

**Minutes**

On call: Nancy Egan, Ray Capoeman, Lorraine Davis, Charles "Red" Gates, Betty Jo Graveen, Mary Greene-Trottier, Roxanna Newsom, Pat Roberts, Scott Krueger, CDC-Susan Anderson & Lorraine Whitehair, FNS-Cathie McCullough, Rosalind Cleveland, Laura Castro, Nancy Gaston, Nancy Theodore, Margie Livingston, Karen Kell, Peggy Cantfil, Mavis Perry, Dana Rasmussen, & Sheldon Gordon, FSA-Sharon Hadder, AMS-Angela Thomas.

**I) Cathie McCullough's Message to Work Group**

- a) Cathie McCullough, Director of FNS' Food Distribution Programs, thanked the work group for their support at the NAFDIR Conference when she announced that butter, corn syrup, and shortening were going to be removed from all commodity programs that received these products. She explained again reasons why these items were chosen for removal and what FNS plans to offer as replacements. Cathie McCullough reiterated that her priority is to make this program better by focusing on three things: improving the quality of the food package, administrative funding, and, the multi food service.
- b) Cathie McCullough stated she is aware that the perception out there has been to shut down the program. This couldn't be further from the truth. She stated that if program directors are approached about this, that they answer by posing the question "why would we propose to put more money into administrative expenses?" The President's budget request for FY 08 asked for a significant increase in administrative funds.
- c) She went on to say that she has made a commitment to replace the butter, corn syrup, and shortening with replacement products that are good wholesome foods. Cathie McCullough pointed out that with the high rates of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes that yet another product is also going to be removed from the package - luncheon meat. Luncheon meat is high in fat, calories, and sodium. It is bad news for what we need to do nutritionally with this food package and it is bad for the Native American clients at risk for those mentioned illnesses. There are now 4 excellent products to be offered and hopes that everyone agrees, which are as follows:
  - i) Fresh Tomatoes – As requested, they are being tested now, and we are ready to provide them nationally if all agree.
  - ii) Ultra High Temp (UHT) milk – Also, is currently being tested and has had positive feedback. So, if you like it, we are ready to go national. There are a few concerns with shelf life and stacking, but Cathie believes these can be worked out.
  - iii) Beef Roast – We are looking at a 2 lb. frozen beef roast. Of all of the products requested and researched, Cathie thinks this could be a fantastic addition to the food package.
  - iv) Turkey Ham – Since pork ham is available over the winter holidays, we thought about offering the turkey ham the rest of the year. This is a cooked product, it can be portable, and we have deliberately pursued it as a replacement for the luncheon meat. Pat Roberts agreed this would be a great product and that she buys it all the time. Betty Jo Graveen had the opposite reaction.

**II) Product Sampling Updates** - The canned chicken has not been sent out for sampling. The vendor indicated that samples should be sent out no later than November 5. We apologized for the delay, but the vendor had issues getting the product out for us.

**III) Discussions**

- a) Members voiced opinions regarding the removal of the mentioned foods from the food package. In addition, members also expressed concerns regarding foods not being available in the warehouse. Cathie McCullough stated she understands the frustration and explained that the transition from the two systems has had some hang-ups, but we are working on them to provide a better system. Many felt that a more organized fashion of phasing foods in and out of the system would have been helpful.

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- b) Work group members were pleased with the four replacement foods, but were hoping for direct replacements of foods from the same category. Members stated that as with any new items, clients will take them. Then over time trends will form to help determine ordering patterns. A few members expressed the UHT milk was impressive; no negative comments were received from those that tasted it.
- c) Food Stamps Concerns - Some work group members voiced concerns of clients going to food stamps because they have free range to purchase foods as they want. Cathie stated, for ITO directors worried about decreased participation, they should be encouraged to sell package to clients. They could advise clients to price out what they get in the FDPIR food package versus the amount and quality of foods they would be able to get with their food stamps dollars. By posing the question on the clients, they would be able to see the goodness of the food package.
- d) Cost – Cathie McCullough also stated that any of these four or all four of these premium foods could be added to the package. The cost of these premium products are much higher than the roughly 50 cents a pound we paid for the corn syrup. She stated we are always battling with the requirement to keep the cost neutral in the package. However, Cathie McCullough thinks we have the winning argument to get a one-time increase in funds for our food package. She stated we are building a food package to have the best foods – lower salt, sugar, and fat, especially since Congress is even considering language in the Farm Bill that would require us to make changes to this food package to meet the Dietary Guidelines.
- e) Frozen Fish – The group had discussed offering frozen fish in the program; however, shelf life and available freezer space were major concerns. FNS will assess the number of ITO's that are still in need of freezers. It was suggested by a work group member that canned is much better. However, you have to be careful not to get the wrong variety of salmon. Pink salmon (sockeye) is not a good product for canning unlike walleye one member stated. Cathie McCullough asked that they consider canned versus frozen fish.
- f) Cathie McCullough also reiterated to the work group the reasons why fresh eggs could not be offered in the program. There were concerns about the corn syrup still showing up in the system, but it was explained this is the last shipment of the corn syrup.
- g) A few members inquired about the possibility of offering snack food items such as popcorn, trail mix, fresh or frozen broccoli, sunflower seeds, honey, and cranberry sauce. It was explained that the trail mix was a bonus item, and that since the sunflower seeds were to be salted Cathie McCullough would not get the support to offer this in program. There were concerns as to who makes the authority to make the decision in the food and money spent in the package. Cathie McCullough mentioned that OMB and other powers above her make that decision.
- h) Lastly, FNS is going to review specifications for the canned beef stew as it was indicated by members that it was not acceptable. Also, FNS is going to follow up on the low-fat, reduced sodium cream of mushroom that was discussed during previous calls.

**IV) Wrap-up – Rosalind Cleveland (FNS)**

- a) Rosalind Cleveland reminded work group members of the two year review cycle. She stated we are now in the second year of the review, which is the implementation year. Therefore, the group will not need to meet as often, only as necessary.
- b) Work group members were also encouraged to check the website for FDPIR updates to the package. She thanked Nancy Egan again for her support and cooperation of the food package work group and for every effort she is making to improve the communication between us and the ITO's.

Meeting adjourned at 2:41PM.