

FNS Handbook 501

Chapter VIII: Distribution of USDA Commodities

CHAPTER VIII DISTRIBUTION OF USDA COMMODITIES

SECTION 1 - MANUAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

8100 GENERAL

An efficient and well-managed distribution system is essential to the success of the Food Distribution Program. Four different types of distribution systems will be discussed in this chapter. The distribution system, or combination of distribution systems, that will be the most effective will depend upon several factors. After determining the specific needs of the ITO's/State agency's participant and eligible population, the ITO/State agency will select the type(s) of distribution system(s) that will be used.

8110 MANUAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Under a manual distribution system, food packages are assembled by food distribution staff working in the warehouse and distributed to the clients.

8120 FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTER FACILITIES AND SERVICES

8121 Size of Food Distribution Center

The manual food distribution center must be large enough to allow the following equipment and facilities:

- A. A private area for certification;
- B. Nutrition education area;
- C. Seating area for households that are waiting for certification or food;
- D. Orderly stacking of commodities (a full order of commodities for each program participant requires three cubic feet of space);
- E. A long table or counter to place and package food orders;
- F. A desk for the distribution clerk;
- G. A table or desk for checkout; and
- H. Public rest rooms.

The ITO/State agency must provide a heating device to maintain comfortable temperatures for program participants and staff during cold weather, and a ventilation system to control temperature during the summer months.

8122 Certification and Waiting Areas

The certification area must be a separate room or enclosure to ensure privacy to the applicant or participant being interviewed. The certification room should include a desk and a chair for the certification worker, file cabinets for certification records, and two or more chairs for household

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members. The waiting room/area must be neat and clean and contain sufficient seating to accommodate participants.

8123 Nutrition Education Area

A nutrition education area must be provided. The activities that may be conducted in the nutrition education area include:

- A. Taste testing of USDA commodities;
- B. Cooking demonstrations using USDA commodities;
- C. Visual displays or the distribution of materials about the proper storage and care of USDA commodities in the home;
- D. Distribution of recipes, sample menus, or other food and nutrition information; and
- E. Obtaining food preferences from participants.

8130 PREPARATION OF COMMODITIES FOR DISTRIBUTION

The following procedures should be followed in the food distribution center for easy access of commodities on the day of distribution:

- A. Commodities should be placed near the distribution counter/table prior to the day of actual distribution;
- B. Each commodity should be stacked in individual rows and in the same sequence as shown on the issuance receipt card or automated invoice;
- C. Commodities requiring refrigeration may be removed from the coolers in small quantities that can be distributed in less than thirty minutes; and
- D. With the exception of commodities requiring refrigeration, several cases of each USDA commodity should be opened prior to distribution.

8140 DISTRIBUTION OF COMMODITIES

Participants may be issued a numbered card by the food distribution clerk to maintain an orderly and controlled distribution sequence.

The distribution of commodities will generally follow the process outlined below:

- A. The participant will present his/her food distribution identification card (see Exhibit W, attached) or other acceptable identification to the food distribution clerk;
- B. The food distribution clerk will review the participant's issuance receipt card (see Exhibit X, attached) or automated invoice, and determine if recertification is necessary. If recertification is necessary, the food distribution clerk will refer the participant back to the certification office;

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- C. If recertification is not necessary, the food distribution clerk will inform the participant of the maximum amounts of each choice of food items that the household is entitled to receive;
- D. The participant will make his/her selection of food items, and the food distribution clerk will write in the desired amounts of each food item on the issuance receipt card or enter this information into the automated inventory system. The pre-posting of issuance is authorized providing that adequate safeguards are outlined in the Plan of Operation;
- E. The food distribution clerk will forward the participant's food order to the food handlers;
- F. The food handlers will place the participant's food order on the distribution table;
- G. Both the participant and the food handler will verify that the food order on the table agrees with the issuance receipt card or the automated invoice. The participant will sign the issuance receipt card or automated invoice in the presence of the food handler, and the food handler will package the food order; and
- H. Commodities not accepted by participants will be placed back into the physical inventory and entered appropriately in the automated inventory system.

Alternative procedures may be employed by the ITO/State agency with approval of the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

8150 ASSISTANCE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The ITO/State agency must provide staff or volunteers to assist participants who are unable to carry their commodities from the distribution center to their vehicle.

8160 HOUSEKEEPING

The ITO/State agency or local agency must maintain the same housekeeping, rodent, insect control, and receiving procedures outlined in Chapter VII, above.

SECTION 2 - SELF-SERVICE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**8200 SELF-SERVICE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

Under a Self-Service Distribution System, clients may take a grocery cart and select food items they desire from the full array of USDA commodities available in inventory, similar to how they would shop in a commercial food store.

8210 FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTER FACILITIES AND SERVICES**8211 Food Distribution Center Size**

The self-service distribution center must be large enough to allow:

- A. A private area for certification;
- B. Seating area for households that are waiting for food or certification;
- C. Nutrition education area;
- D. Orderly stacking of commodities (a full order of USDA commodities for each program participant requires three cubic feet of space);
- E. A desk for the distribution clerk;
- F. A checkout table;
- G. Storage area for approximately ten grocery carts; and
- H. Public rest rooms.

The ITO/State agency must provide a heating device to maintain comfortable temperature for program participants and staff during cold weather and a ventilation system to control temperature during the summer months.

8212 Certification and Waiting Areas

The certification area must be a separate room or enclosure to ensure privacy to the applicant or participant being interviewed. The certification room must include a desk and chair for the certification workers, file cabinet for the certification records, and two or more chairs for household members. The waiting room/area must be neat and clean and contain sufficient seating to accommodate participants and applicants.

8213 Nutrition Education Area

A nutrition education area must be provided. The activities that may be conducted in the nutrition education area include:

- A. Taste testing of USDA commodities;

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- B. Cooking demonstrations using USDA commodities;
- C. Visual displays or the distribution of materials about the proper storage and care of USDA commodities in the home;
- D. Distribution of recipes, sample menus, or other food and nutrition information; and
- E. Obtaining food preferences from participants.

8220 PREPARATION OF COMMODITIES FOR DISTRIBUTION

The following procedures should be followed in the food distribution center for easy access of commodities on days of distribution:

- A. Shelves should be stock with sufficient commodities prior to the day of distribution;
- B. Shopping carts or baskets should be readily available for participant use;
- C. Commodities should be shelved in the same sequence as shown on the issuance receipt card or automated invoice; and
- D. Commodities requiring refrigeration should be placed in coolers that are accessible to participants in the self-serve area.

8230 DISTRIBUTION OF COMMODITIES

Participants may be issued a numbered card by the food distribution clerk to maintain an orderly and controlled distribution sequence.

The distribution of commodities will generally follow the process outlined below:

- A. The participant will present his/her food distribution identification card (see Exhibit W, attached) or other acceptable identification to the food distribution clerk;
- B. The food distribution clerk will review the participant's issuance receipt card (see Exhibit X, attached) or automated invoice, and determine if recertification is necessary. If recertification is necessary, the food distribution clerk will refer the participant back to the certification office;
- C. If recertification is not necessary, the food distribution clerk will inform the participant of the maximum amounts of each choice of food items that the household is entitled to receive;
- D. When the participant has completed selection of his/her commodities, he/she will place the commodities on the checkout counter;
- E. Both the checkout clerk and the participant will verify that the participant's selection of commodities agrees with the distribution guide rates for the household size indicated on the issuance receipt card or automated invoice. The ITO/State agency may use a scanning device that is linked to the automated inventory system to verify/record the issuance; and

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F. The participant will sign the issuance receipt card or automated invoice in the presence of the checkout clerk, and the checkout clerk will package the food order

Alternative procedures may be employed by the ITO/State agency with approval of the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

8240 ASSISTANCE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The ITO/State agency must provide staff or volunteers to assist participants who are unable to carry their USDA commodities from the distribution center to the vehicle.

8250 HOUSEKEEPING

The ITO/State agency or local agency must maintain the same housekeeping, rodent, and insect control, and food receiving procedures outlined in Chapter VII, above.

SECTION 3 - TAILGATE (MOBILE) DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**8300 TAILGATE (MOBILE) DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

In a tailgate distribution system, all functions are performed at the site(s) where the actual distribution takes place. Instead of clients coming to a distribution center to be qualified and receive their food packages, the distribution center goes to the clients. Clients can be certified and receive their food packages at a convenient site nearer to their home. Orders for commodities are filled by Food Distribution Program staff on site.

A tailgate distribution system is an expensive method of distributing USDA commodities. Some of the expenses involved in tailgate distribution include the cost of a suitable truck and normal operating expenses for the vehicle such as fuel, repairs, tires, and insurance.

8310 NEED FOR TAILGATE DISTRIBUTION

A tailgate distribution system should be considered for use when the systems discussed in paragraphs 8100 and 8200, above, are not practical or do not provide sufficient service to participant and eligible households. The ITO/State agency should consider implementing tailgate distribution in the following situations:

- A. On large sparsely populated reservations where small communities are located long distances from the main distribution center; or
- B. On reservations where recipients would not be able to obtain transportation to the main distribution center.

8320 SCHEDULING OF TAILGATE DISTRIBUTION

The ITO/State agency must schedule tailgate distribution to provide maximum service to current participants and eligible persons. Additional cases of commodities must be transported to all tailgate distribution sites to accommodate new program participants who are certified on the day of distribution.

8321 Distribution Times

Food distribution personnel must schedule tailgate distributions in such a manner that it will not require participants to wait long periods of time for the truck to arrive. This may involve scheduling no more than two tailgate distributions during any day.

8322 Distribution Locations

The location of tailgate distribution sites must be:

- A. Near or in small communities so that participants may have easy access to the truck;
- B. Near chapter houses, community centers, or other appropriate facilities so that participants may be protected in the event of poor weather conditions.

8323 Notification to Participants

The ITO/State agency must inform all program participants of the times and locations of tailgate distributions. In addition, the ITO/State agency must advise participants that if they cannot get to the scheduled distribution, they may pick up their commodities at the main distribution center or at another tailgate distribution site. Methods of notification of participants include:

- A. Informing participants of the distributions schedule at the time of certification;
- B. Posting the locations and dates for distributions in chapter houses, community centers, religious centers, and other public places; and
- C. Publicizing the locations and dates of distributions in local newspapers or radio stations.

8330 FOOD DISTRIBUTION FACILITIES AND SERVICES**8331 Severe Weather**

In severe weather, the ITO/State agency must provide adequate temporary shelter at the tailgate site for program participants and applicants.

8332 Certification

The certification clerk must be available at each distribution site to certify new recipients and for recertification. The interviewing of recipients for certification purposes must be done in private. At tailgate distribution sites, interviews may be conducted in a vehicle.

8333 Nutrition Education

The ITO/State agency must provide nutrition education services to tailgate distribution participants if such services are normally provided to participants who pick up commodities at the central distribution center.

8334 Food Distribution

The ITO/State agency must provide a table and chair for the food distribution clerk.

8340 DISTRIBUTION OF COMMODITIES

Participants may be issued a numbered card by the food distribution clerk to maintain an orderly and controlled distribution sequence.

The distribution of commodities will generally follow the process outlined below:

- A. The participant will present his/her food distribution identification card (see Exhibit W, attached) or other acceptable identification to the food distribution clerk;
- B. The food distribution clerk will review the participant's issuance receipt card (see Exhibit X, attached) or automated invoice and determine if recertification is necessary. If recertification is necessary, the food distribution clerk will refer the participant to a certification clerk on site;

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- C. If recertification is not necessary, the food distribution clerk will inform the participant of the maximum amounts of each choice of food items that the household is entitled to receive;
- D. The participant will make his/her selection of food items, and the food distribution clerk will write in the desired amounts of each food item on the issuance receipt card or enter this information into the automated inventory system. The pre-posting of issuance is authorized providing that adequate safeguards are outlined in the Plan of Operation;
- E. The food distribution clerk will forward the participant's food order to the food handlers;
- F. The food distribution clerk will inform the participant of the exact time and location of the next month's distribution;
- G. The food handler will place the participant's order on the distribution table or tailgate;
- H. Both the participant and the food handler will verify that the actual food order agrees with the issuance receipt card or the automated invoice. The participant will sign the issuance receipt card or automated invoice in the presence of the food handler; and
- I. Commodities not taken by participants will be placed back into the physical inventory and entered appropriately in the automated inventory system.

Alternative procedures may be employed by the ITO/State agency with approval of the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

8350 ASSISTANCE TO PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The ITO/State agency will provide staff or volunteers to assist participants who are unable to carry their commodities from the tailgate distribution vehicle to their vehicle.

8360 TRUCK SPACE REQUIRED FOR FULL ORDERS

Approximately six cubic feet of truck space is required for the effective handling and distribution of a full order of commodities for each program participant.

8370 STACKING OF USDA COMMODITIES IN THE TRUCK

USDA commodities should be stacked in the following manner:

- A. Each food item should be stacked in individual rows along the sides and front of the truck;
- B. Individual rows of food items should be stacked in the same sequence as shown on the issuance receipt card or automated invoice; and
- C. When the truck is moving from one distribution site to another the food must be leveled to prevent any food damage.

SECTION 4 – HOME DELIVERY

8400 HOME DELIVERY

ITOs/State agencies are encouraged to respond, whenever possible, to reasonable requests for home delivery services to elderly, disabled, and other homebound individuals who have been determined eligible to participate in the Food Distribution Program.

8410 VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT OF COMMODITIES

The participant or his/her authorized representative must verify receipt of the commodities by signing the issuance receipt card or automated invoice. Commodities not accepted by participants will be placed back into the physical inventory and entered appropriately in the automated inventory system.

8420 NUTRITION EDUCATION

The ITO/State agency must provide nutrition education services to home delivery recipients if such services are normally provided to participants who pick up commodities at the central distribution center or at tailgate distribution sites.

8430 ALLOWABLE COSTS

All necessary and reasonable costs associated with home delivery services are considered allowable for administrative funding purposes.

8440 USE OF VOLUNTEERS AND AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES

In accordance with paragraph 1223, above, volunteers may be used to assist in home delivery of USDA commodities. In addition, an authorized representative may be designated by a household to obtain commodities on behalf of the household (see paragraph 3434, above).