

IDAHO POTATO PULSE



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Early this afternoon, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted on an amendment introduced by Senator Mark Pryor (D-Arkansas), chairman of the Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations, that would allow fresh white potatoes to be purchased with WIC vouchers. The amendment passed by voice vote with Senator Harkin (D-Iowa) the lone vote in opposition.

The amendment was a compromise hammered out between the primary sponsor of the original amendment, Senator Susan Collins (R-Maine) and the Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland).

The amendment provides for the following actions:

- USDA must include potatoes along with all other fresh, whole or cut fruits and vegetables except for vegetables with added sugars, fats, or oils.
- Potatoes will be included in WIC and will remain in the WIC program until the completion of the next scheduled regular review of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.
- USDA must begin their regular WIC review within 90 days of enactment, and it must include a review of the nutrient value of ALL fresh fruits and vegetables in the WIC package.
- Upon the completion of the review, USDA will implement the recommendations from the review through the Federal Register Notice and Comment process.

The bottom line is that unless the results of the review recommend the exclusion of a specific fruit or vegetable based on nutrient value, USDA would not be able to remove them from eligibility in the WIC program.

This is a significant step forward in the effort to include fresh white potatoes in the WIC program. We are not yet finished.

The next step in the Senate will be floor consideration of the FY15 Agriculture Appropriations bill considered by the committee today. The date for this is not yet known.

In the House, FY15 Agriculture Appropriations is expected to be considered next week in full committee. Assuming passage there, the bill will then be considered by the full House.

If both the House and Senate pass FY15 Agriculture Appropriations bills, then the two versions will be combined into one during the conference committee process further down the line.

Today's action was a significant step forward and a good day for producers and consumers of U.S. potatoes. Thank you for all your efforts on this issue.

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