USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

3101 Park Center Drive

Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

January 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Update on Low-Sodium Canned Vegetables in Household Programs: Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
MARO, MPRO, MWRO,
NERO, SERO, and SWRO

Regional Director
Office of Field Operations
WRO

Indian Tribal Organization (ITO)
and State Agency Directors
All CSFP, FDPIR, and TEFAP
ITOs and State Agencies

For the past two years, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) have been working with the vegetable canning industry to purchase low-sodium canned vegetables with a sodium range of 36-140 milligrams (mg) of sodium per serving, with a serving defined as ½ cup. These are special, non-commercially packaged products which are not readily available throughout the year. Rather, these low-sodium products are only packed once a year at the time of harvest. Despite sufficient preparation and announcements to the canning industry, there have been transitional challenges for certain low-sodium products.

AMS did not receive bids for all of the low-sodium vegetables for delivery beginning in January. On January 12, 2010, FNS announced that some low-sodium canned vegetables would be available for April through June delivery, including the kernel corn, cream corn, canned dry beans, tomatoes, diced tomatoes, tomato soup, spaghetti sauce, and tomato sauce. The above options will help ITOs and States to meet food package requirements for CSFP and FDPIR, and permit TEFAP States to expend entitlement dollars.

Some canned vegetable products will be subject to limited availability during this transition. These products include green beans, vegetable soup, and peas. While some multi-food warehouse inventories remain for these products for CSFP and FDPIR, these inventories may be depleted quickly. FNS does not plan to replenish these inventories with the traditional "regular" sodium products.

Purchasing regular sodium vegetables rather than low-sodium products would run contrary to FNS' commitment to implement low-sodium canned vegetables across the board, positively affecting participants' nutrition and overall health. That commitment is based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that Americans should consume less than 2,300

mg of sodium (about one teaspoon of salt) per day. Offering foods that are higher in sodium would contradict these guidelines.

To access the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and read about the health risks associated with increased sodium intake, please visit http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/. We also encourage all ITOs and State agencies to download and share our fact sheet entitled "Season Your Foods Without Salt," at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/facts/nutrition/SodiumFactSheet.pdf.

AMS has reviewed their procurement practices and made changes to ensure that all low-sodium canned vegetables are purchased for the upcoming 2010 pack year to meet program needs for deliveries through 2011. We fully expect to meet the upcoming year's needs.

We regret any inconvenience this has caused in the interim, and appreciate your patience and flexibility as we work to ensure a long-term, positive nutritional impact on program participants.

Cathie McCullough
Director
Food Distribution Division