

National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity

Foods Sold Outside the USDA School Meal Programs (vending, a la carte, etc.)

- ❖ **Recommendation:** Congress should **give the U.S Department of Agriculture authority to establish and enforce regulations for all foods sales anywhere on school campuses throughout the school day** in schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to ensure that foods sold outside of the school meal programs make a positive contribution to children's diets and do not undermine the national investment in school meals.

Within 6 months of enactment, the Secretary of Agriculture should convene an advisory committee of experts in child health, nutrition and education to develop recommendations for nutrition standards for competitive foods. Within 24 months of enactment, the Secretary should finalize regulations to improve the nutritional quality of competitive foods. The regulations should not preempt states or school districts from having stronger requirements.

- ❖ **Cost to USDA:** None

- ❖ **Rationale:**

- **Only 2% of children (2 to 19 years) meet the five main recommendations for a healthy diet** from the Food Guide Pyramid.¹ Three out of four children consume more saturated fat than is recommended in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.² Three out of four American high school students do not eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.³

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity 2001 recommends that "[i]ndividuals and groups across all settings ... [adopt] policies specifying that all foods and beverages available at school contribute toward eating patterns that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*."

- Over the last two decades, rates of obesity have doubled in children and tripled in adolescents.⁴ Between 1989 and 1996, **children's calorie intake increased by approximately 80 to 230 extra calories per day**, depending on the child's age and activity level.^{5,6} The increases in calorie intake are driven by increased intakes of foods and beverages high in added sugars. While obesity is a complex, multi-factorial problem, over-consumption of soft drinks and snack foods plays a key role.
- Children who consume soft drinks consume more calories (about 55 to 190 per day) than kids who do not drink soft drinks.^{7,8} A study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health found that **for each additional can or glass of soda or juice drink a child consumes per day, the child's chance of becoming overweight increases by 60%**.⁹ Consumption of soft drinks can displace healthier foods from children's diets like low-fat milk, which can prevent osteoporosis, and juice, which can prevent cancer.^{7,8,10,11,12} The number of calories children consume from snacks increased by 30% between 1977 and 1996.¹³

- School meals must meet nutrition standards in order for a school food service program to receive federal subsidies. In contrast, foods sold outside the meal programs ("competitive" foods), including those sold in vending machines, a la carte lines, school stores, snack bars, and fund raisers, are not required by the USDA to meet comparable nutrition standards. **The USDA currently has very limited authority to regulate these foods.**
 - During meal periods, the sale of foods of "minimal nutritional value" (FMNV) is prohibited by federal regulations in areas of the school where USDA school meals are sold or eaten. However, FMNV can be sold anywhere else on-campus -- including just outside the cafeteria -- at any time.
 - A FMNV provides less than 5% of the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) for eight specified nutrients per serving.¹⁴ FMNV include chewing gum, lollipops, jelly beans, and carbonated sodas. Many competitive foods are not considered FMNV, such as chocolate candy bars, chips, fruitades (containing little fruit juice), and therefore are allowed to be sold in the school cafeteria during meal times.
- The sale of competitive foods in schools can negatively affect children's diets, since many are high in calories, added sugars, and fat and low in nutrients.¹⁵ The most common items sold out of vending machines, school stores, and snack bars include soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks that are not 100% juice, 100% juice, salty snacks, candy, and baked goods that are not low in fat.¹⁶
- Competitive foods are widely available to students. 43% of elementary schools, 74% of middle/junior high schools, and 98% of senior high schools have vending machines, school stores, or snack bars.¹⁷
- Schools should practice what they teach. Selling low-nutrition foods in schools contradicts nutrition education and sends children the message that good nutrition is not important.¹⁵ The school environment should reinforce nutrition education in the classroom to model healthy behaviors.

❖ **Will Schools Lose Funds if Competitive Foods Regulations are Strengthened?**

- Not necessarily. North Community High School in Minneapolis replaced most of its soda vending machines with machines stocked with 100% fruit and vegetable juices and water and slightly reduced the prices of healthy snack options. As a result, the sale of healthier items increased and the school has not lost money.
- A middle school and high school in Philadelphia changed their vending machines' beverage contents to include only 100% juice, 25% juice, and water. **Average monthly revenue from the machines increased** (see Table).

Vending Machine Revenues in Philadelphia Schools (average sales per month)

	Prior to change in beverages	After change in beverages
Sayre Middle School	\$304	\$333
South Philadelphia High School	\$653	\$667

❖ Is Regulating Competitive Foods a Federal Issue?

- **The federal government invests significant resources in the school meal programs** (\$8.4 billion in FY 2002, including cash payments and commodities), **and has strong nutrition standards for those meals, as well as provides technical assistance and support for states and local food service authorities to meet those standards.**¹⁸ Competitive foods of poor nutritional quality undermine that investment.
- The federal government spends large amounts of money treating diet-related diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke and osteoporosis through the Medicaid and Medicare programs and federal employee health insurance. Those diseases have their roots in childhood. According to the USDA, healthier diets could prevent at least \$71 billion per year in medical costs, lost productivity, and lost lives.¹⁹
- Most states leave the development of dietary guidance to federal agencies. There is no scientific basis for nutrition standards for school foods to differ for children in different states.

¹ Munoz K, et al. "Food Intakes of U.S. Children and Adolescents Compared with Recommendations." *Pediatrics* 1997, vol. 100, pp. 323-329 (erratum in *Pediatrics* 1998, vol. 101, pp. 952-953).

² Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Food and Nutrient Intakes by Children 1994-96, 1998* (1999). Table Set 17. Accessed at <<http://www.barc.usda.gov/bhnrc/foodsurvey/home.htm>> on August 17, 2001.

³ Kann L, et al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 2000, vol. 49, no. SS-5, pp. 1-96.

⁴ Ogden C, et al. "Prevalence and Trends in Overweight Among U.S. Children and Adolescents, 1999-2000." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2002, vol. 288, pp. 1728-1732.

⁵ USDA, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. *Changes in Children's Diets: 1989-1991 to 1994-1996*. Washington, DC: USDA, January 2001. Report No. CN-01-CD1.

⁶ Institute of Medicine, National Academies. *Dietary Reference Intakes: Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2002.

⁷ Harnack L, et al. "Soft Drink Consumption among U.S. Children and Adolescents: Nutritional Consequences." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 1999, vol. 99, pp. 436-441.

⁸ Guenther PM. "Beverages in the Diets of American Teenagers." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 1986, vol. 86, pp. 493-499.

⁹ Ludwig DS, et al. "Relation between Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Drinks and Childhood Obesity: A Prospective, Observational Analysis." *Lancet* 2001, vol. 357, pp. 505-508.

¹⁰ Ballew C, Kuester S, Gillespie C. "Beverage Choices Affect Adequacy of Children's Nutrient Intakes." *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 2000, vol. 154, pp. 1148-1152.

¹¹ Bowman SA. "Diets of Individuals Based on Energy Intakes from Added Sugars." *Family Economics and Nutrition Review* 1999, vol. 12, pp. 31-38.

¹² Lewis CJ, Park YK, Dexter PB, Yetley EA. "Nutrient Intakes and Body Weights of Persons Consuming High and Moderate Levels of Added Sugars." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 1992, vol. 92, pp. 708-713.

¹³ Jahns L, et al. "The Increasing Prevalence of Snacking among U.S. Children from 1977 to 1996." *The Journal of Pediatrics* 2001, vol. 138, pp. 493-498.

¹⁴ Federal Register: 7 CFR § 210.11. "Requirements for School Food Authority Participation, Competitive Food Services."

¹⁵ USDA. *Foods Sold in Competition with USDA School Meal Programs: A Report to Congress January 12, 2001*. Washington, DC: USDA, 2001.

¹⁶ Wechsler H, et al. "Food Service and Foods and Beverages Available at School: Results from the School Health Policies and Programs Study 2000." *Journal of School Health* 2001, vol. 71, pp. 313-324.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *School Health Policies and Programs Study 2000*. Accessed on September 19, 2001 at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/shpps/factsheets/fs00_ns.htm>.

¹⁸ USDA. *Federal Costs of School Food Programs*. Accessed at <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/cncosts.htm>> on February 21, 2003.

¹⁹ Frazao E. "High Costs of Poor Eating Patterns in the United States." In *America's Eating Habits: Changes and Consequences*. Edited by Elizabeth Frazao. Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1999. Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 750, pp. 5-32.