



# USDA Foods at the Executive Level

Round Table Discussion

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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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# TOPICS

- **Topic 1: Strategic Optimization of USDA Foods Entitlement**
- **Topic 2: Advanced Cost Modeling: True Net Cost of USDA Foods**
- **Topic 3: Nutrition Standards & Student Acceptance**
- **Topic 4: Future of Commodity Processing**
- **Topic 5: Risk Management in Commodity Processing**
- **Final Thoughts: Leadership Reflection & Mentorship**



# Topic 1: Strategic Optimization of USDA Foods Entitlement

## Discussion Prompts

- How are you intentionally balancing USDA Food direct delivery vs. further-processed items?
- Where have you seen entitlement *underutilized* or *misaligned* with operational realities? (appearance, availability, item changes taste or texture from original testing)
- Are you planning entitlement proactively—or reacting year to year?

## Follow-Up Questions

- What data points do you rely on most when making entitlement decisions?
- How early do you commit to processing—and what risks does that create?



# Topic 2: Advanced Cost Modeling: True Net Cost of USDA Foods

## Discussion Prompts

- What hidden costs most often get overlooked?
- How do you compare USDA Foods to commercial equivalents?

## Follow-Up Questions

- Have you ever discontinued a commodity because the *true* cost was too high? If so, please share details of your cost analysis.
- What cost data would strengthen your case with leadership?



# Topic 3: Nutrition Standards & Student Acceptance

## Discussion Prompts

- Where have nutrition changes impacted participation?
- How has processing helped—or hurt—acceptance?
- What products failed despite good intentions?

## Follow-Up Questions

- How do you involve students in product evaluation?
- What flexibility do processors truly have?
- Where do nutrition goals conflict with operational realities?



# Topic 4: Future of Commodity Processing

## Discussion Prompts

- Will further processing increase or decline?
- How will automation and central kitchens change the equation?
- What skills will future directors need?

## Follow-Up Questions

- How are you preparing your team for these shifts?
- What innovations excite—or concern—you most?
- What role should USDA Foods play long term?



# Topic 5: Risk Management in Commodity Processing

## Discussion Prompts

- Where are your biggest exposure points?
- How do you manage long-term commitments amid enrollment uncertainty?
- What's your plan for excess inventory?

## Follow-Up Questions

- Have you ever had to reallocate or liquidate commodities?
- How do you prepare for processor disruptions or recalls?
- What contingency plans are already in place?



# FINAL THOUGHTS

## Leadership Reflection & Mentorships

### Discussion Prompts

- What would you do differently starting over?
- What mistakes cost you the most?
- How should new directors approach commodities?

### Follow-Up Questions

- What advice would you give your successor?
- How can associations better support mentorship?
- What lessons shouldn't be relearned?



# Questions?

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