

Wisconsin USDA Foods for the New Food Service Director

Frequently Asked Questions

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What are USDA Foods?

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) purchases food to support American farmers and donates these foods to different government supported programs, like the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). USDA food products include beef, pork, fish, poultry, dairy, fruits, vegetables, oil, and grain.

Who participates in and orders USDA Foods?

96 percent of Wisconsin School Food Authorities (SFAs) order USDA Foods. The USDA Foods Program is one of the benefits of participating in NSLP.

What are some benefits of ordering USDA Foods?

- USDA Foods are a great cost savings. Every dollar's worth of donated USDA Foods used in a school menu frees up money that would otherwise be spent on commercial food purchases.
- Saves staff time on purchasing food, because USDA does the procurement, contracting, and purchasing of USDA Foods for SFAs. USDA ensures the USDA Foods that are purchased meet the NSLP's Buy American requirements.
- USDA chooses products that meet dietary guidelines, have nutritional value, and taste good.

How can I find out what my expected USDA Foods orders are for the school year?

- Login to [WI USDA Ordering System](#).
- [View Expected Orders on the "Survey" tab](#).
- Need help logging in? Call (608) 267- 4598 or (608) 267-4599 or email dpisnusdafoods@dpi.wi.gov.

How will my USDA Foods be delivered?

It depends on the product types.

- For USDA DoD Fresh Produce, all deliveries are made by the DoD Fresh Produce provider.
- For Direct Diversion and Cheese Rebate end products, all deliveries are made by your SFA's contracted commercial distributor.
- For USDA Foods Direct Delivery and State Processing Products, check the WI Ordering System Application tab. You'll see either State delivery is selected, or you'll see a commercial distributor's name in the delivery dropdown.

- State deliveries are made by the DPI contracted Midwest Perishable Industries (MPI). MPI sends an email with delivery details to the delivery contact at your SFA.
- If a commercial distributor is listed, contact the listed distributor for ordering and delivery information.

What are the DPI fees for ordering USDA Food?

- DPI's fees depend on the product types. USDA Foods fees may include administrative, processing, and storage. Delivery fees depend on whether your SFA opted for delivery by DPI's state contracted distributor or by the SFA's contracted commercial distributor. The most recent DPI fees are on [DPI's Product Value and Fees](#) webpage.
- DPI's fees to SFAs for USDA Foods are automatically deducted from the NSLP Claim as "Commodity Charges Recovered" in the Wisconsin Child Nutrition Online Services system.

How much USDA Food products can I order for my SFA?

- The amount of donated USDA Foods you can order is based on how much entitlement (in dollars) your SFA is given by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
- From time to time, DPI or USDA may offer bonus USDA Foods due to a surplus in the market or USDA's purchasing. The entitlement dollar value of these products *is not* subtracted from your entitlement dollar balance.

What are USDA Foods entitlement dollars?

- USDA Foods entitlement is a dollar value that DPI distributes to SFAs that have opted to participate in USDA Foods ordering. The amount of entitlement that a SFA receives is based on the number of lunches served last school year. Entitlement dollars can only be used to order donated USDA Foods.
- When you submit the Annual Order Survey or take advantage of other order opportunities, the value of the products decreases the balance on your USDA entitlement.

Are my entitlement dollars all spent for the school year?

- You should check! Login to [WI USDA Ordering System](#). Click on the Entitlement tab and see if you have unspent dollars.

I still have entitlement to spend down this year. Are there more ordering opportunities?

- When there are any ordering opportunities, DPI emails the primary contact listed in the Ordering System. The email will include ordering instructions.

- DPI strongly recommends SFAs plan to spend all entitlement during the Annual Order Survey. After the Survey closes, DPI will open other opportunities from time to time, but number of products listed are very limited.

How do I get emails from DPI about USDA Foods?

- Login to [WI USDA Ordering System](#). Click on the Application tab.
- [How to Update Contact Information on “Application” tab](#).
- The listed Primary Contact will receive emails with reminders, instructions, and deadlines for USDA Foods. The Primary Contact is responsible for forwarding our emails to staff.

When is the next Wisconsin USDA Foods Annual Order Survey?

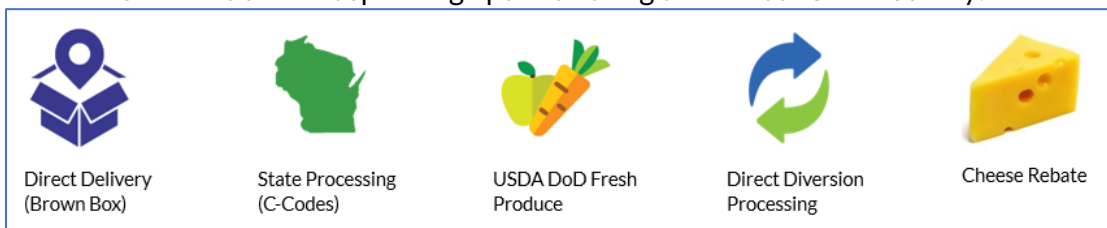
- DPI’s USDA Foods Annual Order Survey opens in February and only stays open for 2 to three weeks. The primary contact will receive emails with ordering information in January.
- DPI strongly recommends you plan to spend all your entitlement during the Annual Order Survey.

Another school or company orders our USDA Foods for our SFA. What are my tasks regarding USDA Foods?

- SFAs that have Food Service Management Companies or Joint or Vended Agreements are responsible for confirming that their SFA is receiving the value of the USDA Foods Program from those food service partners.

What products should I order while the Annual Order Survey is open?

- DPI offers five entitlement spending options during the Annual Order Survey:



- For all your ordering options, and lists of products, go to the DPI [Annual Order Survey](#) webpage. You can navigate to ordering options and product descriptions from there.
- Review menu planning, inventory, and the USDA Foods lists. What USDA Foods items can easily fit into your menus? What items offer the most value compared to commercial prices? Which products are versatile and can be used for more than one menu item?
- Look at previous ordering history. Login to the WI USDA Foods Ordering System. Click on the Survey tab. Change the program year to review the ordering history.

- Evaluate how current products are received by students and make changes to other products as needed.

I'm new, and the previous Food Service Director ordered Direct Diversion (in bulk pounds), what do I need to do?

- Call your prime vendor! Ask for your product lists. Ask how to place orders each month. Make sure vendor explains how to enter orders for the discounted USDA Foods products instead of full price commercial. Ask how far in advance should you submit orders. Ask if there is an order and delivery drop minimum.
- Sign up for access to [K12FoodService](#) and/or [ProcessorLink](#). Login and track your USDA pounds usage and balance for the year. You'll see your beginning pounds balance by product and processor. Plan to have balances at zero by end of school year. If you are having trouble using up your pounds, call your vendor or broker to adjust your order plan.
- Read your vendor contracts and procurement materials (the base contracts, not just the renewals).

What are my primary tasks for USDA Foods this year?

These are tasks we recommend you do monthly:

- After the 15th of the month: If you are expecting a **Direct Delivery** or **State Processed** product delivery next month, login to the [WI USDA Ordering System](#), and review/print your Order.
- Check your inventory onsite and inventory at commercial distributor. Confirm you have a plan to use these USDA Foods on your menus.
- If you order bulk pounds for further processing (**Cheese Rebate** or **Direct Diversion** Programs), login to [K12FoodService](#) and/or [ProcessorLink](#) and monitor your pounds usage. Confirm you are on track or have a plan to use pounds by end of year. Submit orders to your prime vendor. Confirm you are receiving credit for the value of USDA Foods per your prime vendor contract, as applicable.
- If you have an active **USDA DoD Fresh Produce** account in FFAVORS, monitor your balance. Submit orders. Confirm you are on track or have a plan to use balance by end of year.

When do I start planning for the next school year?

- We recommend you start planning for the next school year in November. Watch for emails from our team with reminders and links to resources.
 - Review the most current DPI and USDA Foods Products and Price Lists.
 - Think about your menu goals and how to adjust your USDA Foods order.

- If you have any procurement to do (for prime vendor, commercial distributor, or direct to processor), this is the time to start. You'll need award decisions made by mid-February when the DPI USDA Foods Annual Order Survey opens.
- Review your contracts for renewal and finalize any changes by mid-February when the DPI USDA Foods Annual Order Survey opens.
- If you are planning for Direct Diversion, this is when DPI posts the list of eligible products and processors.
- This is a great time to do student taste tests.

How do I stay current on tasks and training related to the USDA Foods program?

- Review the [DPI USDA Foods Timeline](#) and mark your calendar with monthly and annual reminders.
- Watch for emails from DPI School Nutrition Team - USDA Foods.
- Attend USDA Foods Networking and Training Events. These events cover program and policy updates, time sensitive reminders, and a focus topic training session. For a listing of future dates, training topics, and live event links, visit the [DPI USDA Foods Training](#) webpage.

Questions? Contact us at: dpisusdafoods@dpi.wi.gov or call 608-267-4599 or 608-267-4598.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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