



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONTACT

JULY 29, 2009

Ben Lilliston, 612-870-3416, ben@iatp.org

New Healthy WIC Foods Available in Minnesota August 1 Changes lauded for improving access to fruits and vegetables

Minneapolis – Important changes to the foods provided by the Women, Infants and Children Nutrition program (WIC) will increase access to healthy fruits and vegetables in underserved populations in Minnesota and throughout the nation, according to the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The WIC changes, which take effect in Minnesota on August 1, are the first major overhaul of the foods available in the program's 35-year existence. The WIC program is a federally funded nutrition program for lower-income and nutritionally-at-risk pregnant and breast feeding women, their infants and young children. The WIC food package has always included vouchers for milk, eggs, cheese, cereal, infant formula and other items. Now, all retail food vendors that are authorized to accept WIC vouchers will be required to make several varieties of fresh fruits and vegetables available at all times. The Minnesota WIC program currently serves more than 141,000 participants each month.

"Many low-income communities around the state don't have easy access to supermarkets and often have to rely on smaller corner stores for their groceries. Fresh produce is often scarce in those environments. These changes will make fresh fruits and vegetables more available to WIC participants and enhance the health and well-being of WIC mothers and children across the state of Minnesota," said IATP's JoAnne Berkenkamp.

IATP, a leader in supporting greater access to healthy foods in underserved communities, is partnering with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to promote the WIC fruit and vegetable changes and help small stores access a steady supply of high-quality produce. New posters and point-of-sale materials featuring fresh fruits and vegetables will help make healthy options visible at corner stores across the state.

IATP works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.