



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs

FROM: John Frassinelli, Chief
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: September 30, 2014

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #58-14
Information and Guidance on the Domestic Beef Market

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information and guidance to school food authorities (SFAs) on the current status of the domestic beef market.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has notified state agencies that the wholesale prices for ground beef have increased more than 30 percent since last year. Both commercial and USDA purchased beef prices continue to rise and supplies of domestic beef are tight nationwide.

The USDA understands that lean beef is a popular ingredient in school cafeterias across the country, and that SFAs are working hard to plan menus and coordinate food purchases for the coming months. The USDA continues to encourage schools to purchase and use beef in their menus as a good source of lean protein.

The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are working to address challenges related to the current market situation. SFAs should be aware that supply interruptions for USDA Foods are primarily limited to USDA beef that is purchased for further processing. Products that the USDA delivers directly to states (i.e., USDA fine grind, patties and cooked meat items) have been steadier in supply and have experienced fewer related delays. However, the AMS is engaging with the industry to increase the number of domestic beef suppliers by approving new processing plants, in addition to coordinating with the FNS to ensure that beef purchases are equitably allocated to all states and processors.

In the short-term, should schools find that they are unable to afford or secure sufficient quantities of beef commercially or through USDA Foods, the USDA is offering the following guidance on ways that schools can ensure they obtain protein sources to provide students with healthy, balanced meals. The USDA offers a wide selection of lower cost protein-rich foods, including chicken, pork, fish, legumes, cheese, and eggs, that may be readily incorporated into local menu planning. In many cases, meal pattern crediting for these foods will be similar, particularly if their fat content is consistent with that of the beef that might have been used. Furthermore, other meat products are often available in the same forms that are available for beef (e.g., ground, patties, etc.), simplifying recipe substitutions. In addition to the protein products described above, fruits and vegetables continue to be plentiful and are available to expend USDA Foods entitlement dollars.

For more information on alternative purchasing options, please visit the following Web sites:

- [Food Buying Guide](#) for school meals;
- [USDA Foods List](#);
- USDA's [Team Nutrition](#) Web site;
- USDA's *Just the Facts!* Flyer on [legumes](#); and
- USDA's *Just the Facts!* Flyer on [cheese](#).

Questions regarding regulations pertaining to direct certification may be directed to:

Consultants for School Nutrition Programs	
County	Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairfield County 	Fionnuala Brown fionnuala.brown@ct.gov 860-807-2129
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartford County (towns/cities beginning with A-R) 	Teri Dandeneau teri.dandeneau@ct.gov 860-807-2079
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hartford County (towns/cities beginning with S-W) • Windham County 	Susan Alston susan.alston@ct.gov 860-807-2081
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litchfield County 	Allison Calhoun-White allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov 860-807-2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middlesex County • Tolland County 	Andy Paul andrew.paul@ct.gov 860-807-2048
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Haven County 	Jackie Schipke jackie.schipke@ct.gov 860-807-2123
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