

# Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to reimbursable meals and snacks served in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

For information on the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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## Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

### Crediting Alternate Protein Products (APPs)

Alternate protein products (APPs) credit as meat alternates in the CACFP meal pattern. APPs are food ingredients that may be used alone or in combination with meat, poultry, or seafood. They are processed from soy or other vegetable protein sources and may be dehydrated granules, particles, or flakes. Some examples include soy flour, soy concentrate, soy isolate, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolates, and casein. APPs may be used in the dry (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form. APPs may be used in the dry (nonhydrated), partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form.

APPs are generally used as part of a formed meat patty or in a vegetarian patty resembling a meat product. Examples of foods that might contain added APPs include beef patties, beef crumbles, pizza topping, meat loaf, meat sauce, taco filling, burritos, and tuna salad.

Processed food items such as vegetarian burgers may contain APP, but the food item itself is not an APP because it contains other ingredients such as seasonings or breading. APPs do not include tofu, surimi, seitan, or tempeh.

A 1-ounce serving of a creditable APP provides 1 oz eq of the MMA component. The total MMA contribution cannot exceed the weight of the product.



## Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

### Criteria for APPs

APPs must meet the USDA's requirements specified in [appendix A](#) of the CACFP regulations (7 CFR 226). These regulations specify that APPs may credit for part or all the MMA requirement if they meet the three criteria below.

1. The APP must be processed so that some portion of the non-protein constituents of the food is removed. This refers to the manufacturing process for APP. APP must be safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal sources.
2. The biological quality of the protein in the APP must be at least 80 percent of casein (milk protein), determined by performing a Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS). The PDCAAS is a method of evaluating protein quality.
3. The APP contains at least 18 percent protein by weight when fully hydrated or formulated. "When hydrated or formulated" refers to a dry APP and the amount of water, fat, oil, colors, flavors, or any other substances that have been added.

Menu planners cannot determine if an APP product meets these criteria by reading the product's label. The labeling laws of the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) require manufacturers to list product ingredients, but percentage labeling is voluntary.

For example, a product may list whey protein concentrate and hydrolyzed soy protein in the ingredients but will not indicate the percentage of these protein ingredients by weight. This means that manufacturers must provide the appropriate crediting documentation. For more information, refer to the USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products](#).

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## Required Documentation for APPs

The USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) does not contain yield information for APPs. CACFP facilities must obtain documentation from the manufacturer that the product meets the USDA's APP criteria. Without appropriate documentation, APPs cannot credit in CACFP meals and snacks. Acceptable documentation for APPs includes:

- the original Child Nutrition (CN) label from the product carton or a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- a product formulation statement (PFS) from the manufacturer with supporting documentation on company letterhead that the APP ingredient meets the USDA's requirements. Sample APP documentation is on page 6 of the USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products \(APP\)](#).

The manufacturer's documentation should include information on the percent protein contained in the dry alternate protein product and in the prepared product. For an APP product mix, manufacturers should provide information on the amount by weight of dry APP in the package, hydration instructions, and instructions on how to combine the mix with meat or other meat alternates.

If the PFS for a commercial product lists APP ingredients that are being credited as the MMA component, the manufacturer must provide supporting documentation to indicate that the APP ingredients meet the USDA's APP requirements. APP ingredients without this supporting documentation cannot credit in CACFP meals and snacks.

The USDA's [Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products \(APP\)](#) provides additional guidance on documenting the APP requirements. For information on CN labels and PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#).

Additional guidance on the crediting documentation requirements is available on the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products, of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

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## Storing crediting documentation

CACFP facilities must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the CACFP (refer to the CSDE's [Records Retention Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

## Considerations for Reducing Choking Risks for Young Children

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Some APP foods may be choking hazards, such as tube-shaped meats like hotdogs, sausage, and meat sticks. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what types of APP foods to offer in CACFP menus. Modify menus as appropriate and use preparation techniques to reduce choking risk. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

## Resources

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/accepting\\_processed\\_product\\_documentation\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_cacfp.pdf)

Accepting Product Documentation (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/accepting-product-documentation>

Bite Size Module 2: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

Child Nutrition Labels (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/child-nutrition-labels>

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit\\_commercial\\_mma\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_commercial_mma_cacfp.pdf)

## Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit\\_deli\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_deli_cacfp.pdf)

Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit\\_tofu\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/credit_tofu_cacfp.pdf)

Meats and Meat Alternates Component (CSDE's Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/meats-and-meat-alternates>

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements>

Questions and Answers on Alternate Protein Products (APP) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/questions-and-answers-alternate-protein-products-app>

Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources\\_cacfp\\_meal\\_patterns.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/resources_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf)

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using\\_cn\\_labels\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_cn_labels_cacfp.pdf)

Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

[http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using\\_product\\_formulation\\_statements\\_cacfp.pdf](http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_product_formulation_statements_cacfp.pdf)

## **Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program**

What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

## Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/app\\_requirements\\_cacfp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/app_requirements_cacfp.pdf).

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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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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