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# School Programs Commodity Update

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## USDA Launches a New One-Stop Commodity Information Website ([www.commodityfoods.usda.gov](http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov))

**O**n October 7, 2003, Ann M. Veneman, the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, announced the official launching of the new one-stop USDA Commodity Food Network (CFN) Website.

The CFN Website is an e-government resource designed to provide a wealth of information about the purchase and distribution of USDA's commodities.

"Improving access to nutrition assistance programs is a priority for the Bush Administration," Veneman said. "The Commodity Food Network will enable schools, community feeding organizations, state agencies, Native American tribal organizations, and others to have instant access to information about USDA's commodities." And that is why this one-stop commodity information website is "An Idea Whose Time Has Come!"

Visitors to the site will be able to access a variety of commodity information. Of particular interest to schools, the CFN website includes a special web page

designed primarily for "Schools and other Child Nutrition Programs." This page provides direct links to:

- The latest Food Safety Recalls and Updates;
- A list of the USDA Commodity Foods Available to States for Schools in School Year 2004;
- Program Regulations;
- National Policy Memorandum Database;
- The Commodity Fact Sheet Database and Nutritional Facts for almost 160 commodities;
- Product Specifications and Recipes;
- Commercial Item Descriptions;
- Downloadable Files of the USDA's Commodity Codes and Commodity Descriptions used for food ordering;
- The USDA Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS); and more.

According to Elaine Freeman, the Food Distribution Program Director for the Georgia Department of Education and the current President of the American Commodity Distribution Association, "...I am totally impressed and thrilled with the website. It looks great, and it's easy to navigate. Everything you can think of seems to be there, and we can even access ECOS from it... In short--I think it's great!"

We hope that you, too, will like the site. If so, we suggest that you make it one of the favorite "bookmarks" on your internet browser.

And finally, we want to thank all of you who attended the presentation on the CFN Website during your last Annual National Convention that was held in Reno, Nevada in July 2003.

Your comments and feedback were very helpful to us, and we greatly appreciated the warm reception that you gave all of our USDA team members who were invited to speak at such a well-organized and well-attended event.

To view the CFN Website, please go to: [www.commodityfoods.usda.gov](http://www.commodityfoods.usda.gov).

The website was developed by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in collaboration with several other USDA agencies including the Agricultural Marketing Service and the Farm Service Agency, which gather competitive bids from vendors, award contracts, and ensure delivery of all purchased commodities. FNS also coordinated this

effort with USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, which ensures that meat and poultry products are safe to consume.

### Comments

If you have any questions or comments on our products or service, you may email them to us at: [fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov](mailto:fdd-psb@fns.usda.gov), or you can mail them to us at the following:

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### Acronym List

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
CFN	Commodity Food Network
ECOS	Electronic Commodity Ordering System
FDD	Food Distribution Division
FDP	Food Distribution Programs
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FOCUS	Food Ordering and Customer Service
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
SY	School Year
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

**Prepared by:** Program Support Branch, in conjunction with the Schools and Institutions Branch and PCIMS, USDA, FNS, FDD