

School Programs Commodity Update

What's New in USDA's Food Distribution Program for Schools

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**USDA's NEW AUTOMATED
COMMODITY COMPLAINT SYSTEM
IS UP AND RUNNING!**

We have activated a new commodity complaint module as part of our Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS) that will accept, manage, and track the resolution of complaints about USDA commodities. The module allows State Distributing Agencies to enter complaints into the system as well as track them through resolution and

analyze trends. The module also allows for the rapid identification of complaints with potential foodsafety/biosecurity implications. The new complaint module will streamline communication and significantly improve response times to the school level.

If you have a commodity complaint, please report it to your State Distributing Agency. The State is responsible for acting as the gatekeeper for complaints about USDA commodities. This is important because the State has all of the critical information needed to investigate the complaint.

When reporting a complaint, you should include the most complete information available about the product. Every effort should be made to include:

- the delivery order number,
- commodity description,
- specific problem with the product,
- any illness, injury or allergic reaction,
- brand name,
- lot number, and
- for meat, poultry and egg products, the establishment number.

The establishment number is a critical piece of information, especially when the complaint has food safety implications,

because it identifies the actual plant site where the product was manufactured.

The establishment number allows USDA to quickly investigate problems at the production source, and it provides a unique product identifier in case of a hold and recall action. All meat and poultry products produced in a licensed processing facility and sold commercially must bear an inspection legend indicating the product has been “U.S. Inspected,” such as the example below, and including the plant’s assigned establishment number. The establishment number can be found on the product packaging and generally consists of a number and often a letter. So remember, in reporting commodity complaints you can help us research and resolve problems quickly by providing complete product information, including establishment number for any meat, poultry, or egg product.

**Example of Establishment Number.
In this example the number is P-42.**



FNS FOOD SAFETY UNIT

Commodity complaints which might pose a food safety/biosecurity risk are referred to the FNS Food Safety Unit which serves the food safety needs of FNS’ domestic nutrition assistance programs. This new Unit manages all holds and recalls of USDA commodity foods and tracks all foodborne illnesses

reported in schools. It also interfaces with other groups on food safety matters including the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control, FNS Regional Offices, and State Distributing Agencies. The Unit also is responsible for food safety education directed at schools.

BONUS COMMODITIES AVAILABLE FOR SY 2004-2005

USDA offered schools a number of bonus commodities for this school year. Bonus commodities are purchased each year to assist specific agricultural markets in need of support. [Note: We will soon be issuing a *Special Edition School Programs Commodity Update* where we will discuss the cost benefits of utilizing & processing bonus foods.]

Available commodities this year include:

- Nonfat Dry Milk
- Pudding
- Orange Juice, canned, frozen, & frozen single-serve cups
- Fruit and Nut Mix
- Apricots, canned & frozen
- Peaches, canned, frozen, & frozen single-serve cups
- Pineapple, canned crushed
- Mix Fruit, canned
- Potatoes, frozen
- Tomato products, canned
- Sweet potatoes, fresh, canned, & frozen
- Cranberries, dried, canned, & frozen

The State Distributing Agency will notify you as USDA makes future purchases of bonus products. //

TURKEY HAM SPECIFICATION CHANGE

In response to complaints about bones in turkey hams, USDA's bone tolerance has been lowered this year from .5 inch to .4 inch. In addition, USDA's inspectors are taking larger size samples. We hope these specification changes have increased schools' satisfaction with turkey hams. Please let us know if you have comments about this specification change. //

SUNFLOWER SEED BUTTER SURVEY

We made a test buy of sunflower seed butter which was delivered to five States in July and/or August. We sent an acceptability survey to California, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Tennessee for dissemination to their schools to see how they liked the product.

If you are one of the schools that received the sunflower seed butter and the survey, please return the completed survey to the Food Distribution Division as soon as possible! The address is on the survey. //

PROCESSED COMMODITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS

USDA is phasing-in a new plan for National approval of End Product Data Schedules and National Master Processing Agreements for all multi-State processors. This will ultimately make more choices of processed commodity products available to you!

If you are interested in learning more about this, we will soon be issuing a *Special Edition School Programs Commodity Update* specifically addressing National Master Processing Agreement Program. Please stay tuned to the Food Distribution website at www.fns.usda.gov/fdd.

Comments

Please let us know if there are any commodity-related issues that you would like us to address in future editions of the School Programs Commodity Update. 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

ECOS	The Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
SY	School Year
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Prepared by: Program Support Branch, in conjunction with the Operations Branch, USDA, FNS, FDD.