



UTILIZING USDA FOODS AND USDA DoD FRESH PROGRAMS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA, FNS) offers **USDA Foods in Schools (USDA Foods)**, which includes the **USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh)**, to financially support School Food Authorities (SFAs) through purchases of 100% American grown and produced foods for use in school nutrition programs. These programs can also help you meet the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal patterns and dietary specifications, including sodium nutrition standards.



USDA Foods
in Schools

USDA FOODS

USDA purchases U.S. grown, processed, and packaged foods for nutrition assistance programs, including school meals. More than 200 USDA Foods products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates that meet strict nutrition quality and food safety requirements, are available to order. USDA Foods are available through three ordering options:

- Direct delivered USDA Foods
- Bulk USDA Foods that can be sent to processors
- USDA DoD Fresh

USDA DoD FRESH

A partnership between USDA and DoD provides domestically grown, whole, and pre-cut fresh fruits and vegetables for use in school meals as USDA Foods. The DoD Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) leverages its buying power by contracting with produce vendors for weekly deliveries of a wide variety of produce to schools and other locations.

Utilize your USDA Foods entitlement dollars for USDA Foods products and USDA DoD Fresh produce to provide wholesome meals at a lower cost.

USING USDA FOODS TO LOWER SODIUM IN SCHOOL MEALS

You can substitute many commercial food products with USDA Foods to help lower the overall sodium content of your weekly menu. All USDA Foods processed vegetable and bean products are *low sodium* or *no salt added*, often making them lower in sodium than their commercial equivalents. USDA Foods has also reduced the sodium content in many of its cheese, meat, poultry, and fish products in recent years.

You can find USDA Foods products available for the upcoming school year on the [USDA Foods Available List](#) posted under the subheading “USDA Foods in Schools (USDA-FIS).” The list is categorized by food group and indicates vegetable subgroups and whole grain or whole grain-rich products. *Low sodium* and *no salt added* products are clearly labeled.

[USDA Foods Product Information Sheets](#) provide a product description, crediting/yield information, nutrition information, culinary tips and recipes, food safety, and allergen information for all USDA Foods. Products are categorized by food type (fruit, vegetables, grains, meats/meat alternates, and other foods) and listed alphabetically. You can use the included Nutrition Facts label to compare sodium amounts between commercial and USDA Foods products.

1

A stylized illustration of food items. In the center is a large, dark brown ham with a lighter pinkish-red section on its side. To the left of the ham are two bright orange carrots with green leafy tops. To the right of the ham is a wedge of red Swiss cheese with visible yellow holes. The background is plain white.

2

[illegible]

USING USDA DoD FRESH TO LOWER SODIUM IN SCHOOL MEALS

Fresh produce naturally has very little or no sodium at all. Incorporating more fresh produce in the school menu—either raw, frozen, cooked and seasoned with herbs and spices, or prepared in a recipe—can help reduce the amount of sodium consumed in the meal.

The following list provides a snapshot of the different types of U.S. grown fresh produce you can order when your SFA participates in USDA DoD Fresh. Many varieties, package sizes, and forms of produce (mixes, snack packs, etc.) are available. Keep in mind that fresh produce availability varies by season, region of the country, and vendor. You can even request that your vendor add specific produce items to the catalog, but they must be grown in the U.S. and be fair and reasonably priced.

SNAPSHOT OF USDA DoD FRESH PRODUCE

Apples (Green, Red, Yellow)

Avocados

Beans, Green

Blackberries

Blueberries

Broccoli

Cabbage (Green, Red)

Carrots (Baby, Whole)

Cauliflower

Collards

Cucumbers

Grapefruit

Grapes (Black, Green, Red)

Honeydew

Kale

Kiwifruit

Lettuce (Iceberg, Leaf, Romaine)

Mushrooms

Nectarines

Onions (Red, White, Yellow)

Onions, Green

Oranges (Clementines, Mandarins)

Peaches

Pears

Peas, Snap

Peppers, Bell

Plums

Potatoes (Red, Russet, White)

Spinach

Squash, Summer (Yellow, Zucchini)

Squash, Winter (Acorn, Butternut, Spaghetti)

Strawberries

Sweet Potatoes

Tangerines

Tomatoes (Cherry, Grape, Round Red)

Watermelon

Other:

Assorted chopped vegetables for soup

Mixed berry cups (various)

Mixed pre-cut vegetables (various)

Salad mixes (various)

Vegetable snack packs (various)



1

Record the different types of fruits and vegetables you currently menu in the table below. Compare your list to the *Snapshot of USDA DoD Fresh Produce* on the previous page. Consider spending your USDA Foods entitlement for produce through USDA DoD Fresh! To get the best value, order in-season produce grown in the U.S. For example, California grown grapes are available June through December. Check out the [SNAP-Ed Seasonal Produce Guide](#) to help you explore different fruits and vegetables throughout the year.

[illegible]

2

Offering a variety of produce in your menu encourages your students to eat it, which can ultimately help reduce the amount of sodium consumed in a meal.

Which fruits and vegetables from the *Snapshot of USDA DoD Fresh Produce* list would you like to add to your menu?

Produce Wish List



HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN USDA FOODS INCLUDING USDA DoD FRESH

To get started, contact your State Distributing Agency (SDA), which administers USDA Foods including USDA DoD Fresh at the State level. Go to the [USDA, FNS Contacts](#) page and select your respective state and the program *USDA Foods in Schools* in the drop-down boxes. Select the “Contact Info” button for a contact name, number, and email address, and write the contact details in the space provided for reference.

Each year, your SDA determines the value you are entitled to spend on USDA Foods direct delivery or further processing or allocation to USDA DoD Fresh. Your planned assistance level (PAL) is based on your SFA's prior year reimbursable NSLP meals served, multiplied by the annual Federal assistance per meal rate. SDAs work with SFAs to:

- Manage and fully utilize your USDA Foods entitlement dollars
- Allocate a portion of your USDA Foods entitlement dollars to USDA DoD Fresh
- Decide which USDA Foods products will be offered in your state for the upcoming school year.

Each SDA manages these programs differently. **Refer to your SDA for state-specific details and deadlines.**

Incorporating USDA Foods products and USDA DoD Fresh produce in your menu will help you stay within your budget and meet the sodium limits. Visit [USDA Foods in Schools](#) and [USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) for more information, and contact your SDA today!

My SDA Contact

Name:

Phone:

Email:

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