

January 31, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The undersigned members of the Grain Chain, a grains industry coalition from farm to table, urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to give the highest priority to prompt publication of a proposed rule updating foods approved for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Originally slated for publication in August 2021, the Agency is now saying the proposed rule will be published in April 2022. However, such a delay will make implementation of new package sizes in early FY 2023 impossible. This will significantly delay expanded benefits and improved nutrition for at-risk families, negatively impacting the approximately 6.3 million women, infants, and children participating in this critical program.

The co-signers also strongly endorse the October 2021 letter from the National WIC Association and like-minded partner organizations urging action before the end of 2021. Clearly, that deadline has passed, but there is still an opportunity for the Department to act expeditiously. Our organizations are adding our voices to those already on record supporting this cause to further emphasize the immediate need for a quickened release.

Under your leadership, the Agency has taken important steps over the last year towards transforming the food system to address health equity and the needs of underserved populations. We believe the proposed WIC food packaging rule is a key component of this Agency goal. By further delaying its implementation beyond early FY 2023, USDA risks compromising its health equity mission.

The Grain Chain looks forward to the opportunity to submit formal comments on the updated WIC rule, which we anticipate will include a number of changes directly impacting the grains industry.

Studies show that WIC has an impressive track record of success, achieving improved dietary outcomes for infants and children and improved maternal health. WIC food packages provide foods that are designed to help meet specific nutritional needs of the participants, and have resulted in reduced obesity in toddlers, and improved dietary patterns in children.

USDA's prompt action – before April 2022 – to advance the WIC food packaging rule will help ensure these at-risk WIC consumers fully benefit from this seminal federal program by allowing them greater access to healthful foods like grains.

Sincerely,



AMERICAN BAKERS
ASSOCIATION

