

# School Programs Commodity Update

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

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### WE TESTED NEW PRODUCTS

We recently offered some new items at the end of the school year. Test purchases included frozen chicken crumbles and chicken burger-style patties. We also introduced a 7-piece batter/breaded chicken, which replaced the previous 8-piece batter/breaded chicken, after listening to your concerns about this product. By removing the wings and cutting the breasts into 3 pieces, the new product makes the number of servings in each finished case more uniform, and improves the nutritional quality of a serving. Finally, we offered two new frozen pork items: cubed and thin-sliced ham. These two new pork products were developed based on comments we received from you on other acceptability surveys last year.

Recently, we sent out acceptability surveys on all of these items. If you received these new products, please let us know your opinions, as this will help us to determine how well these products are meeting your needs.

### LOOKING TOWARDS SCHOOL YEAR 2007/2008

**Pineapple:** Due to weather related problems in Hawaii, pineapple products are in low supply. We expect this to continue throughout School Year 2008.

**Blackberry Puree:** We are currently surveying schools for another new fruit product, blackberry puree, which schools can redirect for further processing in the upcoming



### ANOTHER SCHOOL YEAR IS ALMOST OVER

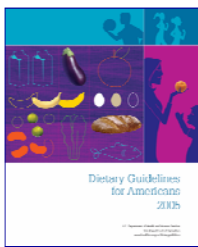
This is the last *School Programs Commodity*

*Update* for this school year. We continue to make changes and improvements in the commodity programs that we will pass on to you through this newsletter. Let us know if there are any commodity-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](mailto:fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov). Have a good summer.

school year. Contact our staff that handles processing for further information on potential end product uses for this new item.

**Turkey Products:** For the first time ever, USDA is attempting to secure long term contracts for several turkey products. This should make more turkey available at a stabilized price. The long term contract will be supplemented this summer with bi-weekly solicitations for turkey taco filling and bulk turkey that will be reprocessed. We are reviewing the possibility of offering bulk ground turkey in School Year 2008. //

**MAKING HEALTHY COMMODITY IMPROVEMENTS**



We are working to improve our commodities so they support the guiding principles in the *Dietary Guidelines* and MyPyramid.gov:

**Increasing Whole Grains:**

We plan to offer more whole grain products in the commodity programs. We already offer whole wheat flour, rolled oats, and regular brown rice, and we are planning to offer a quick-cook brown rice as a test buy for schools for the upcoming school year. This rice cooks in just under 20 minutes, and it will help with the limited time school foodservice professionals have to prepare meals. We also plan to offer whole grain spaghetti, rotini, and macaroni as test purchases.

**Lowering Fat:**

- We are working to eliminate **trans fats** from our frozen potato products. We are reviewing *trans* fats levels in all of our commodities. *Trans* fats information is also being added to all commodity labels.

- We revised the specification for **canned boned chicken** to exclude the skin. We increased the total meat proportion which considerably reduces fat content. This will make the product more appealing to school kids.
- For those of you who process USDA commodities under the standard yield system, your poultry processor can now substitute white meat for skin in a 1 to 10 ratio. This allows processors to formulate new products with less fat. Contact your processor or their representative for more information about these reduced-fat poultry end product options.

**Lowering Sugar:**

We recently removed the added sugar from applesauce. It is now only offered unsweetened.

All of our canned fruits **continue** to be packed in juice and/or water, or light syrup. This has been the case for over 15 years.



**Lowering sodium:**

Most of our canned vegetables meet the Food and Drug Administration’s “healthy” standard for sodium, which is less than or equal to 480 mg per serving. We are looking to lower the sodium content in our canned vegetables even more in the upcoming school year. //

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Once a school or SDA diverts a USDA commodity for reprocessing, it is no longer considered a USDA commodity. It becomes a “processed end product.” Establishing the nutrient standards for that processed end product, and sharing them with the processor, becomes the sole privilege of the school or SDA who orders the end product.

## NEW AND UPDATED COMMODITY FACT SHEETS FOR SCHOOLS ARE ALMOST HERE



We are completing the huge task of reviewing, revising, updating, and reformatting all of USDA's Commodity Food Fact Sheets for Schools. They have not been revised in over a decade.

In addition to updated information about product pack sizes, yields, storage, preparation, and nutritional values, what is new about them?

- They have a new user-friendly look and format.
- Each fact sheet represents one food, one commodity code.
- Each fact sheet contains the MyPyramid graphic with the food group for that commodity highlighted on the Pyramid.
- They are consistent with USDA guidance on planning NSLP meals.
- Nutrient values have been added for dietary fiber, *trans* fat, sugars, magnesium, potassium, vitamin A in RAE units of measure, and vitamin E.
- A food safety information section has been added.

The fact sheets should be available to you on our website by late spring as a tool for planning menus and ordering commodities. To access them, go to:

[www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/facts.htm](http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov/facts.htm) and click on the *FD Fact Sheets* link, which is the third bullet listed under the heading entitled "*Food and Program Facts.*" //



## SY 2007 - 2008 ESTIMATED VALUE OF DONATED FOODS UP AGAIN

For the 2007/2008 school year (July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008), USDA is estimating a significant increase in value of donated foods available to schools.

When USDA calculates a State's commodity "entitlement," an estimated per-meal rate is applied to each lunch served by schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. Additional commodity "entitlement" for the 2007/2008 school year will be available to meet the National School Lunch Act requirement that the commodity support level for schools must be greater than or equal to 12% of **ALL** Federal assistance provided through the National School Lunch Program. This translates into about **\$123** million more in commodity dollars in the upcoming school year.

While the per-meal rate for July 2007 through June 2008 is estimated to be **17.50** cents, the estimated adjustment to meet the 12% commodity support level will equal about 2.448 cents more per meal. This translates into approximately 20 cents per meal served. So, please monitor your entitlement dollars in ECOS and order accordingly, or work with your State Distributing Agency to make sure you receive all of your planned assistance level. //

### **HOLDS AND RECALLS: The Importance of Tracking Food**

Holds and recalls on food serve a valuable purpose. They remove products from commerce that have quality problems or that may cause harm. This past year, the Food and Nutrition Service conducted a few recalls of products purchased for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) for quality reasons rather than for major food safety concerns. We've learned a lot from these recalls.

The most important lesson learned is that it is critical to be able to track food within your own facility so that a suspect food can quickly be located. Think of traceability as a chain. Each piece of information must be intact so we can link the product from its original source to you, the recipient. The most important pieces of information for identifying specific commodity products are the contract and delivery order numbers. These can be found on the boxes or case packaging, but are not usually found on the individual units within a case.

If the product is removed from the original case at the school district level or at individual schools, the identity of the product can be lost. To be better prepared for a hold or recall, we suggest that, when you remove products from their original packaging, you use some method or system for maintaining identifying numbers. This could be as simple as writing the contract and delivery order numbers on a blank label and sticking it on one of the product units.

Just imagine for a moment the worst case: that a product you received is recalled and it is suspected of being contaminated with a deadly substance. This product needs to be removed immediately from the food supply. Could you locate the product quickly and easily in your facility? Most recalls in the NSLP are not the result of imminent food safety dangers. But,

we should always be prepared for any emergency situation. At the very least, being able to track your products allows you to identify and locate them quickly and promotes timely, accurate replacement and/or reimbursement should a hold or recall occur.

### **COMMODITY WORKSHOPS AT THE UPCOMING SNA NATIONAL CONFERENCE**



If you are planning to attend the School Nutrition Association's Annual National Conference in Chicago this July 15-18, plan to check out the Commodity Track workshops again this year. They cover a variety of topics on commodities. We believe you will learn a lot.

The SNA Commodity Track will offer a choice of workshops:

- *Basic Concepts of Commodity Processing*
- *The Life Cycle of a Commodity Delivery Order – Explore 12 Steps in Commodity Ordering and Procurement*
- *How will New Commodity Program Regulations Affect your Operation?*
- *DoD Fresh Program – Changes and Updates*
- *Integrating Processed Commodities: Successful District Strategies*
- *ECOS – Managing Commodities on Line – Lose the Paper*
- *Sharpen Your Commodity Ordering Skills – Getting the Biggest Bang for your Commodity Buck*
- *Intricacies of Commodity Processing – The Devilish Details*
- *Hot Topics Affecting Commodity Processing*
- *Making Commodity Dollars Work for You*
- *Healthy Cuisine for Kids*

- *Recipient Agency Procurement Guidance – A Handbook for Processing Success*
- *Commodity Bidding: Updating, Evaluating, and Integrating*
- *On the Road to Professional Food Preparation–BLT, 2nd Edition*

For more information on these workshops, check out the School Nutrition Association 2007 Conference website at:

<http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/meetingsandevents/anc2007/program.asp> //

### NEW BUSINESS MODEL FOR THE DOD FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM



The Department of Defense (DoD) is changing the way it procures products for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. At the beginning of

School Year 2008, they are instituting long-term Prime Vendor contracts that will divide the country into 13 contract service regions.

Under this new business model, States and locals will use a new electronic ordering system, called the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipt System (FFAVORS), to place orders and receipt for them. Any school currently using TAP-IT will be transferred to the new system, which is just as easy to use.

Three highlights of FFAVORS are:

- It lists actual market prices versus estimated prices. Schools are billed at the price they see at the time they order.
- Federal and State balances are available at the time of order. Schools will not be able to place orders that exceed their available balance.
- After delivery, the school will go back into the FFAVORS Web system to enter a receipt of items received. The vendor's

invoice must match this receipt before a bill can be generated to the school (or USDA for federal funds).

FFAVORS will improve monitoring of orders at all levels. DoD hopes to implement long-term Prime Vendor contracts and the FFAVORS system beginning in School Year 2008. //

### COMMENTS

Please let us know if you have any commodity-related issues that you would like addressed in future editions of the School Programs Commodity Update. If you have any questions or comments on our products or services, please e-mail them directly to our Program Support Branch at: [fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov](mailto: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, VA 22302. //

### ACRONYM LIST

DoD	Department of Defense
ECOS	Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FFAVORS	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipt System
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
SDA	State Distributing Agency
SNA	School Nutrition Association
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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*Prepared by: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Food Distribution Division's Program Support Branch, in conjunction with the Operations Branch and the Food Safety Unit.*