

Release No. 0512.11

Contact:

USDA Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

USDA Celebrates One Year Anniversary of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 Department Takes Historic Steps to Stem Hunger, Improve Nutrition and Curb Obesity for Nation's Children

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 2011 - First Lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today highlighted the achievements of the historic Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, one year after the legislation was enacted to combat child hunger and obesity and improve the health and nutrition of the nation's children.

"The success of our nation tomorrow depends on the choices we make for our kids today. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act is vital to the health and welfare of our kids, helping them build the healthy futures they deserve," said First Lady Michelle Obama. "We've seen the connection between what our kids eat and how well they perform in school. And we know that America's success in the 21st century means having the best-prepared and best-educated workforce around. So it is critical that we work to ensure that all children have the basic nutrition they need to learn, grow, and to pursue their dreams. As we celebrate the many accomplishments of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act's first year, we also pledge to continue taking bold steps forward to advance this goal."

"The strength of our communities, our economy, and our national security, rely on the health of our children," said Vilsack. "The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act strengthens the school nutrition environment, expands access to healthy meals, and simplifies processes so every child can receive a well-balanced school meal. And today, we celebrate those important accomplishments and look forward to those achievements which are still to come."

The Act makes many critical improvements to the child nutrition programs that serve millions of children across our country each day. It provides for improved access to nutrition assistance to make it easier for children to get nutritious meals when they are away from home. The legislation also improves the entire nutrition environment in schools and will enhance understanding of the causes and consequences of hunger and food insecurity among children. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 advances the goal of solving the problem of childhood obesity within a generation, which is at the heart of the First Lady's Let's Move! initiative.

USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon said, "School nutrition improvements are an investment in our children's future. By working together, USDA and its partners can make these changes happen to feed every child the nutritious food they deserve - to excel and thrive in their lives."

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 marked a great win for the nearly 32 million school children that participate in the National School Lunch and the 12 million school children that participate in the School Breakfast Programs each school day. USDA is working to implement historic reforms that will mark the most comprehensive change to food in schools in more than a generation. USDA's efforts to improve and enhance the school food environment include: updated school meals nutrition standards to increase fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy; science-based standards for all foods and beverages sold on the school campus; performance-based funding increases for schools - the first real increase in 30 years; and training and technical assistance to help schools meet improved standards.

Key accomplishments from the Act in the first year include:

Nutrition Standards for School Meals: USDA proposed new meal patterns and nutrition standards that align school meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, analyzed over 130,000 public comments, and used them in drafting a final regulation for publication.

Common Sense Standards for Revenue: USDA issued new rules to ensure that all revenues from school food sales keep pace with the Federal commitment to healthy school meals and properly align with costs, providing local schools as much as \$7.5 billion over 5 years to invest in healthier meals for children.

Nationwide Expansion of At-Risk Afterschool Meals: USDA worked closely with states to expand the availability of afterschool meals across the nation through the Child and Adult Care Food Program. USDA estimates this expansion could provide supper to an additional 140,000 kids in low-income areas.

Categorical Eligibility for Foster Children: USDA issued guidance and provided technical assistance to states to ensure that more than 400,000 children in foster care are certified to receive free meals in all USDA child nutrition programs.

Strengthening Direct Certification: USDA provided guidance, technical assistance and grant funding to states to improve their direct certification systems to help more children already receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

Implementing Community Eligibility: USDA is working with three states - Illinois, Kentucky and Michigan - to implement a "community eligibility" approach to reimburse schools for meals without the need for paper applications.

Simplified Area Eligibility for Family Day Care Homes: USDA provided guidance to states to simplify the kinds of information that family day care home providers can use to qualify for participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Improved School Wellness Promotion: USDA provided guidance to enhance local wellness policies in schools in order to promote healthier lifestyles for children.

Bolster Farm to School Connections: New USDA policy ensures that children have access to fresh produce and other agricultural products and give a much-needed boost to local farmers and agricultural producers.

Key accomplishments from the Act expected in the coming year and beyond:

Nutrition Standards for School Meals: USDA anticipates finalizing the actual standards to align school meals with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in early 2012.

Nutrition Standards for All Foods Sold in School: USDA plans to propose new standards for foods sold in school other than reimbursable meals, such as those in school stores, a la carte lines, and vending machines.

Implementation of Performance-Based Reimbursement: The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act included the first real reimbursement rate increase for school meals in roughly 30 years. These funds are tied to performance in meeting the updated nutrition standards for school meals. USDA plans to begin issuing these funds in 2012.

Implementing Direct Certification using Medicaid Data: USDA will select states to participate in a demonstration project to test the use of Medicaid data for connecting eligible children with free school meals.

Nutrition Standards for the Child and Adult Care Food Program: USDA will propose updated standards for child and adult care settings, as well as other early learning settings that participate in CACFP, to better align the meals served with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Implementing Community Eligibility: USDA plans to continue evaluating the current States participating in community eligibility and expanding to others.

#