



Testimony
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House Agriculture Committee Hearing - A 2022 Review of the Farm Bill: Stakeholder Perspectives on Non-SNAP USDA Nutrition Programs

Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about USDA feeding programs and how they can best serve all consumers, especially the most vulnerable and underserved populations. I am Bill Smittcamp, President and CEO of Wawona Frozen Foods located in the San Joaquin Valley in Clovis, CA, and representing the American Frozen Foods Institute. At Wawona, we grow and process over 125 million pounds of fresh fruit into nutritious frozen fruit products that we supply worldwide to sectors such as schools, foodservice, retail and as an ingredient supplier.

We have been in business since 1963, and we are honored to have been partners with USDA for over 35 years to serve families who participate in the National School Meals Program, as well as TEFAP. Personally, I am passionate about feeding communities, not just in my hometown but among populations around the country. Family, business, and community are a way of life for me and my family...not to mention peaches.

We believe households are best served when they have access to all forms of nutritious foods, just as my family does. We know USDA nutrition programs have been successful in bringing fresh foods to recipients. However, there is an opportunity to include and promote frozen foods to enhance these programs, and help ensure families have access to high quality nutrition throughout the year, regardless of their geographic location, available time to prepare

meals, and cooking skills. This is especially true in programs such as GusNip, in both incentive and produce prescription programs, FDIPR, and consumer education through programs such as SNAP-Ed. When we think about strengthening these programs in the 2023 Farm Bill, there are three main components I'd encourage you to consider.

- 1. Americans fall far short of meeting recommended intake levels of produce and therefore, federal feeding programs should promote greater consumption of these important foods. Feeding programs intended to increase produce consumption should promote all forms of produce.**

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consumers eat all forms of fruits and vegetables, including frozen, fresh, canned, and dried, to meet the recommended daily intake. Frozen foods offer a cost-effective and pragmatic way to help people meet these nutritional needs.

USDA's Thrifty Food Plan recognizes the value of frozen food in helping consumers eat a diet that meets federal nutrition guidelines. This is thanks to the benefits that frozen food offers in meeting value, time, and preparation needs. Frozen food is delicious, nutritious and helps families meet their food and nutrition goals while ensuring they spend less money over time.

Additionally, [results from menu modeling](#) show that realistic, balanced and affordable menus featuring mostly frozen foods can meet energy, nutrient and cost goals based on recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, MyPlate and the USDA Thrifty Food Plan.

When studying produce consumption in the United States, data indicates that many consumers do not eat more produce because they do not know how to prepare it¹. Frozen vegetables are peeled and trimmed, ready to cook with easy-to-follow cooking instructions on package. In addition, research shows that the nutritional value of frozen fruits and vegetables is equal to, and in some cases better than, fresh produce²³. We need to ensure consumers are encouraged and able to purchase the form of produce that is right for their family and meets their ease of preparation and cost needs.

2. The Frozen Advantage: frozen foods promote a sustainable food system, especially one that minimizes food waste.

Frozen foods are critical to fighting food waste due to their extended shelf-life and pre-portioned servings that help consumers prepare just the amount of food they plan to eat. For example, families currently throw out up to \$2,275 worth of food each year⁴, but frozen foods are often lower in cost-per-serving and have a longer shelf-life than refrigerated or fresh foods, so households can avoid this financial waste by utilizing frozen products.

This translates to consumers saving money and benefits to the environment by reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in landfills from food waste. This reduced waste can also help lessen the environmental impact across the entire food production chain, including at the distribution and retail level.

¹ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAP-Barriers-Summary.pdf>

² Bouzari, A., D. Holstege and D.M. Barrett. 2015. Vitamin Retention in Eight Fruits and Vegetables: A Comparison of Refrigerated and Frozen Storage. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 63(3):957–962

³ Li, L. et al., 2017. Selected analyses of fresh, fresh-stored, and frozen fruits and vegetables. *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis*, 59:8-17

⁴ <https://www.nrdc.org/media/2012/120821>

3. Supply chain stability: We should consider that freezing is like nature's pause button. It allows all of us to enjoy just-baked, just-harvested, and just-crafted food at our convenience without losing any of the freshness or nutritional benefits.

For example, the day after Mother's Day, suddenly there is a sharp decrease in demand for fresh strawberries. So, we in the frozen industry are the safety net for the strawberry growers for the fresh market that could plummet. Therefore, we now freeze those strawberries, so that the nutritious strawberry could be eaten any time of the year and not wasted. Access to food year-round is one reason why USDA's feeding programs are extremely important, and why we should work together to strengthen them.

Unfortunately, we oftentimes hear that, due to a lack of freezer capacity at schools, food banks, pantries, and retail locations, that these outlets cannot or will not accept frozen foods. How can we work together to solve these infrastructure challenges and ensure that consumers can access multiple forms of produce for their nutritional needs at any time? The real point that I am trying to make here, is that our peach season in the U.S. is four months long. With frozen peaches in particular, the recipients and schoolkids can have a delicious, healthy fresh-frozen peach during any season.

In conclusion, as you craft the 2023 Farm Bill, please ensure that frozen foods are allowed and encouraged as a solution to increasing nutrition access and ending hunger. In any program that is specifically geared to increase produce consumption, we would like to see families have the option and incentive to purchase *all forms* of *nutritious* foods: fresh, frozen, dried, and canned.

In the U.S. in 2022, I am saddened we are still talking about how to help hungry people, yet we are. But the frozen industry stands ready to offer innovative solutions and work with you to make sure that all Americans have access to the bounty of products, the fruits of our labor, if you will, we food producers can offer. I thank you and “Think Peaches.”