

Minutes

On call: Ray Capoeman, Lorraine Davis, Charles "Red" Gates, Betty Jo Graveen, Mary Greene-Trottier, Roxanna Newsom, Pat Roberts, Melanie Todd, CDC-Susan Anderson, FNS-Rosalind Cleveland, Nancy Gaston, Nancy Theodore, Margie Livingston, Karen Kell, Sarah Kellogg, & Sheldon Gordon, FSA-Sharon Hadder, AMS-Cathie Smith.

- I. A brief summary from the June conference call was provided. Also, an update was given regarding FNS' commodity improvements initiative.
 - a. Low-fat bakery mix has been widely accepted across all FNS programs. In efforts to improve the nutritional profile of USDA's foods, regular bakery mix will be removed from the foods available list for all FNS programs.
 - b. Low-sodium vegetables- For household programs, starting this fall/winter delivery of low-sodium tomato sauce, spaghetti sauce, and canned dried bean products will be replacing all regular versions. We will provide you with a roll out schedule later when all other vegetables will be replaced with low-sodium products. More information on actual delivery times will be provided soon.

Discussion: Concerns were raised regarding low sodium vegetables take rates when participants on Food Stamps can pick whatever they want. It was stated that USDA is moving toward low-sodium vegetables for all of its commodity programs including FDPIR. The Food Stamp Program has looked at ways to restrict certain foods from being purchased but has not successfully been able to do so to date.

- II. AMS Report Update –
Canned Chicken - Cathie Smith provided updates regarding the canned turkey. She reiterated that prices for turkey products are extremely high while the supply is low. They have been in touch with the canned chicken industry and the samples should be sent out in the near future. FNS is requesting once the samples have been tested that representatives please provide feedback back to FNS regarding the overall appeal and feasibility of the product among participants in their programs.

Task 1a – FNS to verify shipment of chicken samples to ITO's by Friday, September 14, 2007.

Task 1b – ITO reps to provide feedback on product acceptability by Friday, October 12, 2007.

- III. FSA Report Update
 - a. Vegetable Oil – Sharon Hadder reported that corn, safflower, and sunflower oil would cost an average \$0.10 more per gallon. She mentioned that canola oil production in the USA is still very limited and would not be able to meet our demands. Majority, if not all, the canola oil seen on the shelves is being produced in Canada. Smoke points for the alternative oils were discussed on the call. It was clarified that ITO's have been only receiving soybean oil not the mixed vegetable oil in recent years. Since no one was receiving the mixed blend of oils the off-flavor was no longer a concern. It was suggested to modify the announcement to request only soybean oil not a blend.

Task 2 – FNS will provide FSA with request to change announcement to request on Soybean oil by Friday, September 14, 2007.

- b. UHT Milk – 1% Milk is available in 32 oz (qt) containers. The cost for the 1% milk is approximately \$0.30/lb and is available from several vendors. In some ITO's, milk is not a popular among their participants. However, some members have sampled the milk previously and were fascinated with the taste. It was suggested that samples should be sent to ITO reps for taste testing, possibly a pilot program.

Task 3a – FNS will provide FSA with addresses for 1% UHT milk samples by Friday, September 7, 2007.

Task 3b – FSA will contact vendors to send samples of 1% UHT milk to respective ITO reps for product sampling by Friday, September 14, 2007.

Task 3c – ITO reps will provide feedback to FNS (Sheldon) work group by Friday, October 12, 2007.

- IV. Warehouse Concerns
Discussion regarding warehouse availability of out of stock items was addressed by Margie Livingston. As of August 31, in the warehouse should be corn meal, egg noodles, etc. Americold is not at fault for issues regarding availability of foods; this is due to the transition from Carthage

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warehouse. However, other issues regarding timely/scheduled deliveries from Americold will need to be researched further. It was suggested for those ordering in ECOS, to check the ECOS catalog often. Mavis Perry is the new point of contact for FDPIR. She can be reached by telephone at (703) 305-2681 or by email at mavis.perry@fns.usda.gov. Four (4) trucks have been rushed to Carthage containing oatmeal, egg mix, fruit, and corn. However, dehydrated potatoes should be arriving at the end of October.

Discussion regarding expired foods being delivered was noted. It was suggested that these complaints are brought to the attention of the Regions. Some members felt this has been going on for quite some time and that the issue has not been resolved after informing region officials.

Task 4 – FNS will work with regions to resolve expired foods deliveries to ITO's by September 14, 2007.

V. Possible Replacements for FDPIR Food Package

- a. Fresh Tomatoes – During the last call, fresh tomatoes was requested as food item that participants would like to have added to the food package. FNS, via the DoD Fresh Vegetable program, will be able offer fresh tomatoes an available ordering option. The fresh tomatoes will be packed in a 1-lb package same as the other fresh vegetables offered in the program. More information will be provided when it is available for ordering.
- b. Fish (Frozen) – An email was sent out regarding the acceptability of frozen fish in the food package. The survey inquired about fish such as cod, halibut, and salmon. Many felt the fish would be a nice addition to the food package. Salmon is available in different varieties such as sockeye, coho, pink, keta, etc. However, some members were hesitant because participants are not accustomed to consuming fish in their diet. Hence, the low take rate for the tuna for the Navajo Nation.
- c. Beef/Pork Roast - Members were in favor of offering a roast in the food package. According to the members on the call, the beef roast was more favorable and also is lower in fat than the pork roast.
- d. Fresh Eggs – USDA was not able to secure a vendor that would be able to deliver fresh eggs in the commodity programs. As a result, an email was sent to the work group inquiring about frozen liquid eggs.
- e. Liquid eggs is another product suggested to the work group. Many members had questions regarding the overall content of the product, how it could be used, and shelf life. Currently, USDA purchases liquid eggs for schools and institutions, and it has been well received. Cathie Smith (AMS) stated the product is a pasteurized, egg mixture (yolk and whites), and taste great. Side by side, she indicated the taste difference was very minimal. However, shelf life was a major concern, it was stated it has to be used within 24 hours after opening. AMS will get back to us regarding the actual shelf life for this product to determine if this would be a feasible product for the food package as well as pack size.
- f. The work group was asked to rank the suggested replacements in order of preference. Beef roast ranked the highest among those on the call.

Task 5a – FNS will research availability, cost, of the beef and pork roasts as well as available fish products by September 27, 2007.

Task 5b – AMS to verify shelf life on frozen liquid eggs once opened as well as available pack size by September 27, 2007.

VI. ITO's/Region Corner

- a. A member inquired about adding honey to program since corn syrup was removed. It was restated that there will not be direct placements for those items removed (corn syrup, butter, and shortening). USDA's goal is to offer healthier alternatives to all of its nutrition assistance programs including FDPIR's food package.
- b. A concern regarding how USDA does business was raised as program directors and ITO's are constantly being asked why things happen they way they do regarding the food package. It was suggested that at the next NAFDPIR conference that a session be held informing participants how USDA procures foods and the challenges USDA faces when procuring certain foods.

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- c. Members on the call felt they needed to be more involved/consulted in the decision making process concerning selection/removal of commodities from the program. Members were informed that many of the decisions are made from the top and implemented on a lower level. They were also informed that many of these decisions made to remove certain foods from the foods available list affect all household programs and schools that have received those commodities.
- d. A member inquired if hormones, as well as other chemicals, additives, preservatives were monitored in the food specifications. Currently, USDA does ban certain ingredients in all of its food specifications, i.e. MSG.
- e. In efforts to increase whole grains in the commodity program, whole grain rotini is being considered. A member felt USDA should have been testing the products with household programs specifically FDPIR before tasting it with schools. It was explained that since schools have more flexibility in their program as well as a larger group of people to test products, it is more advantageous to use a larger group to get feedback. The feedback provided is useful in determining if any changes could be made to the food specification for a better product. Wild rice has been suggested in the past; however, due to high cost and availability this product has not been further pursued.
- f. A recent change in the guide rates raised concern regarding categorizing the dehydrated potatoes and egg noodles in the same group. Some members questioned why this was done. It was explained that by widening the category, it allowed participants to always receive something in that category rather than going without. Since these foods are commonly consumed in the diet similarly and the nutritional profiles are close, it is to the advantage of the participant to group like items together.
- g. It was requested if a one-page memo from Cathie McCullough could be sent to all program directors as well as ITO's indicating why many of these changes have occurred. This memo could possibly be posted on the website for participants to see. [In the future, for any changes to the food package or program, i.e. guide rates changes, this information would be readily available for participants, ITO's, and program directors to be kept in the loop on changes that affects the FDPIR program.]

Task 6 – FNS to draft a one-page memo from the FDD director explaining changes in the FDPIR food package to ITOs and Program Directors by September 21, 2007.

- VII. Next Conference Call – October 25th or November 1st. Please check calendars and respond by email.**