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SUBJECT: FNS – Food Loss as an Eligibility Factor for the Disaster Food Stamp Program

TO: Regional Administrators  
Food and Nutrition Service

Historically, there has been a lively debate about the appropriateness of loss of food (due to a power outage connected with a natural disaster) as an eligibility factor for the Disaster Food Stamp Program (DFSP) when this food loss is the only loss to the household associated with the disaster.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Handbook 320 (DFSP Handbook) does provide for loss of food in connection with loss of food stamps and Authorization to Purchase Cards implying application to ongoing food stamp households. There is some ambiguity in regard to newly applying households.

After considering the various views expressed on this issue, we have decided that State agencies are in the best position to decide on the appropriateness of loss of food (due to a power outage connected with a natural disaster) as an eligibility factor when this food loss is the only loss to the household associated with the disaster. In making its decision, one of the factors a State agency will need to consider is its ability to handle the applicant population which would likely be considerably increased if food loss without other disaster related losses is an acceptable DSFP eligibility qualifier. Whatever the State agency decides about food loss as an eligibility criteria without other disaster related losses, it must include in its request to FNS to operate a DSFP an explicit statement in regard to its decision, along with the usual description of special disaster procedures that will be applied when evaluating applications submitted by those residing within the area covered by the disaster.

This policy clarification will be incorporated into FNS Handbook 320 when it is revised.

*/S/ Jessica Shahin, for*

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cc: PAD  
BRD