



USDA FOODS: HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT CONSIDERED

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) strives to provide nutritious food to our nation's children and low income families and strengthen American agriculture by purchasing food to support schools, institutions, and food assistance programs. FNS works with the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to purchase a pre-determined list of USDA Foods products. If your product is not yet being purchased by USDA, please review the list below to determine if your product meets the minimum criteria for consideration.

In order to be considered as a USDA Food, the product must:

- **Be 100% grown and processed in the United States or its territories.** USDA aims to support and strengthen American agriculture, so all food products and ingredients must be domestic, with limited exceptions.
- **Support the nutrition goals in the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).** Products considered for distribution by USDA must align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the nutrition guidelines for each program setting (e.g. [Healthy-Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010](#)). The guidelines encourage a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy, and items that are low in sodium, saturated fat, *trans* fat, added sugar, and refined grains. For example:
 - Fruits (fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100% juice or extra light syrup)
 - Vegetables (no salt added or low-sodium)
 - Beans/legumes (no salt added or low-sodium)
 - Grain products (whole grain or at least 50% whole grain content)
 - Milk and other dairy products (low-fat or nonfat)
 - Meats and meat alternates (low in fat, saturated fat, and sodium)
 - Nuts and seeds (unsalted)
- **Be versatile.** USDA provides products for school children, families, the elderly, emergency feeding programs, and persons residing on Indian Reservations through the USDA Foods program. USDA seeks to purchase foods that meet the needs of the diverse population served by these programs nationwide. Many USDA Foods are offered in basic forms that can be used in a variety of recipes and meal patterns.
- **Be available from more than one vendor.** USDA strives to purchase food products that are available from multiple vendors to encourage competitive pricing. It is unlikely that the product would be considered if it is patented or a "sole source" product (e.g. only one company can supply).
- **Have a documented demand in a commercial setting.** USDA seeks to purchase foods that have been used successfully in similar program settings. For example, vendors are encouraged to market their products to schools directly first to determine the demand for the product in the National School Lunch Program. USDA product purchases are request driven, so the list of available foods must reflect items that are currently being used or are requested by schools or household programs.
- **Be produced by a responsible entity.** Vendors must demonstrate their responsibility in areas such as experience and past performance through successful participation in a commercial/governmental setting. USDA will not be the first or the only customer for a product. Vendors must also demonstrate financial solvency and the capacity to meet contract requirements in terms of quality, timeliness, and quantity. Refer to the [Federal Acquisition Regulation \(FAR\) 9.104-1](#) for additional information.

If your product meets all of the above criteria, you may submit product information to the USDA Foods mailbox for consideration: USDAFoods@fns.usda.gov. Please provide a complete description of the product, including packaging information, nutritional data, indications for use, cost per pound, and storage requirements. In addition, items that are used in Child Nutrition Programs require an ingredient statement, product formulation statement or CN Label, and allergen information. USDA will review all submissions that include the requested information to determine if the product could be considered for a limited purchase in future procurement cycles.

If your company supplies products that are already being purchased by USDA, please refer to the [AMS website](#) for information on how to become a qualified vendor and on upcoming solicitation schedules.