



## Frequently Asked Questions About the BCSFVNP (General)

### Common questions parents have about the Program

#### **Is there a cost to schools or parents to participate?**

There is NO COST to schools or students to participate. The Program is funded by the BC Ministry of Health.

#### **Are all of the fruits and vegetables in the Program grown in BC?**

All fruits and vegetables in the Program are grown in BC. On occasion, due to unforeseen circumstance we may need to substitute for other imported products. When we do need to out-source produce we continue to use BC suppliers so that we are still contributing to BC's agriculture.

#### **Is the produce organic?**

Some of the produce we serve is organically grown. In BC we import over 80% of our organic produce from other countries. Many of the products we use are not certified organic, but are grown utilizing organic practices.

#### **Is conventionally-grown (non-organic) produce safe to eat?**

Absolutely. BC boasts some of the safest growing practices in the world. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency regularly checks produce for pesticide residues and our produce is considered some of the safest in the world. All of the fruits and vegetables used in the Program are HACCP certified. This means that the growers and packers follow all the best growing practices, and packing and safety techniques.

#### **What does the school do with leftover produce?**

Each school has the ability to utilize leftover produce however they see fit. Many schools place a basket at the office so that children can help themselves. Some schools use leftover produce for sports teams, while others package it up and send it home with children they feel are in need. This is a school-based decision. One reason a school may have leftover produce is that, for safety reasons, we do not break case lots of produce.

#### **How often do you deliver product to the school?**

Your school will receive a fresh fruit or vegetable snack thirteen times over the school year.

#### **How do you deal with food allergies?**

The issue of allergies is a very sensitive and important matter. It is the responsibility of each school to be aware of any students with food allergy issues. Every participating school

receives a list of all the products that will be delivered to them throughout the Program. The In-school Coordinator for each school needs to alert us of any specific allergy concerns with their school and that delivery will be automatically cancelled. Please consult with your school if you have any specific concerns or questions regarding your child and possible food allergies. If you would like guidance regarding new and current allergy issues, policies, procedures, and the most up-to-date allergy information, please contact your school district. There are many variables in regards to allergies and foods and it can be a confusing issue for parents. If you have specific allergy concerns regarding your child then we suggest you consult your family physician about creating an allergy profile that you can provide for your school.

### **What are some of the fruits and vegetables served in the Program?**

Some of the fruits and vegetables that your child will receive include plums, blueberries, grapes, pears, mini cucumbers, several varieties of apples, tomatoes, baby bell peppers, and carrots.

### **How much fruit or vegetables should my child eat?**

For optimal health, children need to eat a minimum of 5 servings of fruit and vegetables each day. A serving could be: 1 medium-sized apple or pear, 1/2 cup (125 mL) raw, cooked, frozen or canned fruits or vegetables, 1 cup (250 mL) raw leafy vegetables, 1/4 cup (50 mL) dried fruit, 1/2 cup (125 mL) fruit or vegetable juice.

### **What if I do not want my child to participate in the Program?**

Participation in the Program is entirely optional. Should you decide that you do not want your child to participate, simply inform your teacher or principal and they will give you a reverse consent form to sign and return. The Program coordinator for your school will notify us of any students who are not participating so we can adjust the product requirements.

## **Frequently Asked Questions About the BCSFVNP (for Coordinators)**

### **Common questions teachers and coordinators have about the Program:**

#### **What if there is a problem with our delivery?**

If there is an issue with the condition and/or quality of the produce, please take pictures and e-mail them to [laura@aitc.ca](mailto:laura@aitc.ca) before you call. This will enable us to look at the pictures while we're talking with you. Specifically, we need pictures of:

- the actual produce
- the outside of the boxes in which the produce arrived
- any expiry dates on the boxes or on the packaging inside the boxes

Call the BCSFVNP office toll-free number as soon as possible after you've e-mailed the pictures and steps will be taken immediately to correct the problem. 1-866-517-6225.

### **What products need to be refrigerated?**

The following produce requires refrigeration at all times:

- blueberries
- carrots (baby or regular size)
- mini cucumbers
- sliced apples

All other produce may be refrigerated if space is permitted. Please store any un-refrigerated produce in a cool room, out of sunlight. For a complete list of the refrigeration needs of all our produce, refer to our Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide.

### **Are all the fruits and vegetables provided in the Program grown in British Columbia?**

Yes, all of the fruits and vegetables provided in the BCSFVNP are grown in BC. There may be an occasion when a shipment is late and we are required to substitute other produce. Should this happen our mandate is to supply Canadian produce if possible. There may be occasions when growing conditions affect our BC crops and we will need to utilize other sources, but we do our best to ensure top quality BC produce whenever possible.

### **Is the product organic?**

Some of the produce we provide in the Program is organically grown. In BC we import over 80% of our organic produce from other countries. Many of the products we use are not certified organic, but are grown utilizing organic practices.

### **Is traditionally grown (non-organic) produce safe?**

Absolutely. BC boasts some of the safest growing practices in the world. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency regularly checks produce for pesticide residues and our produce is considered some of the safest in the world. All of the fruit and vegetables used in the Program are HACCP certified. This means that the growers follow all the best growing practices, and packing and safety techniques.

### **What do we do with leftover produce?**

Each school has the ability to utilize leftover produce however they see fit. Many schools place a basket at the office so that children can help themselves. Some schools use leftover produce for sports teams, while others package it up and send it home with children they feel are in need. This is a school-based decision. One reason you may have leftover produce is that, for food safety reasons, we do not break case lots of produce.

### **Do we have to prepare the produce before serving it i.e. washing it, cutting it up?**

The fruit and vegetables provided in the BCSVNP have been on a journey since their harvest at the grower so it is always a good idea to wash them prior to consumption. This can be easily achieved in most cases right in the packaging. The sealed sliced products are ready to eat and don't require washing. Tree fruits have all been water bathed, but it's a good idea to rinse prior to consumption. This is a good opportunity to emphasize with students one of the

BCSFVNP objectives of safe food handling, no different than washing your hands. The fruits and vegetables that we provide are easily consumed without slicing or dicing. Enjoy them whole!

### **What is the best time to serve the produce?**

Those fruits and vegetables listed under “What products need to be refrigerated?” must not be left un-refrigerated for more than 3 hours. Other produce can be served in class at the teachers’ convenience.

### **What are the safety requirements for storing and handling produce?**

The safety requirements for receiving, storing and handling the produce are outlined in the In-School Coordinator’s guide book. Your school is required to have a FOODSAFE certified handler. All hand washing and safety procedures as outlined in the FOODSAFE guide must be followed. All produce should be checked for freshness before being delivered to the classroom. Any quality issues should be recorded in the Monthly Log Sheet and reported to the designated lead in your school and our office (see question “What if there’s a problem with my delivery?”).

### **Where can we get more information on the Program and BC agriculture?**

Please visit our website at [aitc.ca](http://aitc.ca) or contact our office. Toll-free 1-866-517-6225.

### **Does the In-School Coordinator have to have FOODSAFE certification?**

Not necessarily. As long as there is at least one person in the school with FOODSAFE certification that is inspecting the produce before distribution, then the In-School Coordinator does not need to have this training.

### **Why is the produce sometimes under-ripe?**

This is not uncommon. In order for you to have the highest quality produce, we order from our suppliers up to 6 weeks in advance of your delivery date. Since we don’t want it to be over-ripe when it gets to you (thus inedible), we err on the side of caution so the produce may be a little under-ripe. Under-ripe produce also endures the trip from the supplier to the schools much easier than over-ripe produce. Please wait until your produce is ripe before you distribute it to the children. If your produce is a little under-ripe, placing it out on the counter next to some bananas (which give off a natural ethylene gas) will help it ripen quicker.

### **How should we distribute bulk items such as blueberries and sugar snap peas?**

One method that we’ve heard used by schools was to use paper cupcake holders for each student’s serving. They are recyclable and inexpensive. Some schools choose to take the opportunity to emphasize the importance of hand washing before eating, and have all the students wash their hands before grabbing a handful of blueberries and/or sugar snap peas. Upon enrollment, each school on the Program is issued a one-time stipend to help with costs for distribution implements such as bowls, spoons, paper cupcake holders, etc.

### **Does my FOODSAFE Level 1 certificate expire?**

Up until June 29, 2013, none of the FOODSAFE Level 1 certificates had an expiry date. It was a one-time training. As of June 29, 2013 all new FOODSAFE Level 1 certificates issued in BC will have a five-year expiry date. Existing FOODSAFE Level 1 certifications will be valid until July 29, 2018. To help existing certificate holders keep their food safety knowledge up to date, there is an inexpensive and short three-hour refresher course. For accurate information on this topic, please contact the FOODSAFE Authority in your area through [foodsafe.ca](http://foodsafe.ca).

### **Why didn't our school get our delivery on a Pro-D day?**

Deliveries that conflict with any day where the students are not in session (Pro-D, District Closure Days, etc.) are automatically cancelled. As long as your school has notified us that there will be no one at your school to accept a delivery on these days, we cancel the delivery. If you know that someone at your school will be willing and able to accept our delivery on a day when students are not in session, then we do not need to be advised of (or cancel) that date. To make changes to the not in session dates for your school, please have your Principal sign into your school logIn page, and submit these changes via the Update School Details online form. Once submitted, these changes will move seamlessly into our database. Please remember — we require a minimum of 3 weeks' notice in order to reinstate or cancel a delivery.

### **How much is too much bad produce in a delivery?**

Fruit and vegetable crops are susceptible to many outside influences such as weather, temperature, and handling. Any variation in these influences can affect how quickly or slowly they ripen. Anything less than 5% of bad produce in your delivery is within a somewhat normal range. If more than 5% of your delivery is bad, please refer to "What if there is a problem with our delivery?" for instructions on what to do.

### **Are the individual plastic bags recyclable?**

Yes, they are 100% recyclable #7 or #5 plastic. If your city or town does not pick up recyclable plastic bags from your school, there are drop-off locations where you can recycle the #5 plastic bags free of charge through West Coast Plastic Recycling. For drop-off locations please contact them through their website at [westcoastplasticrecycling.com](http://westcoastplasticrecycling.com).

### **Why is FOODSAFE certification so important?**

The main reason to take FOODSAFE training is to protect the public from foodborne illnesses. The #1 cause of foodborne illness outbreaks is improper cooling. It is estimated that there are between 11-13 million cases of food related illnesses in Canada every year. Many of these illnesses could be prevented by following proper food handling and preparation techniques (Health Canada, 2006).

It is our responsibility to ensure that the fruits and vegetables are safe to eat before they leave our supplier. It is the school's responsibility to guarantee that they have a FOODSAFE Level 1 certified person inspecting all produce before it is distributed to the children.

**Is wax added to the whole apples?**

Unless the apples are organic a wax coating is added to whole apples. When apples are still on the tree they have a natural protective coating that slows dehydration and seals in moisture, but after they are picked the natural coating is removed. They are waxed to keep them fresh and looking fine.

The wax that is used is vegetable based, completely edible, utterly safe, and approved by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It is used very sparsely — a single gallon of wax will coat five tons of apples!

It's not just apples that are waxed. Citrus fruits, rutabagas, cucumbers, many tomatoes, melons, and peppers also go through this same waxing process.

**What is the \$250 cheque that my school received upon enrollment in the BCSFVNP?**

A \$250 one-time stipend cheque was provided upon enrollment in BCSFVNP, to be used to support the Program in your school. This grant is to be used to cover costs that may be incurred to administer the Program. Some schools use the funds to purchase cups, toothpicks, and other materials that assist them in the distribution of products to the students according to FOODSAFE requirements. As long as it is used in a manner that supports the implementation of the Program in your school, usage of the funds is the school's discretion.

There will not be replacement cheques sent for lost or stale-dated stipend cheques

Revised May 2015