

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL SCHOOL

3E'S OF HEALTHY LIVING *Lunch Program*
EDUCATION, EXERCISE AND EATING RIGHT

January 2025 Monthly Newsletter

Local Food for Schools

Next Local Food for Schools Office Hours: January 8, 2025, 3-4 p.m. CST

Get the latest updates on the Local Food for Schools (LFS) grant at the January LFS Office Hours. The LFS team will provide tips on making the most of your funds before the current grant period ends. Visit the LFS webpage to view recorded sessions and slides from previous Office Hours. If you are participating in the LFS grant and are not receiving direct communications, please contact localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

New Training: Identifying Top Sources of Added Sugars

Team Nutrition is pleased to announce a new addition to the training series, The Road to Successful Menu Planning for School Meals, to help schools plan and implement menus that support updates to the school nutrition standards. The new 15-minute training covers identifying top sources of added sugars in your school menus!

This training series includes quarterly 1-hour live (and recorded) webinars co-hosted with the Institute of Child Nutrition, and short on-demand trainings. Both are designed to provide school nutrition professionals with quick tips, tools, and knowledge needed to meet the nutrition standards for added sugars and sodium and to help create a road map for successful school menu planning now through School Year 2027-2028.

Watch this recorded 1-hour webinar with the Institute of Child Nutrition:
• [Creating Your Road Map to School Menu Planning Success!](#)

Check out these short (about 15 minutes each), on-demand trainings:

• [Defining Added Sugars and How to Find Them On a Nutrition Facts Label](#)

- [Choosing Yogurt That is Lower in Added Sugars for School Meals](#)
 - [Choosing Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars for School Meals](#)
 - [Choosing Flavored Milk That Is Lower in Added Sugars for School Meals](#)
 - [Identifying Top Sources of Added Sugars and Simple Swaps *NEW*](#)
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[TANS Update](#)

The Texas Automated Nutrition System (TANS) will replace TX-UNPS for administration and management of all programs beginning with Program Year 2026 applications. Timelines, resources, and updates are available now on the [Systems Hub](#).

[2025 NSLP Financial Report](#)

The 2025 NSLP Financial Report opened on January 6, 2025.

All SFAs must ensure that the reported data on the Financial Report accurately reflects the SFA's financial operations for the 2023-2024 fiscal period being reported. The Financial Report will be in Jotform this year.

Squaremeals.org includes resources to assist you in the completion of the 2025 NSLP Financial Report:

- [Link to the financial report Jotform](#)
- [A blank financial report](#)
- [A "preparing for the financial report worksheet"](#)
- [A new interactive, self-paced training for completing your financial report](#)

Please submit questions regarding the [financial report](#) to your ESC specialist or to school.operations@texasagriculture.go

[Preparation for the Upcoming WBSCM Requisition and Ordering Cycle](#)

To prepare for the upcoming WBSCM-USDA Foods requisition and ordering cycle, please keep the following important items in mind:

- Ensure you have an active WBSCM Login: All WBSCM logins will use Login.gov credentials, as the eAuth User ID is no longer valid
 - Login Assistance: If you experience any login issues, please refer to the WBSCM resources and training page.
 - Ordering Labs for technical assistance: All Education Service Centers (ESCs) will host and conduct ordering labs, both in-person and virtually in January and February.
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[USDA Requests Public Comments on Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting](#)

USDA issued a request for information on December 26, 2024, to obtain input to help inform future policymaking, guidance, and technical assistance related to grain-based desserts and high-protein yogurt crediting in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). Public input may be submitted to USDA through March 26, 2025.

On February 7, 2023, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued a proposed rule to update CNP meal pattern requirements. The rule included a proposal to limit grain-based desserts in the School Breakfast Program to no more than two ounce equivalents per week, consistent with the National School Lunch Program. However, based on public feedback, FNS did not finalize that proposed limit in the final rule, which published on April 25, 2024. Partners raised concerns that the proposal would limit options at school breakfast and recommended that FNS re-evaluate use of grain-based desserts at school breakfast. In the final rule, USDA committed to exploring methods for improving and simplifying grain-based dessert requirements by soliciting further partner input.

Regarding yogurt, the variety of yogurt available at retail and in the K-12 market, including high-protein yogurt (e.g., Greek and Greek-style yogurt), has grown and evolved significantly. Therefore, in 2017, FNS requested public input on whether high-protein yogurt (including Greek and Greek-style yogurt) should credit differently than regular yogurt. Those comments were mixed and, as a result, FNS maintained consistent crediting for all yogurt in the CNPs. FNS is now seeking additional public input to determine if any new information warrants a change to yogurt crediting in the CNPs.

Additional Resources:

- More information about the request for information can be found on the [FNS website](#)
- Comments can be submitted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to Request for Information: Grain-Based [Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting](#) in Child Nutrition Programs and follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

USDA Foods Ordering Updates

School Year 2025-2026

- TDA has distributed the initial Planned Assistance Level (PAL) in WBSCM for PY26 in December. The current rate of assistance published by USDA is 30 cents per meal. In January 2025, the rate of assistance will be updated by USDA to reflect the final adjustments anticipated for program year 2026.
- If you opted into the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetables program you will also see your allocation set aside that will be loaded into FFAVORS for school year 2026 at the beginning of the program year.
- At this time USDA Foods team will not be making any adjustments to entitlement until after USDA releases the updated rate of assistance. All requests to opt-in to DoD have been finalized and will not be adjusted at this time.
- USDA Foods will be opening catalogs for PY26 in WBSCM, January 2025.

School Year 2024-2025

DoD Fresh FFV Program Participants:

- Please remember to complete receipts in FFAVORS for each delivery within 2 business days from the date of delivery.
- TDA monitors monthly utilization of DoD funds in FFAVORS to ensure proper use of entitlement. To maximize your DoD entitlement SFAs should be spending, at minimum, 10% per month. SFAs who have not been utilizing funds may be at risk of redistribution once the usage analysis begins.
- TDA will reach out to participants identified as low usage.

All ordering is complete for SY25. RAs can validate with a Requisition Status Report in WBSCM and checking the "Requisition Status" for "Approved by SDA".

- Please check your user accounts in WBSCM to validate that appropriate SFA staff are active, have the correct roles assigned, and that their emails are up to date.
- Sales Orders that are in "Order Received" status are available at your contracted warehouse and must be placed on a delivery schedule as soon as possible.
- Please check with your contracted warehouse if you need any available surplus.

TX-UNPS Weekly Commodity Bulletin will no longer track entitlement allocations and balances for SY25. RAs must utilize a combination of reporting from WBSCM, FFAVORS and distributor systems.

For questions regarding USDA Foods, please contact your respective Education Service Center Child Nutrition representative(s) for guidance, training, and technical assistance in WBSCM.

NSLP-USDA Foods Inventory and Contract Management

**SY25 Mid-Year Inventory Counts are complete for all State Contracted Warehouses (EPFH, SAFB, USF, and GSF). **

- Your State Contracted Warehouse inventory system is the inventory system used for SY25, so it is highly important that training has been completed for staff that place delivery orders and maintain inventory at your school sites. Ask system questions directly to the State Contracted Warehouse staff.
- Ensure you are organizing your current storage space to make room for your SY25 USDA Foods and monitor your inventory in conjunction with your menu planning. If you have any questions regarding your menus and/or inventory, contact your Education Service Center representative.
- As a reminder, keep your USDA Foods inventory levels less than 6MOH to maintain compliance with the NSLP for SY25. Monitor your Best-If-Used-By Dates, Expiration Dates, and Pack Dates to maintain inventory at optimum quality.
- Ensure all invoices are paid within 30 days of receiving your inventory/private storage fees.
- TDA has been reviewing the SY25 Private Storage reports from all FDP Regions and has instructed State Contracted Warehouses to force ship inventory that has been sitting over 45 days to your sites. Please place your delivery orders, accordingly.
- As you are aware, the Weekly Commodity Bulletin is no longer available to schools in TX-UNPS. In previous years, TDA has utilized the below reports/resources to pull together the information presented within the Weekly Commodity Bulletin. Each school will need to review the following reports/resources to gather the necessary information:

1. Identify items received/used through the reports below:

WBSCM Reports

a. **Requisition Status Report**

b. Value of Commodities Received – details products that have been shipped to your warehouse or processor:

*State Contracted Warehouse reports

*DOD Usage Reports

*ProcessorLink or K12 usage Reports

2. Once you have items used/received items, you can use one of two tools on SquareMeals to determine value of commodities received:

a. Cost Comparison Tool – used to help you determine the value of commodities received to ensure that your school received the correct credit, rebates, or discounts.

b. **USDA Process Material Prices** – provides an average material price for all USDA Foods even though it references Processor Materials.

3. If you need additional support with these, please contact your Education Service Representative.

4. Connect with your ESC should you need assistance with any transfer requests. Ensure you are utilizing the [H4529 Transfer Jotform](#) for TDA approved transfers.

[Now Available: New Recipes in the Child Nutrition Recipe Box \(CNRB\)](#)

Fifteen standardized recipes have been added to the Child Nutrition Recipe Box (CNRB), seven of which are existing favorites that have been revised to reflect updates from the final rule, “Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” and eight new recipes that provide additional ideas for breakfast and lunch menus.

The eight new recipes include Whole Wheat Pancakes, Cauliflower Rice, Chicken Salad, Griddle Corn Cakes, Breakfast Bowl, Taco Salad, Sweet Potato Hummus, and Quinoa Bowl. The seven revised recipes are Pumpkin Bread, Oatmeal Muffin Squares, Kati Kati Chicken, Jerk Fish Wrap, Orange Glazed Carrots, Orange Glazed Sweet Potatoes, and Vegetable Frittata.

USDA Standardized Recipes provide program operators and menu planners with appealing and practical menu options for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

You may access the [newly-released recipes](#) in the Child Nutrition Recipe Box – USDA Standardized Recipes.

[Apply for the HMI Recognition Awards Today!](#)

Visit our [SquareMeals](#) page to see our 11 Texas HMI awardees so far! There is still time to apply for this national recognition. Visit the [HMI website](#) for an overview video of each award. **The application deadline is June 30, 2025.** Apply today!

[Final Rule Resources](#)

Visit [USDA](#) for more information on the Final Rule and upcoming changes. Let us know what kind of resources would best support you in implementing these new meal standards – [Click here](#)



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