



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

April 2008

## USDA Commodity Foods

### The Healthy Option

*The mission of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people with access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.*

*USDA's 15 nutrition assistance programs are the first line of our Nation's defense against hunger. They include the Food Stamp Program (FSP), the school meals programs, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).*

USDA commodity foods are better than ever. We continually assess the foods we offer for their quality and appeal. Over the years they have kept pace with nutrition, science, and technological advancements and have changed to conform to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid – USDA's food guidance system ([www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)).

Each year, USDA provides about 1.9 billion pounds of nutritious commodity foods to State distributing agencies through our nutrition assistance programs. Although the bulk goes to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, USDA commodity foods play an important role in feeding America's people of all ages — from infants to the elderly — while supporting the American farmer.

- Over the past two decades, USDA has reduced the levels of fat, sodium (salt), and sugar in commodities while keeping them tasty and acceptable to children.
- USDA promotes fruits and vegetables as an important part of a nutritious diet. In FY 2007, USDA purchased \$378 million worth of fruits and vegetables for its programs.
- For more than a decade, USDA has successfully partnered with the Department of Defense to supply more than 60 types of high quality fresh fruits and vegetables to participating schools. These purchases increased from \$4 million in FY 1993 to \$50 million per year since FY 2003.
- For the last decade, all canned fruits are packaged in light syrup, water, or natural juice. Unsweetened apple sauce is an option for schools in 2008.





## In Schools

- **USDA commodities make up about 15-20% of the value of food used in school meals provided by the National School Lunch Program. The rest is bought in the commercial market.**
- **Schools choose what commodities they order. More than 180 types of commodities are offered to schools participating in the National School Lunch Program, including fruits, vegetables, meats/fish/poultry, rice, cheese, beans, pasta, flour, and other grain products.**
- **Schools are free to have their USDA commodities further processed into foods their students will like. In fact, about half the commodities provided by USDA are processed into a ready-to-use end product. But again, it's the local schools that decide.**

- Butter has not been offered to schools since 1997 and, effective SY 2008, shortening was eliminated as an offering.
- In 2008 trans fats were eliminated from our frozen potato products.
- Since 1992, beef patties with a fat level as low as 10% have been offered. Other lower-fat meat offerings include 97% fat-free ham, 95% fat-free turkey ham, turkey taco filling, and diced chicken.
- Meatless spaghetti sauce, several varieties of low- and reduced-fat cheeses, plus other lower-fat items are available.
- In 2008, whole-grain spaghetti and rotini were added as new products to be followed by whole-grain macaroni and parboiled brown rice. USDA offers an array of whole grains such as wheat flour, whole-grain corn, rolled oats, and regular brown rice.
- Most USDA canned vegetables meet the Food and Drug Administration's "healthy" standard for sodium, which is less than or equal to 480 mg per serving. For SY 2009, while USDA is working to purchase canned vegetables that are lower in sodium, schools continue to have the option to order salt-free frozen vegetables.

## From USDA to Your School National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

What's for lunch? For more than 30 million school children each school day, the answer is a meal that contains nutritious USDA commodities. Our commodities provide about 15-20% of the value of food used in the nutritionally balanced meals served each day in more than 101,000 schools and residential child-care institutions participating in the National School Lunch Program ([www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/)). The remaining 80 - 85% of the food is bought by schools in the commercial market, using cash assistance provided by USDA, and money from other sources. But, wherever the food is obtained, National School Lunch Program meals must meet Federal dietary guidelines as assessed over a 1-week period.

## Other USDA Commodity Programs

### Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

Hunger doesn't take a summer vacation. And so USDA's Summer Food Service Program ([www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/summer/)) provides nutritious commodities for use in meals served to children during their summer vacation from school (and long vacation periods for schools on year-round schedules) in needy areas.

### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP ([www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/)) provides nutritious commodities for meals and snacks served to children and adults in day care facilities, such as child care centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. The program also provides meals to children in emergency shelters and snacks to youth in after-school programs.

### Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

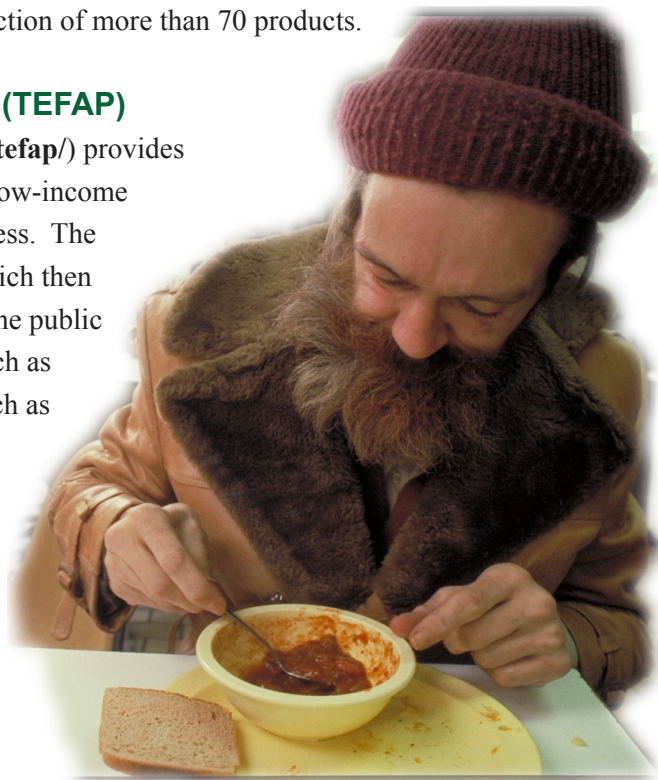
CSFP ([www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/csfp/)) works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women and other new mothers up to 1 year post partum, infants, children (up to age 6) and older people at least 60 years of age, by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodities.

### Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

FDPIR ([www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/)) provides monthly food packages to low-income people residing on Indian reservations or to low-income Native Americans living in designated areas near Indian reservations. The program serves as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program for those living in remote areas of reservations and offers participants a selection of more than 70 products.

### The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP ([www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/tefap/)) provides emergency food and nutrition assistance to low-income Americans, including the elderly and homeless. The program supplies commodities to States, which then distribute them to local agencies that serve the public directly through household distributions (such as food banks), or congregate feeding sites (such as homeless shelters and soup kitchens).



# For More Information

Quick Facts on FNS Programs	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/factsheets/programfactsheets.htm">www.fns.usda.gov/cga/factsheets/programfactsheets.htm</a>
Commodity Food Network	<a href="http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/">www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/</a>
Commodities in Schools	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/">www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/</a>
USDA Food Distribution Programs	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/">www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/</a>
Food Processing & USDA Commodities	<a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/processing/national/">www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/processing/national/</a>
MyPyramid.gov	<a href="http://www.mypyramid.gov/">www.mypyramid.gov/</a>
MyPyramid for Kids	<a href="http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/">www.mypyramid.gov/kids/</a>
Healthy School Meals	<a href="http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/">healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/</a>



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