

The School Lunch Tray: January 10, 2024

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly email notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

Action Items

- None

Need to Know

- Reminder: Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS), Applications Due January 22, 2024
- Reminder: Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems (Project SCALES), Applications for First Cohort Due January 26, 2024
- USDA 2023-24 School Food Authority (SFA) Survey on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation
- Resource Roundup: Monitoring Order Status of USDA Foods

Good to Know

- Recording Available for Team Nutrition's webinar: Level Up Your Professional Standards Tracking
- School Nutrition Environment and Services: Policies and Practices That Promote Healthy Eating Among K-12 Students

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.



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Need to Know

Reminder: Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS), Applications Due January 22, 2024

Led by Chef Ann Foundation, these projects will support regional efforts to expand scratch-cooked meal programs, increase equity, foster a resilient supply chain, and create scalable and sustainable change for school districts across the country. Chef Ann Foundation's PLANTS was awarded \$7.8 million and will provide sub-grants of \$500,000-\$600,000 to each of eight awardees. These grants will increase opportunities for regional small- and mid-scale producers, aggregators, and processors to become part of the K-12 school food market. [Applications](#) close on January 22, 2024.

Reminder: Supporting Community Agriculture and Local Education Systems (Project SCALES), Applications for First Cohort Due January 26, 2024

Led by the Center for School and Community Partnerships at Boise State University, these projects will increase the procurement of locally sourced foods by developing innovative partnerships between schools and producers, growers, and processors. In addition, schools will be supported in the preparation of the foods and promoting them to students. Project SCALES was awarded \$16.1 million and will provide two cohorts with sub-grants of up to \$150,000 each (70 total). [Applications for the first cohort](#) close on January 26, 2024. Applications for the second cohort will open in 2025.

USDA 2023-24 School Food Authority (SFA) Survey on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is conducting a web survey of all school food authorities (SFAs) that operate Child Nutrition Programs and needs your input. The survey seeks to collect information on current key challenges SFAs are facing, including those related to school food procurement, program administration, and program finances.

FNS has contracted with Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) to conduct the 2023-24 *SFA Survey on Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation* with all public, charter, and private SFAs nationwide. Your participation is vital to providing FNS with information they need to support school districts during this time. Please take advantage of this opportunity to share your experiences from this school year and communicate the specific issues you are facing in your community directly to FNS.

On January 29, 2024, DIR will email you a link to the survey. It will come from noreply@qemailserver.com. Please add this email address to your approved senders list so you do not miss the email. When completing the survey, you will provide information about your SFA for school year 2023-24. The survey has a maximum of 30 questions and is estimated to take up to 20 minutes to complete. Please complete it as soon as you are able, but no later than **March 11, 2024**.

For questions about this survey, please contact the survey team at DIR toll-free at 844-632-9019 or email SFASupplyChainSurvey@dir-online.com. For additional information, please review the

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[“Frequently Asked Questions” document](#). To learn more about other ongoing FNS surveys and data collection, visit the USDA’s [“Current Data Collections” webpage](#).

Thank you in advance for your support of the 2023-24 Survey and your participation in this important effort.

Resource Roundup: Monitoring Order Status of USDA Foods

The Food Distribution Program (FDP) team frequently reminds school food directors to run a Requisition Status Report at least monthly to monitor the status of USDA Foods orders going to processors and the state contracted warehouse. The [Web-based Supply Chain Management \(WBSCM\) Training Guide](#) on the FDP webpage provides step-by-step instructions on how to run this report, as well as ordering and contact information.

Good to Know

Recording Available for USDA’s webinar: Level Up Your Professional Standards Tracking

A recording is now available of the USDA’s webinar, [Level Up Your Professional Standards Tracking](#). The webinar demonstrated some of the newest time-saving features of the Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool (PSTTT), including logging certifications (e.g., food handler's license) and enhanced search and filter capabilities for managing employee lists and logging training.

School Nutrition Environment and Services: Policies and Practices That Promote Healthy Eating Among K-12 Students

[School Nutrition Environment and Services: Policies and Practices That Promote Healthy Eating Among K-12 Students](#) is a systematic review of 97 articles that identifies ways schools can improve nutrition services and help students adopt food and beverage choices that support health. The authors found that the actions below resulted in increased selection and consumption of healthier foods and beverages:

- Providing school nutrition professionals with professional development.
- Improving the palatability of school meals.
- Offering taste tests.
- Pre-slicing fruit.
- Providing recess before lunch.
- Offering incentives for trying healthier options.
- Providing access to drinking water.



For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs 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/SLT/2024/SLT_01_10_2024.pdf.

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3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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