

School Programs Commodity Update

What's New in the Food Distribution Program for Schools

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It is hard to believe the school year is nearly over! This will be the last *School Programs Commodity Update* for this school year. There have been some changes and many improvements this year in the commodity programs, and we have tried to keep you informed of them. Please let us know if there are any commodity-related issues that you would like us to address in the upcoming school year. If you have any comments, you may email us at: fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov. Have a nice summer!

COMMODITY FACT SHEET DATABASE PROJECT

We are working with AMS and FSA on a major project to review and update our commodity fact sheets for schools. We welcome comments from schools on any changes you would like to see on the fact sheets.

We are planning to develop a web-accessible database that will house all information related to our commodity fact sheets. This web site will provide "one stop shopping" for information related to our commodities. The database will contain all information currently on the fact sheets including packaging information, preparation and storage instructions, and nutritional facts. We plan to include the commodity code on each fact sheet so that schools and other recipients can easily access them. One significant enhancement will be a direct link from the fact sheet to the commodity specification.

We know that schools really use our fact sheets, and depend on them to obtain pertinent information on our commodities. Thus, we want to make sure that the fact sheets are up-to-date and easy to access. //

**COMMODITY COMPLAINT
CORNER**

We have two items of interest to you about complaints.

A Reminder: If you have asked for a replacement of a USDA donated product, you **must** keep the product on hold until you have been notified by USDA. We must give vendors the opportunity to inspect and/or pick up the product they have been asked to replace. Frequently, they want to inspect the product to determine what went wrong and why. If the product has been destroyed, the vendor cannot be required to replace it. Sometimes the vendor does not want the product. In these instances, USDA will inform you that the product can be destroyed. However, we must give the vendor this choice. If you are in doubt whether to continue to hold the product in question, please call the complaint hotline.

Future complaint database: We have begun working with our ECOS (Electronic Commodity Ordering System) contractors to include our complaint database in ECOS. Eventually, States and recipient agencies will be able to enter their complaints about USDA donated commodities directly into this system. This will be a significant improvement in our ability to track and respond to complaints about USDA donated commodities.

**Commodity Complaint Hotline
1-800-446-6991**

Or email:
usda-fns-commoditycomplaints@fns.usda.gov

Or fax:
703-305-1410

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH®

March is National Nutrition Month®. National Nutrition Month® (NNM) is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored annually by the American Dietetic Association (ADA).

The campaign is designed to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. NNM also promotes ADA and its members to the public and the media as the most valuable and credible source of timely, scientifically based food and nutrition information. For additional information, visit the web site at:

http://www.eatright.org/Public/92_11422.cfm

**SY 2005 FOODS AVAILABLE LIST FOR
SCHOOLS**

The Foods Available List for Schools for SY 2005 was disseminated to States in November, 2003. This enabled States to advise schools very early what commodities will be available for the upcoming school year. New products expected to be available include sunflower seed butter, pork taco filling, pork sloppy joe mix, and pork breaded patty. We are hoping to offer more products for next school year, including queso blanco, cooked beef roast, beef sloppy joe, breaded beef patty, cooked beef patty, beef taco filling, and cooked beef crumbles. We will provide more information on these products in the next *School Programs Commodity Update*.

You can access this list on our website at:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/sy05-schfoods.pdf> //

**IMPROVED DELIVERY ORDER
ACCESS: JUST IN TIME ON-LINE VIA
THE WEB!!**

Second party receiver organizations; i.e., processors and commercial warehouses, will soon be able to track their delivery orders in the Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS) on the Internet. Direct delivery school districts and cooperatives may also have access to this critical planning information through their State Distributing Agency (SDA). School districts who participate in direct delivery will need to get approval from their SDA.

Currently only purchased delivery order information is available from the PCIMS Intransit report posted bi-weekly on the Food Distribution Program website. While this report was an improvement over faxes and mailed forms or no information at all, it still falls short of meeting the information needs of receiver organizations.

Once registered on ECOS, receiver organizations will be able to see all inbound delivery orders for their specific warehouse or plant entity codes, regardless of status. Planned orders, orders on invitation for purchase, and filled orders with their notice to deliver number will be visible in REAL TIME! In the near future there are plans to include shipping instructions and USDA vendor contact data.

This data will be extremely valuable to receiver organizations. Guidance on how to read this information and use it in a constructive manner to enhance inventory management and menu planning will be issued. We expect users to have access to their orders for SY 2005 in a few months. //

Comments

If you have any questions or comments on our products or services, including comments on ways to improve our commodity fact sheets, please e-mail them directly to our Program Support Branch at: fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov. You can also write to the Food Distribution Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 520, Alexandria, VA 22302. //

Acronym List

ADA	American Dietetic Association
AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
ECOS	The Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
NNM	National Nutrition Month
PCIMS	Processed Commodity Inventory Management System
SDA	State Distributing Agency
SY	School Year
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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