

# USDA Foods

## *The Case for School Breakfast Commodities*

### **Background:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides two types of assistance to the schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP): cash reimbursement for meals served and USDA Foods, or “commodities.” Participating schools rely on this aid to operate school meal programs.

The USDA Foods program purchases high-quality domestic agricultural products and distributes them to states for use in preparing school meals. USDA purchases include fruits and vegetables, lean protein and low-fat dairy foods, whole grains and oils. USDA Foods account for approximately 15-20 percent of the foods served as part of school lunch.

Although USDA Foods may be served as part of school breakfast, a state’s USDA Foods entitlement is based only on the number of *lunches* served and does not account for the more than 14 million breakfasts served each school day.

With research affirming the importance of breakfast to academic success, school nutrition programs have worked to increase student access to healthy school breakfasts. Expanding USDA Foods to support the School Breakfast Program would sustain this effort, ease the burden on financially strapped meal programs and advance USDA’s mission of supporting America’s farmers.

Within the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, Congress provided schools an additional 6 cents per lunch to meet the updated nutrition standards. Congress could support the School Breakfast Program and US farmers by passing **H.R. 3738, the Healthy Breakfasts Help Kids Learn Act**. H.R. 3738 provides schools 6 cents in commodities for every breakfast served, at a cost of \$147 million annually (*based on the number of breakfasts served in Fiscal Year 2016*).



### **Congress:**

*Support America’s students and farmers by passing H.R. 3738, the Healthy Breakfasts Help Kids Learn Act*

### **Expanding USDA Foods Will Support 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 support would also help schools invest in innovative breakfast in the classroom or grab-and-go breakfast programs, proven to increase school breakfast consumption.

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

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*Research affirms the importance of school breakfast to academic success, making breakfast commodities a smart investment for taxpayer dollars.*

[Research shows](#) students who eat school breakfast perform better on standardized tests, and have improved classroom behavior and attendance. With 13 million children living in food insecure households in the U.S., 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.

### **Expanding USDA Foods Will Support Schools:**

Updated nutrition standards required schools to increase the quantity of whole grains, fruits and vegetables they serve, but federal funding increases have not kept pace with costs. USDA estimated the cost of meeting new school breakfast mandates would increase food and labor expenses by **27 cents per breakfast**, yet no additional funding or USDA Foods entitlement was provided to help schools manage higher breakfast costs. School meal programs have struggled in recent years to manage these rising food and labor expenses.

Thanks to USDA's large volume purchasing power, schools are able to "purchase" USDA Foods at a lower price point than in the commercial market, allowing schools to stretch their food dollars further. 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.

### **Expanding USDA Foods Will Support 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.



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

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



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