

State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2013



National Action Guide

This National Action Guide accompanies the *State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2013* and provides potential actions that state leaders, public health professionals, coalitions, and community-based organizations can take to improve the food environment in support of individuals' and families' increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. For the full report visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/professionals/data>.

U.S. Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* recommends that Americans eat more fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet. Fruits and vegetables have important nutrients for the human body. Eating fruits and vegetables lowers the risk of developing many chronic diseases and can also help with weight management.

The *State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2013* shows that fruit and vegetable consumption is higher in some states than others, but overall consumption of fruits and vegetables in the United States is low. National findings include that adults consume fruit about 1.1 times per day; vegetable consumption is about 1.6 times per day.



Policies and Environments to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Many states are attempting to increase fruit and vegetable consumption by improving access and establishing policies that make it easier to get fruits and vegetables in communities, schools, and child care.

Improve Opportunities to Purchase Fruits & Vegetables

Currently, about 70% of census tracts in the U.S. have at least one healthier food retailer located within 1/2 mile. Bringing retailers into more neighborhoods may increase fruit and vegetable availability and affordability. Retailer acceptance of nutrition assistance program benefits may improve access for individuals with lower incomes. The percent of farmers markets that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits varies among states; with the District of Columbia, Vermont, New Mexico, and Oregon currently leading all others. Additionally, 19 states now authorize farmers to accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) Cash Value Vouchers.

Potential Actions

- Work with stakeholders to conduct assessments that identify communities without retail outlets selling healthier food and develop initiatives to improve the food environment in those areas.¹⁻³
- Consider improvements in fruit and vegetable access that can be made in existing retail venues.²
- Work with groups trying to bring new retail outlets to neighborhoods to ensure that public health goals, including the sale and promotion of fruits and vegetables, are addressed and evaluated.¹⁻³
- Work with stakeholders to increase the number of farmers/farmers markets that accept nutrition assistance program benefits and to increase use of the benefits. This includes supporting the use of wireless electronic benefit transfer (EBT) devices for acceptance of SNAP benefits and implementing awareness campaigns.^{2,4}



Increase Availability of Fruits & Vegetables in Schools, Child Care, and Early Education Programs

Schools, child care, and early education programs are uniquely positioned to model and reinforce healthful eating behaviors. Offering fruits and vegetables when food is served at meals, activities, and special events is one way of doing this. Twenty-eight states now have a farm to school/preschool policy. Also, states have begun to align child care regulations for serving fruits and vegetables with national standards. Ten states have regulations that align with standards for fruits and four states have regulations that align with standards for vegetables.

Potential Actions

- Educate partners on the importance of nutrition standards and initiatives as part of child care licensing, child care training and certification, and school wellness policies, including requirements for fruit and vegetable availability whenever food is offered to students.^{1,5,6}
- Educate schools, child care, and early education administrators and practitioners on the tools they can use to conduct self-assessments and help kids eat more fruits and vegetables (tools available at [HealthierUS Schools Challenge](#), [CDC's School Health Index](#), and [Let's Move Child Care](#)).
- Support farm to school/preschool activities, such as the purchasing of food from local farms, and provide opportunities for agriculture, nutrition, and gardening education.²
- Promote access to and student participation in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, which provide nutrient-dense meals that emphasize fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



Encourage Food System Support

The food system includes the many factors involved in getting fruits and vegetables from the farm to the consumer (e.g., production, processing, distribution). Food hubs (businesses or organizations that actively manage the collection, distribution, and marketing of locally and regionally grown food) are examples of an improvement to the food system infrastructure. Food systems may also be improved by bringing diverse partners together as a food policy council to examine the food system in a state or region and make recommendations.² Currently, there are 213 food hubs and 27 state-level food policy councils across the U.S.

Potential Actions

- Work with partners to organize a food hub or facilitate communication between established food hubs and potential buyers (e.g., educational institutions, food retailers, health care providers).⁷
- Leverage traditional and nontraditional partnerships through food policy councils or similar coalitions to improve the food system and create supportive environments for fruit and vegetable access.² The topics in this guide can be addressed by food policy councils.

For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/professionals/data> or contact fvreport@cdc.gov.

Resources — Numbers in the text indicate either data sources for the action step or resources that provide additional information about the topic.

1. IOM's Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention.aspx>
2. The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase the Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/resources/recommendations.html>
3. State Initiatives Supporting Healthier Food Retail: An Overview of the National Landscape <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/resources.html>
4. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at Farmers Markets: A How-To Handbook <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5085298>
5. CDC's School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6005a1.htm>
6. Caring for Our Children: Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf
7. The Regional Food Hub Resource Guide from the United States Department of Agriculture <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/foodhubs>

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