

Patricia Daniels, Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division
FNS, USDA
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520
Alexandria, VA 22302

December 14, 2003

Dear Ms Daniels:

Please accept my comments for recommended revisions to the WIC Food Package. I agree with the recommendations as set by the Task Force dated November 20, 2003, but I do have a few additional foods to consider. Over the past 20 years I've worked in various WIC programs in California, as a nutritionist. In addition for almost 10 years, I've worked as a dietitian for a local California Diabetes and Pregnancy Program. Many of these women are eligible for WIC.

In the various programs in Northern California, and most recently Sonoma County, I work with a number of participants who are vegetarian, some vegan. Some of these eligible women drop out now and again, perhaps inspired to return when pregnant. When I ask why they choose not to participate for their children, the response is invariably that there are insufficient choices to make it worth their while.

A vegan will not eat dairy or eggs, often will not want refined cereals, so beans, peanut butter, oatmeal, juice, and possibly carrots are the only options for them. These women would like the option of purchasing whole grains instead of breakfast cereals. **Multigrain whole grain cereals and millet**, have been suggested to me and I would like to see these added to cereal choices, or to the Task Force's recommended list of whole grain bread, corn tortillas or brown rice.

In addition, I would like to see various nuts and seeds added to the food package. This could help in meeting the recommended target nutrients of zinc, folate, and magnesium. I believe the best choices considering cost and nutrients may be **sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, peanuts, almonds and/or flax seeds**. They will also enhance trace mineral intake as well as iron, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids. Significantly, they will offer additional protein for vegans, and low glycemic index choices for diabetics. In considering cost tradeoffs, these foods could replace the cereal if necessary, since at least 2 lbs of any of the above mentioned seeds could be bought for the current maximum on breakfast cereals. At least as many kilocalories would be purchased even though the foods are not of the same food group.

Please consider these recommendations in revising the WIC Food Package.

Sincerely,

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