



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

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Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: March 13, 2013

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #21-13
Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements

The purpose of this memorandum is to identify common issues related to inaccurate or misleading product literature, product labels and fact sheets; provide guidance about how product literature can be used to make purchasing decisions; and highlight several sample product formulation statements that can be used to document a product's contribution to the meal pattern requirements in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs.

Fact sheets and product labels provide a way for food manufacturers to communicate with program operators about how their products may contribute to the meal pattern requirements for meals served under the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Complaints to the USDA about inaccurate or misleading product literature, product labels and fact sheets have become common.

Schools and other program operators are not required to offer processed products with Child Nutrition (CN) labels; however, it is important to recognize that **CN labeled products ensure that the food provides the stated contribution toward the USDA meal pattern requirements.** These foods are also processed under a quality control plan administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service or National Marine Fisheries Service using guidelines provided by the USDA. CN labels are available only for items that contribute to the meat/meat alternates component. For more information on the USDA's CN Labeling Program, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/default.htm>.

When purchasing a processed product without a CN label, the school food authority (SFA) must have a completed and signed product formulation statement on manufacturer's letterhead that demonstrates how the processed product contributes to the meal pattern requirements. SFAs must also maintain files on nutrient information to meet the requirements of program regulations in 7CFR 210 and 220. If there is no nutrition facts panel on the processed product, the program operator must obtain nutrient information from the manufacturer.

SFAs are ultimately responsible if a menu does not fulfill the meal pattern requirements; therefore, they must keep records of supporting documentation (original CN product label from the product carton or signed product formulation statements) provided by manufacturers. It is the SFA's responsibility to request supporting documentation and verify its accuracy.

General Guidance for Reviewing Product Formulation Statements

An appropriate product formulation statement will provide specific information about the product and show how the credit is obtained citing Child Nutrition Program resources or regulations. SFAs must review this information for accuracy using the steps below.

- **Review Product Formulation Statements prior to purchasing processed products.**
The USDA has several resources that can help menu planners with this process including a reviewer's checklist and sample product formulation statements. These are available on the USDA's Food Manufacturers/Industry Web page at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/foodmanufacturers.htm> or the direct links below.
 - *Checklist for Evaluating Manufacturer Product Formulation Statements (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) Products:*
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/reviewer_checklist.pdf
 - *Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in School Meals (SY 2012-13 Only):*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/PFSgrains12-13.pdf>
 - *Sample Product Formulation Statement (Product Analysis) for Meat/Meat Alternate Products:* <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/PFSmma.pdf>
 - *Sample Product Formulation Statement for Documenting Grains in School Meals Required Beginning SY 2013-14:*
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/PFSgrains13-14.pdf>
 - Specific policies for alternate protein products and food-based menu planning are available in the USDA's handout, "*Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP)*," at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/cnlabeling/APPindustryfaqs.pdf>.

SFAs can use these documents to determine how a product credits toward the meat/meat alternate and grain components of the meal pattern requirements. Manufacturers may need to modify these statements for various types of products available in the market place. For example, cheese pizza could have crediting information about the red/orange vegetable subgroup in addition to the meat/meat alternate and grain components.

- **Determine that creditable ingredients listed in the product formulation statement match a description in the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG)* available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/foodbuyingguide.html>.** All creditable ingredients in the product formulation statement must match a description in the FBG. If a product formulation statement for a specific product claims to provide a higher credit than what is listed in the FBG, the product formulation statement must clarify all crediting ingredients and demonstrate how the product provides that credit according to USDA regulations, guidance or policy.

- Verify that the credit a product contributes to meal pattern requirements is not greater than the serving size of the product.** For example, a 2.2-ounce beef patty may not credit for more than 2 ounce equivalents of meat/meat alternates. SFAs must ensure that the product formulation statement proves how the manufacturer obtained the claimed credit and that creditable components are visible in the finished product. It is never acceptable for a manufacturer to simply state that the product provides a certain amount of credit for the meal pattern. For example, fruit-filled pancakes cannot provide meat alternate because it is not obvious how the product contributes to the meat alternate component. For a product to claim a meat or meat alternate contribution, the product must have a visible meat or meat alternate present such as a sausage link, beans, cheese or peanut butter and the method for crediting these items should be outlined.

The USDA has become increasingly aware of misleading and inaccurate information on product fact sheets. The USDA encourages SFAs to review product literature carefully since they are responsible if their menus do not meet the meal pattern requirements. It is important to note that CN labeled products provide program operators with a warranty against audit claims when the product is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. **A product formulation statement does not provide any warranty against audit claims. Any crediting information received from a manufacturer other than a valid CN label should be checked by the SFA or other program operator for accuracy prior to the item being included in the reimbursable meal.**

Questions may be directed to:

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