

■ Food Distribution Programs

Commodity Complaint Filing Tips

This page provides tips to recipient agencies, State Distributing Agencies, and Indian Tribal Organizations on how to file commodity complaints to USDA for commodities distributed to participants in any of the [Food Distribution Programs](#).

Q1. How are Commodity Complaints accepted and processed by USDA?

Commodity Complaints should be directed to your State Distributing Agency (SDA). The SDA enters information about your complaint into the National ECOS Commodity Complaint System. The SDA will act on complaints from eligible program recipients participating in the following USDA Food Distribution Programs:

- [Child Nutrition Programs](#) Includes the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- [Nutrition Services Incentive Program \(NSIP\)](#)
- [Commodity Supplemental Food Program \(CSFP\)](#)
- [Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations \(FDPIR\)](#)
- [The Emergency Food Assistance Program \(TEFAP\)](#)

Q2. How do I contact my State Distributing Agency or Indian Tribal Organization about a complaint?

Link to [Contact Pages](#) on Website

Q3. How do I file a complaint about a USDA commodity product?

Commodity Complaints should be reported to your State Distributing Agency (SDA). The SDA will decide whether your complaint can be resolved at the state level, and if not, they will enter your complaint into the National ECOS Commodity Complaint System.

To assist your SDA in processing your complaint more quickly, provide the following information:

- Commodity Title and Code
 - Description of the problem
 - Date your agency received the commodity
 - **Quantity** of product involved
 - **Quantity and physical address of product remaining**
 - Contract number (may be stenciled on the outer carton)
 - Delivery Order Number
 - Notice to Deliver Number
- These numbers may be on the paperwork you received with the commodity shipment. If not, your SDA should be able to obtain them.

If you are **requesting** a replacement, you should **retain the unopened** product so that the vendor can exercise his right to examine or retrieve the product.

Q4. How do I file a complaint about a USDA product that has a commercial label?

Manufacturers that produce foods for USDA, which are distributed to schools and other outlets, have the option of using their own commercial label or they can use the traditional USDA labels. This means that you may receive USDA donated foods in a label that is the same as those which you have purchased commercially. For example, your USDA commodity green beans may come with a Del Monte label.

When a recipient has a complaint about a product that has a commercial label, you have the option of contacting the company directly to request a resolution to your complaint. This may be the easiest option for you, particularly if you have purchased other foods from the manufacturer and already have a relationship established with the company.

However, you may choose to notify your SDA about your complaint and provide the information requested in Question # 3 above.

Q5. What other tips do you have that might help resolve my commodity complaint more quickly?

When placing a call to your State Distributing Agency, it would be very helpful if you could provide the following information:

- The name of the product and the USDA Commodity Code if known, (e.g., canned Beef - A-502).
- The nature of the problem and whether anyone reported feeling sick or being injured from consuming the product.
- The extent of the problem (e.g., the number of cases, pounds, truckloads, etc.).
- The specific circumstances involved (for example- I received the damaged canned products two months ago but the case they were packed in was located in the middle of a pallet that could not be seen until it was opened by the school. Or the temperature in the delivery truck was 40 degrees when the discolored frozen products were delivered.)
- Street address of each location where the product is being stored.
- Delivery order number, date product received, contract number, notice to deliver number, lot number, and can codes (if applicable).
- In some instances, digital photographs of damaged product may be helpful.

Even if you do not have all of the information listed above, please call your SDA so that they can enter your complaint into the National ECOS Commodity Complaint System. Similar complaints to yours may have been submitted previously, which may help us resolve your complaint.

Q6. Can I call USDA directly with my commodity complaint? I've heard of a USDA Commodity Complaint Hotline.

Reporting your complaint to your State Distributing Agency is the recommended method for processing commodity complaints. The SDA enters your complaint into the National ECOS Commodity Complaint System. They can track the resolution of your complaint and also determine whether similar complaints have occurred throughout the country.

The Commodity Complaint Hotline is available. Our toll-free number is **1-800-446-6991**. Our core business hours are **8 A.M to 5 P.M. (Eastern Time)**

Indian Tribal Organizations (ITO) without access to ECOS must use the Commodity Complaint Hotline to register their commodity complaints with USDA.

Note: If you call the hotline during non-business hours, or if no one is available **when** you call during regular business hours, please leave your name, telephone number, and a brief message on our voice mail system. A commodity complaint specialist will promptly return your call.

If, however, a complaint is considered urgent or serious and you want to report it after 5 p.m. we suggest that you leave a voice mail message on our toll-free 1-800-446-6991 hotline number (or [Email us](#)) and then contact your [State Distributing Agency](#), [FNS Regional Office](#), and/or local health agency, as appropriate.

Note: For the hearing impaired, the hotline may be contacted by first dialing the local Teletype (TTY) Relay Service in your State. Then you should have the Relay Operator dial the 1-800-446-6991 number.

Q7. Can I file a commodity complaint electronically via Email?

Reporting your complaint to your State Distributing Agency is the recommended method for processing commodity complaints. The SDA enters your complaint into the National ECOS Commodity Complaint System. They can track the resolution of your complaint and also determine whether similar complaints have occurred throughout the country.

However; you can contact us via email at: commoditycomplaints@fns.usda.gov

If you wish, you may also contact us by regular mail at:

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service,
Food Distribution Division
3101 Park Center Drive,
Alexandria, VA 22302

Q8. Is there a list of commodity codes for all USDA Commodities that I can use when filing complaints?

Yes. This information is available via the ECOS Online Ordering System. For those who do not have access to this system, you can download copies of the PCIMS Commodity Price File Reports from the Food Distribution Website at: www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/pcims/commodityfiles.htm