

Impact of Limiting Language in Government Recommendations on Fruit and Vegetable Consumption



During a time when consumers are not eating even half of their recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) commissioned research to measure the impact of the federal government's fruit and vegetable recommendations on consumers' perceptions of, and intent to purchase, various forms of fruits and vegetables.¹

An on-line survey of 1,200 consumers was conducted in October 2015. Half of respondents were exposed to inclusive recommendations for increased intake of fruit and vegetables and the other half were exposed to limiting language that reinforced fresh produce intake at the expense of packaged forms. All were then asked a series of questions after being exposed to both sets of current government recommendations.

Research Results

Perception of Healthfulness

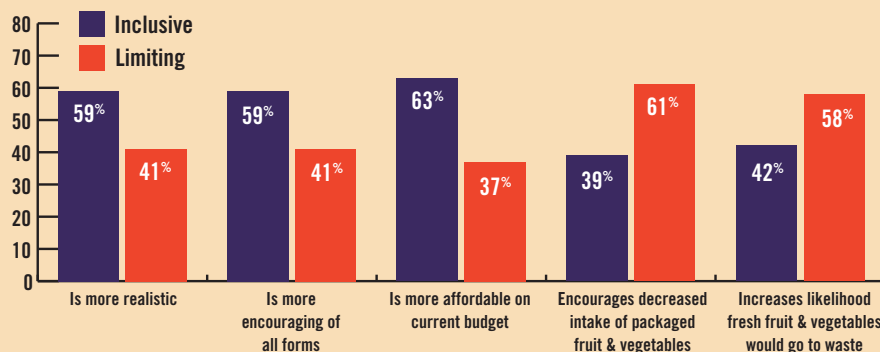
Government guidelines impact consumers' perceptions of the healthfulness of packaged fruits and vegetables:

- **Inclusive language** more strongly and consistently reinforces the healthfulness of all forms of fruits and vegetables — fresh, frozen, canned, 100% juice and dried.
- **Limiting language** that over-emphasizes the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables, compared to packaged forms, detracts from the perceived healthfulness of packaged fruits and vegetables.
- Among vulnerable² consumers, **inclusive language** more consistently reinforces their perceived healthfulness of packaged fruits and vegetables.
- Vulnerable consumers feel that **limiting language** recommendations would most likely cause a decrease in their intake of packaged fruits and vegetables.

Intent to Purchase

Government recommendations with **inclusive language** more strongly and consistently increase consumers' intent to purchase packaged fruits and vegetables, without decreasing their intent to purchase fresh produce.

Impact of Policy Statements on Consumer Perceptions about Fruits and Vegetables



When directly comparing inclusive vs. limiting language, all consumers feel that inclusive language is more realistic, more encouraging of all forms of fruits and vegetables, and offers more affordable options.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Inclusive language incorporates words and phrases that encourage consumption of fruits and vegetables regardless of form. For example:

- Include more fruits and vegetables in your diet. Fruits and vegetables may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried.
- When including more fruits and vegetables in your diet, all forms of fruits and vegetables matter—fresh, frozen, canned, dried and 100% fruit or vegetable juice.
- With 200+ options and a variety of convenient packaging, prepared fruits, vegetables and beans are easy to store and easy to serve.

Policy language should encourage all forms of fruits and vegetables so people can feel good about the purchases they're making and find more ways to increase their intake.

LIMITING LANGUAGE

Limiting language is defined as words and phrases that devalue packaged forms of fruits and vegetables or overemphasize the value of fresh. For example:

- Include more vegetables and beans (without added salt or fat), and fruits (without added sugars) in your diet.
- Include canned or frozen fruits and vegetables when fresh produce is not available.
- Overall, fruits and vegetables that are just picked or fresh from the farmers market are healthier than frozen or canned ones. However, including frozen and canned fruits and vegetables can still be a good choice.

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Endnotes:

1. Inclusive of beans, like kidney beans.
2. Vulnerable consumers are those individuals who receive government food assistance, eat less than the recommended levels of fruit and vegetables or have limited access and budget for purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables.