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How to Bring Healthier Food to Corner Stores New Paper Explores Innovative Strategies from Across the U.S.

Minneapolis – Corner stores around the country have used a number of innovative strategies to bring healthier food to their shelves, finds a new paper by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. In many low-income neighborhoods without a grocery store, corner stores are one of the few food options for consumers.

In *Healthy Food for All: Healthy Corner Store Strategies from Across the United States*, IATP explores how corner stores have expanded their selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, utilized social marketing strategies and transformed their in-store facilities to successfully sell healthier food.

Changes in the federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program will make healthier food options available across the country. In Minnesota, new WIC rules were instituted on August 1 that allow WIC participants to use their benefits to purchase a range of fruits and vegetables. Stores that accept WIC vouchers will be required to carry certain minimum quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Making healthier foods more accessible, particularly in low-income communities, is critically important in these times of rising diet-related disease and escalating health care costs," said IATP's JoAnne Berkenkamp. "We found that corner stores can overcome the logistical challenges of providing fresh fruits and vegetables through a variety of strategies. This paper also illustrates how non-profit, government and business partnerships can enable corner stores to make healthier options available in their neighborhoods."

IATP's paper reported on successful efforts by corner stores around the country to expand their stocking of healthy food. These efforts include: social marketing strategies of corner stores on the White Mountain and San Carlos reservations in Arizona and in the uptown neighborhood of Chicago; efforts to expand fruit and vegetable selection in Hartford, Conn. and San Francisco, Calif.; changes in corner store infrastructure in Oakland, Calif. and Louisville, Ky.; and pilot programs to expand the use of WIC vouchers to include fruits and vegetables in New York.

The paper also makes a series of recommendations for corner stores looking to expand sales of healthier food, including: assessing consumer preferences; closely monitoring store pricing and profitability; addressing procurement and distribution challenges; ensuring effective produce handling and merchandising; and making store improvements to increase the visibility of healthier food.

IATP is working in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health and produce distribution partners to promote changes in Minnesota's WIC program and connect corner stores with a stable supply of fresh, high quality produce.

IATP works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. www.iatp.org.