

Minutes

Work Group members in attendance: FDPIR Program Staff: Tod Robertson (NAFDPIR President), Jaime Prouty (NAFDPIR Treasurer); Perry Martinez (SWR VP), Connie Martinez (SWR); Jenelle Gimlin (WR VP), Lorraine Davis (WR); Mary Greene-Trottier (MPR VP), Charles “Red” Gates (MPR); Susie Roy (MWR VP), Gloria Goodwin (MWR - Proxy for Betty Jo Graveen); Melissa Baker (FNS WRO), Samia Hamdan (FNS MWRO); Sara Hernandez (AMS), Lena Milton (FSA); Laura Walter (FNS), Patti Schock (FNS) Stephanie Cooks, (FNS).

Work Group members not at the meeting: Anna Wright (NAFDPIR Secretary), Fi Davis (NAFDPIR Parliamentarian), Betty Jo Graveen (MWR); Desiree Bergeron (WR); Sharon Wheeler (SWR); Lucy Atteberry (MPR); NAFDPIR MWR Nutritionist – vacant; Lou Hankins, (FNS SWRO); Kathy Sweitzer (FNS MPRO).

Visitors: Kevin Concannon (Under Secretary, FNCS), Diane Kriviski (Acting Deputy Administrator, SNAS), Laura Castro (Director, FDD), Janice Fitzgerald (Chief, FDD Household Operations), Dana Rasmussen (Chief, FDD Policy), Roxanna Newsom (Chickasaw Nation); Andre Orange (FDD), Emily Buday (FDD), Akua White (FDD), Matthew Martin (FDD), Erica Antonson (FDD), Jeramia Garcia Ramadan (FDD).

I. Welcome/Introductions

- a. The meeting opened with introductions by each workgroup member and visiting FNS staff. The workgroup was greeted by Kevin Concannon, FNCS Under Secretary and Diane Kriviski, Acting Deputy Administrator for SNAS.

II. AMS Procurement Overview

- a. FNS and AMS provided a short update on canned vegetable procurement and how the low sodium specification impacts product availability. Since the canned vegetable specification was modified in 2011 to purchase no salt added corn and tomatoes, school programs and most household programs have received these products. To date, only low sodium canned corn and tomatoes have been purchased for FDPIR. When low sodium product is in short supply and not available from vendors, FNS has not been able to substitute no salt added product without workgroup agreement. Because canned corn and tomatoes are very popular in FDPIR, the workgroup wants them to be available each month for distribution, regardless of sodium level. No salt added corn and no salt added tomatoes were sampled at the June 2013 NAFDPIR conference and the December 2013 face-to-face meeting. Ten (10) members voted “Yes” to ordering no salt added corn and tomatoes for FDPIR for 3rd quarter FY 2014 and beyond, and permitting waivers for low sodium products should no salt added not be available. No members (0) voted “No” to purchasing no salt added corn and tomatoes. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will purchase no salt added corn and tomatoes for FDPIR for the end of FY 2014 and beyond. If no salt added corn and tomatoes are unavailable, FNS will purchase low sodium products. FNS and AMS will also work with vendors to ensure a more consistent supply of corn and tomatoes in the food package.
- b. FDPIR has the option to receive beef stew in pouches or cans. USDA explored pouched beef stew to increase availability and potentially lower price. Some

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Workgroup members sampled the pouch product at the June 2013 NAFDPIR conference, but found it was not acceptable. The group discussed possible challenges for store-type FDPIR programs in displaying pouched stew, and elders may have challenges opening the pouches. Ten (10) members voted not to offer pouched beef stew as a packaging option in FDPIR. The workgroup noted if USDA wants to pursue pouched beef stew in the future, a blind taste test at the NAFDPIR annual meeting or a product pilot might help to get additional feedback from programs on the acceptability of pouched beef stew for FDPIR. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will provide cost comparison information for pouched and canned beef stew.

III. Warehouse Update

Food Inventories - Both Nampa and Paris Bros. warehouses have experienced recent inventory and customer service challenges. This was due in part to limited food funding at the end of FY 2013 (\$7 M in funding, \$10 M in orders), an increase in program participation in early FY 2014, and delayed deliveries from vendors. The workgroup asked if funding could be increased 5 to 10% to allow for the increase in participation; FNS is exploring funding needs. The workgroup suggested that better communication of low inventory levels would help programs anticipate a shortfall in inventory. FNS noted that, short-term, there may be shortages of individual items, but the goal is to allow for full food package distributions within categories (e.g., fruits, vegetables, proteins). The Workgroup recommended that participation and inventory levels be closely monitored to anticipate food ordering needs. Vendors should also be held accountable for delayed deliveries and past vendor performance be considered for future procurements. When orders cannot be filled, programs would like for the warehouse to suggest another item within the same category as a replacement. This is difficult for warehouses to do and may impact food availability for future orders that have been entered into WBSCM because the warehouses can only see five days of orders in the system. Substituting other items may result in a shortfall for longer term orders in WBSCM. **ACTION ITEMS:** FNS and ITOs will monitor inventory levels and maintain communications.

Guide rates for butter/oil/buttery spread – The workgroup asked if the guide rate for butter could be increased for a single person household. Under Secretary Concannon and FNS staff stated that the guide rate could not be increased based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the need to maintain FDPIR's high Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score of 86.7. A workgroup member asked how often the HEI is updated and requested a comparison of how much the HEI would decrease if one additional lb. of butter was added to the food package for 1 person households only. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will coordinate with the FNS Office of Research and Analysis for the requested information.

- a. **Best If Used By (BIUB) dates** – Programs would like to “bonus” foods that are close to/beyond the BIUB date to participants within the program. FNS noted that it is of great importance to FNS that the products issued in our programs are of the highest quality and in optimal condition, and that a positive image of USDA Foods is maintained. FNS further noted that USDA and ITOs share the responsibility to manage inventories effectively. FNS is working to minimize the delivery of foods to ITOs that are near the BIUB date, and included requirements in the most recent

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National Multi-Food Warehouse contract in this regard. At the same time, ITOs must monitor their inventories (via the FNS-152) and food orders to ensure they are not exceeding three months on-hand per food package category, while at the same time applying first-in, first-out (FIFO) to existing inventories, based in part on BIUB dates. In certain limited circumstances, when USDA Foods cannot be distributed as intended in the program they were provided to, such foods, with FNS National Office approval, can be distributed as non-USDA products at local food banks, food pantries, and/or soup kitchens (with the agreement of such entity).

ACTION ITEM: FNS will consider further options/outlets.

- b. Wish list recap** –FNS reviewed the remaining food items on the wish list: wild rice, blue cornmeal, Tanka bars, and frozen fruits and vegetables. Wild rice, blue corn meal, and Tanka bars are traditional foods that can be considered in future option years for the regional vendor pilot. The option for future pork chop orders will depend on available funding in FY 2014 and the results of the pork chop pilot survey. Frozen fruits and vegetables, and other items of interest such as frozen whole grain waffles and whole grain pancakes will be considered once feedback from the NAFDPIR Board survey on freezer space is completed. **ACTION ITEMS:** (A) FNS will provide a chart with a timeline and status updates for each item on the wishlist as well as other items for which the group has expressed interest. (B) FSA will provide: (1) a price comparison of regular and quick cooking white rice, (2) cost and availability of domestic canola oil, and (3) price information and vendor interest in providing unsalted mini crackers and unsalted crackers on a 6 month alternating schedule.
- c. Request to reinstate Warehouse calls** – Due to recent inventory challenges, the workgroup asked to have monthly warehouse calls with FNS and Regional staff. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will set-up a monthly call schedule starting in January for an initial 3-month period.

IV. Food Package Planning for FY 2014 -

The draft work plan document was updated to reflect the Workgroup's priorities and will be finalized and distributed at the next work group meeting.

V. Complaints Update

- a. FNS received thirty (30) complaints filed in WBSCM in FY13. Currently six complaints are open for resolution: apple juice (3), cranapple juice (1), pinto beans (1), and pasta (1).
- FNS is working with AMS to have the vendor replace apple juice products.
 - The pinto beans have pieces of corn kernels in the bags and the ITOs are unable to enter a complaint until the Bill of Lading (BOL) is uploaded. FNS has made AMS aware of the complaint(s) and will file a complaint in WBSCM as soon as possible.
 - The pasta complaint is for bags tearing/not properly sealed. Spaghetti in boxes will be purchased in spring 2014. FDPIR sites will begin receiving the boxed spaghetti when the current supply is depleted.
 - All complaints should be entered in WBSCM; however, if the BOL is outstanding and a complaint cannot be entered in WBSCM, programs can contact Andre Orange and the Regional Office directly. FNS will forward preliminary info to AMS/FSA. This will allow FNS/AMS/FNS to begin researching the complaint and allow the respective

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agencies to follow-up in a timely manner. FNS will notify ITOs of receipt of the complaint.

VI. DoD Update

- a. Communications** – DoD provided an overview of the DoD Fresh program and how it works across Regions. Customer surveys and Regional contact information were distributed to workgroup members to encourage communication with vendors and DoD staff. Customer service suggestions included:
- Within Regions, programs are receiving different produce items from different vendors. They would like to receive a consistent supply of items long-term.
 - Vendors are not notifying programs of unavailable items. Partial deliveries are being made and programs don't have enough produce to meet the participant demand. It would help if vendors said which items were unavailable so programs could order something else.
 - It would be helpful to revisit the produce items and package sizes in the catalog. Items in pre-packaged sizes for households are more convenient. Regional DoD staff can provide information on the cost to pre-package items to see if it is cost effective.
 - **ACTION ITEMS:** FNS will: (1) follow-up with DoD to ensure programs are receiving the DoD Fresh customer service surveys and report on survey results, (2) work with DoD to help reduce variation in bulk and bagged items, and (3) coordinate with DoD to provide updates on available produce items.
- b. Fresh shell eggs** – DoD will provide a list of modified contracts that will allow delivery of shell eggs to programs. Currently only one contract area (upstate New York, serving Seneca) includes this option. As more contracts come up for renewal, DoD will include fresh eggs as an option. Programs have expressed concern with breakage and delivery issues with tailgating. The NAFDPIR survey will also help to determine if refrigerator space is an issue. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will provide a nutrition and cost comparison of fresh eggs and egg mix (2 pkgs of egg mix = 20 eggs) and information on estimated percentage of breakage.

VII. ITO Marketing Project – Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Flathead Sioux Tribes and Chickasaw Nation have partnered with Tocabe Restaurant owners, Ben Jacobs and Matt Chandra, to develop recipes, nutrition education activities, and documentary footage within their respective communities. The plan is to create DVDs that address family meal time and nutritious and creative ways to prepare foods received through FDPIR. The Tocabe owners visited Chickasaw Nation in November 2013 and will be visiting the Flathead Tribe in Montana in February 2014.

VIII. Regional Vendor Pilot – FNS awarded the initial contract in March 2013 to Nash- Finch to serve the Chickasaw Nation, and the Ponca, Sac and Fox, and Pawnee Tribes in Oklahoma. The vendor initially faced significant challenges providing 100% domestic products, meeting requested delivery timelines, products arriving with dirty packaging, and inconsistent loading and unloading of trucks. With the help of FDPIR program staff, the vendor was able to correct these issues. Nash-Finch is now using some of the same vendors AMS uses to supply food. The contract allows for four (4) option years. FNS will evaluate the progress of the existing contract and whether funding is available to exercise the first option. If exercised, the first option year would begin in March 2014 and could expand to the following additional sites: Grand Portage Reservation and White Earth Band of Chippewa (MN); Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe (ND); Santee Sioux Nation (NE); Acoma Pueblo (NM); and

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Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. (OK). FNS will give advance notice to these programs if the decision is made to go forward with option years.

IX. Policy and Funding Update –

- a. **FDPIR Study** – study questions have been developed and programs participating in the study can anticipate calls from the contractor to visit their sites, if not already received. Workgroup members expressed concerns about the intent to look at participation declines. FNS emphasized that the study will look at participation trends, including recent increases, not just declines. FNS further underscored the importance of this study to the program, its program operators, and participants, as there is no current data; last study was done over two decades ago whereas other FNS nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP have been studied more recently. FNS needs the data to build upon the multiple program improvements made over the years, due largely to the help of program directors. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS is working with researchers to ensure the study will look at participation trends, including recent increases.
- b. **Recertification** – Workgroup members would like to see lengthier certification periods allowed for families with zero income. Families with zero income are being recertified at least every 2 months for FDPIR per FNS Handbook 501 requirements. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will research to determine if the regulations allow flexibility.

X. Communication Project – Workgroup members reviewed drafts of the FDPIR brochure, poster, and banners and provided comments for future edits. Workgroup comments are attached.**XI. Nutrition Education Update -**

- a. **Nutrition education materials:** All ITOs received nutrition education materials, purchased by FNS in November 2013. Regional Office Staff assisted with this initiative by providing HQ with feedback on nutrition education needs and physical addresses of ITOs. Items are from the Learning Zone Xpress (<http://www.learningzonexpress.com/search.aspx?keywords=nutrition>) and provided education to participants using ‘easy’ methods (just display them) and more intensive methods (use them as the basis of nutrition or food demo sessions). Most of the resources include further guidance on using the materials. FNS Regional Office staff forwarded Tip Sheets on using the materials to ITOs in their regions. Workgroup members acknowledged receipt of the items and expressed satisfaction with the materials.

The materials provided include:

- (1) How Much Fat? –Three sets of 10 ‘test tubes’ with the amount of fats in foods
- (2) Two DVDs: “What’s on My Plate” and “My Plate – Understanding the USDA Dietary Guidelines
- (3) A poster entitled “Active MyPlate” that provides ChooseMyPlate.gov guidance on foods and physical activity.

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FDPNE FY 2014 Request for Applications (RFA): Like last year, the performance period for FY 2014 is expected to encompass a full year. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. FNS is working to release the RFA by spring 2014. Workgroup members expressed concern about whether ITOs would have sufficient time between the release of the RFA and the due date for proposals to complete applications and get necessary approvals. Meeting participants asked for details that would help them start on application content prior to the release of the RFA. Pending OMB approval, HQ anticipates that the 2014 RFA will contain the same goals as FY 2013, the application content template is basically the same, and that failing to submit an SF 424, SF-424 A, SF-424B and Lobbying Certification forms with an application will result in elimination from the competition. FNS emphasized that nothing is definite until OBM clearance is obtained. **ACTION ITEM:** FNS will send a reminder e-mail encouraging potential applicants to review the FY 2013 RFA and list of funded projects to start planning.

Workgroup members also suggested sharing successful applications with potential applicants. Due to confidentiality, HQ cannot share applications with others; however, project summaries are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/fdpir-nutrition-education-grant-awards>. FNS encourages ITOs to contact current grantees for copies of their applications. One workgroup member suggested ITOs develop a mentoring initiative that would help applicants write an application.

Workgroup members asked if FDPNE funding can be disbursed through Regional Offices vs. the requirement to apply for funds by submitting competitive applications. FNS has considered this funding method; however, the Regions are not prepared to administer additional funding at this time.

FNS offered conference calls with ITOs to discuss why their applications were not funded in 2013. FNS urged potential applicants to read the RFA carefully to ensure that applications meet all requirements, especially the required forms. FNS will conduct technical assistance webinars and will offer further assistance, through the Regions, to all ITOs.

XII. Other Business –

- a. Product review/sampling:** Workgroup members sampled two products, reduced sodium ham and reduced sodium cheese. The ham product is a 3 lb. chub and is offered to school programs. The cheese product is a 2 lb. unsliced block and is offered to the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Based on work group feedback, FNS will not pursue these items in 2014.
- b. February 2014 workgroup call:** The next Workgroup call will be February 13, 2014.

XIII. Meeting Adjourned