

# USDA Foods

## *The Case for School Breakfast Commodities*

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### ***What are USDA Foods and how do they support school meal programs?***

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) rely on two forms of federal aid to operate school nutrition programs: cash reimbursements for meals served and USDA Foods, or “commodities.” The USDA Foods program purchases high-quality domestic agricultural products and distributes them to states for use in preparing school meals. USDA Foods account for approximately 15-20 percent of the foods served as part of school lunch, while remaining foods are purchased through commercial markets.

*Expanding USDA Foods would help farmers & allow more children to enjoy a wider variety of American grown foods as part of a nutritious school breakfast.*

#### ***How does expanding USDA Foods to support school breakfast help FARMERS?***

Expanding USDA Foods helps farmers by increasing purchases of 100% American-grown foods. To ensure the program supports the domestic agricultural market, nearly 60 percent of the foods purchased must be determined by USDA to be in surplus. Thanks to DoD Fresh, schools have dramatically increased purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables through regionally-based produce vendors, to the benefit of local growers and students. [Click here](#) to learn about the USDA Foods purchased in your state.



#### ***How would expanding USDA Foods to support school breakfast help SCHOOLS?***

Updated nutrition standards required schools to switch to whole grains and double the amount of fruits/vegetables offered with every school breakfast, among other mandates. However, Congress provided no additional funds to help schools offset the cost of meeting the requirements. Providing USDA Foods for school breakfast would help reduce schools' food expenditures, allowing them to manage rising costs and invest limited foodservice dollars into menu improvements for students.

Learn more at  
[schoolnutrition.org](http://schoolnutrition.org)

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***How would expanding USDA Foods to support school breakfast help STUDENTS?***

Expanding USDA Foods would allow more children to enjoy a wider variety of American grown foods as part of a nutritious school breakfast. USDA Foods for breakfast would also free up limited funds to invest in innovative breakfast in the classroom or grab-and-go breakfast programs, proven to increase school breakfast consumption. [Research shows](#) students who eat school breakfast perform better on standardized tests, and have improved classroom behavior and attendance. With nearly 1 in 5 children living in food insecure households, school breakfast is critical to ensuring students receive the nutrition they need to succeed at school. [Click here](#) to learn how many students participate in the School Breakfast Program in your state.

*USDA purchases include fruits and vegetables, lean protein foods, low-fat dairy foods, whole grains and oils.*



***What kind of foods are offered?***

USDA purchases meet school meal requirements including fruits and vegetables, lean protein foods, low-fat dairy foods, whole grains and oils. In recent years, USDA Foods has expanded the variety of healthy choices available to schools and reduced the sodium, sugar and fat in foods offered. [Foods available for the 2016-17 school year](#) include perishable and shelf stable foods, raw ingredients, such as whole wheat flour, and prepared items, such as frozen oven-roasted chicken. Schools may also use their USDA Foods entitlement to buy fresh produce through the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (DoD Fresh). Reports on the state of origin of foods ordered are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/state-origin-usda-foods-fiscal-year-2013-and-2014>.

***For more information,  
call (301) 686-3100 and ask for the  
Government Affairs and Media Relations  
Center.***

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[schoolnutrition.org](http://schoolnutrition.org)



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