



School Programs USDA Foods Update

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What's New in USDA's Food Distribution Program for Schools?

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HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

We are quickly approaching the end of another school year. We continue to make changes and improvements in the USDA Food Programs that we will pass on to you through this newsletter. Let us know if there are any USDA Foods related issues that you want us to address in future issues. If you have any comments, please e-mail us at: fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov.

COMMODITY FORECAST

Each year, USDA reviews the nutritional profile for foods offered to schools and other outlets to determine which specifications could be improved to help meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans' (DGA) recommendations.

COMING SOON!

Oven Roasted Chicken



In December 2009, State Distributing Agencies (SDAs) were notified about our plans to offer schools a healthier alternative product to replace the batter breaded chicken (A526). Well, the wait is almost over. We have found an excellent replacement product which is oven roasted chicken.

This fully cooked chicken product has half the fat of the batter breaded product. Oven roasted chicken is versatile, and it can be prepared in numerous ways to be acceptable to children. In fact, oven roasted chicken is extremely tasty and crispy. Also, this product is more in line with the recommendations found in the DGA and most recently the report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Presently, the specification for the oven roasted chicken is being finalized. Our goal is to develop a product that students will like

For more information go to: <http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov>

which offers lower amounts of fat and sodium in the diet. The target date for delivery is late in School Year (SY) 2011. In the meantime, States and/or School Districts may wish to consider ordering the small bulk birds (A521) for reprocessing into a bone-in cooked product. We hope the oven roasted chicken will help schools to improve the nutrition profile of their menus, while providing a food that will be well liked and highly accepted by schoolchildren.

The oven roasted chicken will be available for sampling from poultry suppliers at this year's School Nutrition Association 2010 Annual Nutrition Conference (SNA ANC) in Dallas, Texas in July. Stay tuned! You will have the opportunity to see first-hand just how appealing and appetizing this product is for your students. Please let us know if you have comments about this Program improvement.



Dry Split Peas, Lentils, and Chickpeas Available in School Year 2011

Did you know that dry split peas, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), and lentils are offered to schools for SY 2011? They are available in 25 pound bags. Dry split peas, lentils, and chickpeas are members of the pea family of legumes. These three food items are rich in fiber and provide protein, iron, potassium, and folate. They are low in calories, sodium, and fat, and have no cholesterol. Dry split peas, lentils, and chickpeas can be added to soups and stews, served as a side dish, mixed with pasta, pureed as a low-fat thickener or dip, sprinkled on salads, and added to salad bars. Split peas and lentil peas do not require soaking and will cook in about

20 minutes. Chickpeas need to be soaked and then cooked for 1 ½ to 2 hours. For more information about dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas, visit USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council at www.pea-lentil.com.

Alaskan Pollock



Earlier this school year, we offered Alaskan Pollock

blocks (A747) for further processing to schools as a test buy. The Alaskan Pollock is made from Grade-A, once-frozen, boneless, skinless fish fillets that do not contain sodium phosphates.

The Alaskan Pollock blocks are appropriate for further processing into a variety of finished end products including stick, nuggets, and patties. There are currently six further processors with approved end products who accept and process commodity Alaskan Pollock blocks. A list of approved processors for SY 2010/2011 can be found on the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Web site at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/processing/national/SY2011/NPA_ApprovedProcessors_SY11.pdf.

VALUE OF DONATED FOODS

For SY 2009/2010, (July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010), the published rate establishing the value of donated foods or cash-in-lieu of donated foods USDA gives schools and institutions is 19.50 cents. The per-meal rate applies to each lunch served by schools participating in the NSLP.

In addition, Section 6(e) of the National School Lunch Act requires that at least 12 percent of the total assistance provided through the NSLP be in the form of commodities. When purchases fall short of the minimum 12 percent requirement, USDA

is required to purchase additional foods beyond those available through entitlement and bonus. For SY 2010, USDA Foods assistance is projected to fall short of the required 12 percent level by approximately \$150 million.

The shortfall is a result of falling beef, poultry, and cheese prices last year. As a result, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Producer Price index, used to calculate the per meal rate for USDA Foods, is lower for SY 2010 than it was in SY 2009.

Since school money is two-year money, FNS has increased SY 2011 entitlements for States by about 2.5 cents per meal to make up the shortfall. This will yield an effective entitlement rate of 22 cents per meal. This rate will be adjusted in July 2010 when the Federal Register Notice announces the annual per-meal rate for USDA Foods for SY 2011. Please monitor your entitlement dollars and order accordingly, and work with your SDA to make sure you receive all of your planned assistance level.



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) FRESH PROGRAM

The DoD Fresh Program is a cooperative effort between USDA and DoD to supply more than 60 types of fresh fruits and vegetables to schools, paid for with entitlement funds.

Over the past several months, produce contracts were awarded in South Carolina, Washington, Wyoming, and Nebraska, and school food service personnel have been instructed on how to place their orders in the FFAVORS Web system. Remember to contact the local DoD field representative with any questions or concerns regarding deliveries, quality, or overall service.

Contracts are pending for the remaining areas currently using the TAP-IT System. DoD will notify the schools as soon as awards are final.

Some contracts are nearing their expiration, and surveys have been emailed to schools. We encourage schools to fill out a survey to report on the performance of your vendor who provided you fresh produce through the DoD Fresh Program. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact your local DoD field representative.

SAVE THE DATES



We hope to see you at the Big D-Dallas, Texas that is!



SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

Annual National Conference (ANC), July 11-14, 2010

USDA is pleased to be able to conduct 16 educational sessions at the SNA Conference this summer. Topics include:

- USDA Foods 101
- USDA Foods MyPyramid Game
- USDA Foods Processing 101
- Manage USDA Foods Inventory to Reduce Costs
- Make PAL Your Friend
- Value Pass Throughs
- USDA Responding to Food Recalls
- USDA Food Safety Education Resources
- Blueprint for Handling Food Allergies
- Best Practices for Cool Food in Schools
- USDA Update
- Go for the Gold! Be a HealthierUS School!
- Nutrition Recommendations and the School Meal Programs (IOM and 2010 DGA)
- Farm to School
- Improving Direct Certification
- Making Nutrition Education More Effective
- Procurement
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Make “**USDA Lane**”, in aisle 1600, a “must” stop on your journey through the exhibit hall in Dallas. You will find a wealth of resources about what USDA is doing for you and have some fun doing it!

Make sure to also attend our USDA Culinary Demonstration on Monday, July 12, 11:15 a.m. to noon. Dallas Independent School District will be featured, cooking with USDA Foods.

For conference registration information, visit SNA’s Web site at <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/>.



**USDA FOODS
COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVE**

USDA has worked incessantly to make improvements in its foods over the last two decades. Despite those efforts, many are still unaware of the changes and incorrectly believe that USDA Foods are inferior and unhealthy. FNS launched an initiative to improve the image of and increase the use of USDA Foods, especially in the school meals program.

To intensify and expand upon these efforts, FNS contracted with a public relations firm to help reposition/rebrand the USDA Foods Program and promote public awareness of the contributions these foods provide, conduct focus testing to explore the public’s reaction to existing materials and messages, and develop a two-year communications plan to reach our target audiences.

USDA will continue to offer healthful foods and remains committed to providing high-quality, safe, nutritious products manufactured to standards that are equal to, or better than, their commercial counterparts. The NSLP will serve as the platform from which to begin communicating these messages about USDA Foods.

USDA values its partnership with school nutrition professionals. We encourage schools to share with others the improvements that have been made to USDA Foods, and how they contribute to school meal programs. This will help dispel myths and negative perceptions about USDA Foods.

We will be developing some new Program materials and resources as a result of the research-based findings learned from the focus groups. We encourage you to visit our Web site for Initiative updates and to download new resources as they become available at <http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/>.



**WEB BASED SUPPLY
CHAIN MANAGEMENT
UPDATE**

FNS, along with Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) continue to work on the new computer system, Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM). This system will replace the approximately 13 systems including (FNS’ Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS)) used to support domestic and international food assistance programs.

ECOS is currently used by SDAs and some schools to place orders for USDA Foods, to manage entitlement spending, to submit complaints, and to receive product information for recalls.

WBSCM will be used for all supply chain management activities from the creation of orders from our recipients (both domestic and international) to processing bids, tracking funding, order status, commodity distribution, and product receipts.

WBSCM will go live later this year. States have been asked to submit orders earlier than usual in the existing system (ECOS), to ensure timely processing of SY 2011 orders.

Demonstrations of WBSCM will be taking place at numerous conferences this year including SNA ANC in July.

View WBSCM updates on our Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/WBSCM/default/htm>.



USDA FOODS REGULATIONS AND POLICY UPDATE

FNS' final rule, *Revisions and Clarifications in Requirements for the Processing of Donated Foods*, remains in the clearance process. We expect to publish it in the Federal Register in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010.

We completed a revision of policy memorandum FD-080, which responds, in a Q & A format, to questions arising from the August 2008 publication of the final rule, *Management of Donated Foods in Child Nutrition Programs, the Nutrition Services Incentive Program, and Charitable Institutions*.

The final rule amended 7 CFR Part 250 requirements to ensure that School Food Authorities (SFAs) receive the benefit and value of donated foods in contracts with food service management companies. The Q & As respond to questions on crediting SFAs for the value of donated foods and required use of donated foods in such contracts.

A copy of policy memorandum FD-080 may be found on the FNS Web site at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/policymemo/pmfd080rev_NSLP-SFSP-CACFP_DonatedFoodswithFSMCs.pdf.

We also completed revisions to policy memorandum FD-067 which includes guidance for

small SFAs, such as charter schools, on the best use of donated foods. Since charter schools and other small SFAs often lack storage or kitchen facilities, they may benefit from the efficiencies in performing donated food activities collectively, or in an agreement with a larger SFA. Such activities may include the receipt and storage of donated foods, and the use of donated foods in the preparation of meals. A copy of policy memorandum FD-067 may be found on the FNS Web site at

http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/policymemo/pmfd067_NSLP-CollectiveUnitrev.pdf.

AMS GROUND BEEF PURCHASING PROGRAM CHANGES

USDA's AMS announced it will make a number of improvements to the food safety requirements of its ground beef purchase program. These changes are based on recommendations from the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) and the ARS.

AMS will implement the five changes below for purchases in the upcoming 2010-2011 SY:

- AMS will now begin to formally take into account the food safety record of vendors' commercial sales.
- AMS will tighten its microbiological testing protocols.
- AMS will tighten its microbiological criteria for USDA purchased ground beef.
- AMS will increase its microbiological sampling frequency to every 15 minutes of production.
- AMS will institute additional requirements for source product used to manufacture USDA purchased ground beef.

Additional information about these changes can be found at

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/CPFoodSafety>.

Together these five Program changes, as well as continuous reviews, will ensure that the vendors supplying USDA ground beef are not only outstanding firms, but that the product AMS is purchasing is as safe and high quality as any commercially available.

FOOD SAFETY RESOURCES

Holdings and Recalls

The USDA Foods hold and recall process is used when a food safety issue is raised about a USDA purchased food. The process pertains exclusively to USDA purchased foods delivered to approved entities (recipient agencies and processors). If you suspect that a USDA food may be contaminated or harmful in some way, please contact your SDA immediately.

The best way for anyone to get email notifications of **all food recalls** is by signing up for **free** email updates from www.recalls.gov. This is a one-stop shop for U.S. Government recalls. We encourage everyone who needs recall information to sign up today!

Follow these few easy steps, and you will receive an instant confirmation of your subscription from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS):

1. Log on to www.recalls.gov.
2. Click on the Food tab at the top.
3. Click on "Sign Up for Free Recall Updates by E-Mail" (in red toward top of page)
4. This takes you to the DHHS signup page, where you will:
 - Enter your email address and confirm same; and
 - Check the box titled FoodSafety.gov Recalls and Alerts under the FoodSafety.gov Updates section.

Please add these instructions to your Web site. Food recalls are important to everyone!

Foodborne Illness

The primary cause of foodborne illness in schools is norovirus. People with norovirus usually feel ill very suddenly and can experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. Because it can easily be transmitted person-to-person as well as through food, norovirus can spread extremely rapidly. Cleaning properly after someone vomits, especially in the cafeteria or kitchen, is an important way to stop the spread of norovirus, as well as other stomach illnesses.

To educate school employees about stomach illnesses at schools, FNS Food Safety Staff together with the National Education Association Health Information Network (NEA HIN) developed a new booklet, *The Stomach Bug Book: What School Employees Need to Know*.

The Stomach Bug Book addresses appropriate cleaning methods to prevent or minimize an outbreak of norovirus and other stomach illnesses.



The Stomach Bug Book can be downloaded at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/safety/pdf/stomach_bug_book.pdf, and hard copies can be ordered from NEA HIN at <http://www.neahin.org/HINPrograms/order.html>.

DID YOU KNOW?

...USDA Foods are available to any school that participates in the National School Lunch Program. School Districts and States can select from a wide variety of foods that match their needs. In 1981, USDA offered schools 54 different foods. Today, over 180 are offered. In addition, USDA now offers more frozen, fresh, and refrigerated products,

more package sizes, and more varieties of specific foods.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK!

Please let us know if you have any USDA Foods related issues that you would like addressed in future editions of the School Programs USDA Foods Update. If you have any questions or comments on our products or services, please email them directly to our Program Support Branch at fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov.

You can also write to the Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 508, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

ACRONYM LIST

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DoD	Department of Defense
DGA	Dietary Guidelines for Americans
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ECOS	Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FFAVORS	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipting System
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
FSIS	Food Safety Inspection Service
FY	Fiscal Year
IFT	Institute of Food Technologists
IOM	Institute of Medicine
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
NEA HIN	National Education Association Health Information Network
SDA	State Distributing Agency
SY	School Year
SFA	School Food Authority
SNA ANC	School Nutrition Association Annual National Conference
PCIMS	Processed Commodities Inventory Management System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WBSCM	Web Based Supply Chain Management

Prepared by: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Food Distribution Division and the Food Safety Unit.