



January 23, 2009

VIA FACSIMILE: (202) 720-2166  
ORIGINAL BY U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the frozen food industry, I would like to offer my congratulations on your confirmation as the 30<sup>th</sup> Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As you know, USDA plays a vital role in the delivery of food products to the American consumer. The American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI) looks forward to working with you to ensure the nation's continued access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food.

As the only national trade association representing the frozen food industry, the reauthorization of the Women, Infant & Children's (WIC) and Child Nutrition programs, which USDA will play a pivotal role in shaping, is of particular interest to us. As a result of the variety of nutritional, safety and cost benefits to the consumer that frozen foods provide, they play a valuable role as part of the health and wellness mission of the federal feeding programs, and should be included as participants in all of these programs.

In particular, frozen fruits and vegetables must be included in the USDA's Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. Despite a large body of evidence stating that frozen fruits and vegetables have been found to be nutritionally equivalent and, in some cases, superior to their fresh counterparts, frozen fruits and vegetables currently are excluded from the Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program.

Deteriorating economic conditions, rising food cost and child hunger make it imperative that additional steps be taken to increase access to these programs by eligible children. In part, increased participation can be accomplished, where possible, with greater use of frozen produce. In addition to nutritional equivalences or superiority, frozen offer a lower cost option with longer shelf lives than "fresh" counterparts. By taking advantage of volume discounts, consumers can realize savings without compromising nutrition, menu choices or safety.

Finally, convenience and safety are hallmarks of frozen produce. Frozen fruits and vegetables are easily transported and stored frozen, and are not subject to seasonal or regional limitations. Additionally, they conform to strict processing standards that enhance the safety of the product.

We appreciate the many competing demands that you will face as you seek to craft a legislative proposal for the reauthorization of the critical WIC and Child Nutrition programs. To improve the targeted populations' access to healthful, affordable, convenient, and safe foods, we urge you to include frozen foods in all federal feeding programs.

Again, congratulations on your confirmation. We look forward to working with you on the successful reauthorization of these programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'R. Garfield'.

Robert L. Garfield  
Interim President