The School Lunch Tray: October 7, 2026

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. 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.

Action Items

- Reminder: USDA Foods Update: Action Required by Today, October 7, 2026
- Reminder: Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance due October 15, 2026
- Reminder Buy Local Program Submission due October 15, 2026
- Date Change to November 9, 2026: Fall into Farm to School Live! Webinar

Need to Know

- CT Grown for CT Kids Week Celebrations Happening All Across the State
- Take Pictures During CT Grown for CT Kids Week to Enter CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest
- Announcing 2026 School to Farm Field Trips
- Operational Memorandum No. 01-27: Schedule for Submitting Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Monthly Claims for Reimbursement in Fiscal Year 2027
- New CSDE Form: School Food Authority Form for Sites Discontinuing Participation in the Child Nutrition Programs
- USDA Foods Reminder: Ordering USDA Foods in Pepper, Hartford Provision Company's (HPC) Online Ordering System

Good to Know

- None

The School Lunch Tray: October 7, 2026

Action Items

Reminder: USDA Foods Update: Action Required by Today, October 7, 2026

The USDA Foods deliveries below are cancelled. These products will not be available for reorder this school year.

1. Sweet Potatoes Crinkle, Frozen – Material Code 110721, Sales Order Number 5001036673 (100)
2. Corn, Whole Kernel, Canned, 6/10 – Material Code 100313, Sales Order Number 5001035291 (100)
3. Strawberry Slices, Unsweetened, 6/5 LB – Material Code 110860, Sales Order Numbers 5001036538 (100) and (200)
4. Strawberry Frozen Cups – 96/4.5 oz, Material Code 100256, Sales Order Numbers 5001038712 (100) (200) (300) and (400), and 5001046652 (100) and (200)

All entitlement associated with canceled trucks has been returned to the Recipient Agency's (RA) Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) account. Due to the unusually high number of cancellations this year, the Connecticut Food Distribution Program (FDP) is offering an opportunity to allocate any remaining entitlement funds to the RA's USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable account. To participate in moving unused entitlement into FFAVORS for use in the USDA Fresh DoD Program, please complete the steps below.

1. Run the RA's **Entitlement Bonus Summary Report** in WBSCM for the current school year (2027).

2. If you have a positive entitlement balance, forward the report to **Allison Calhoun-White** at allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov and **Sybil Walton** at Walton@ctserc.org no later than **Wednesday, October 7, 2026**.

3. The FDP will provide an update in the School Lunch Tray to indicate to RAs when the dollars will be allocated to FFAVORS. Note: The allocation will not happen immediately because entitlement is moved into FFAVORS quarterly. The target for loading all dollars into FFAVORS is early November.

RAs that are not currently participating in the USDA Fresh DoD Program and have an available entitlement balance may be able to enroll this school year. Please contact the FDP for assistance with establishing a USDA Fresh DoD Program account.

For questions, please contact Allison Calhoun-White at allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov.

Reminder: Readiness in School Everyday (RISE) Funds and Point of Service Counts and Eligibility

The CSDE reminds local educational agencies (LEAs) that have opted into receiving RISE funds that although breakfast is provided at no cost to all students, meals must be counted and claimed at the point of service based on each student's eligibility. Reimbursable breakfasts must be claimed as free, reduced-price, or paid meals according to the student's eligibility, even though all students receive breakfast at no cost. Reduced-price eligible students also receive lunch at no cost under RISE and meals must be counted and claimed at the point of service based on each student's eligibility. Questions may be directed to your school nutrition CNP Team member.

Reminder: Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance due October 15, 2026

To maintain the school food authority's (SFA) nonprofit status, the NSLP regulations require that the fund balance (net cash resources [NCR]) of the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) cannot exceed three months' average expenditures at any time. SFAs with an operating balance in excess of 3 months' average expenditures (exceeds three months' average expenditures as indicated on the Financial Report, Due Date September 15, 2026) must submit a Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance for School Nutrition Programs by October 15, 2026.

For any equipment or services with a unit cost of $5,000 or greater that is not included on the Capital Expenditure Approved List for School Food Authority Equipment Purchases, SFA's must submit a Capital Expenditure Request Form in the CNP system.

For any expenditure that benefits other programs (such as cafeteria furniture, lunch aides, and utilities), a Cost Allocation Plan must be submitted to the CSDE in the CNP System

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Reminder Buy Local Program Submission due October 15, 2026

October 15, 2026, is the deadline to submit for eligible Buy Local Program purchases made from July 2025 through September 2026. Gather invoices, receipts, and other proof of payment and submit them through the Buy Local Program Request Form. After October 15, Buy Local Program requests will draw from participating sponsors' 2026-27 allocation shared back in September and posted on the CSDE's Buy Local Program website.

Date Change to November 9, 2026: Fall into Farm to School Live! Webinar

Please save November 9, 2026, from 2:00-3:30 p.m. for a Fall into Farm to School Webinar & Statewide Live! Join the CSDE, UConn Extension, and Regional Farm to School Coordinators for a review of farm to school initiatives, resources, and support for school year 2026-27. The webinar will include the latest on the CT Fresh Ed Buy Local Program, CT Fresh Ed Compass & Snapshot, and an opportunity to connect with the district's Regional Farm to School Coordinator. **Note:** This webinar replaces the Back to School with Farm to School webinar planned for October 19, 2026.

Need to Know

CT Grown for CT Kids Week Celebrations Happening All Across the State

Thank you to all SFAs supporting Connecticut farmers by showcasing local food during CT Grown for CT Kids Week! The CSDE is reminding all schools to post pictures on social media tagging local farms and partner organizations. Send photos to execdir@snact.org and ctfts@googlegroups.com to be posted on the SNACT and CT Farm to School Collaborative social media accounts, email local legislators, and publicize the amazing work being done in school newsletters and local papers. Refer to the CT Fresh Ed Social Media Toolkit for tips and tricks.

Take Pictures During CT Grown for CT Kids Week to Enter CT Fresh Ed: Great Plates Contest

Not sure how to snap the perfect photo? Check out CT Fresh Ed's quick video, Tips for Taking a Fabulous Photo for the CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest starting later in November for easy tips, then take photos of meals featuring local food and share the best photo. Contest entry instructions and additional photo resources are available on the "CT Great Plates Contest" section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed webpage. Help the CSDE showcase the nutritious, delicious, and local food schools are serving their students by entering this year's Great Plates contest.

Announcing 2026 School to Farm Field Trips



Enrich National Farm to School Month efforts with a farm to school focused tour of a farm in your region. UConn Extension and CSDE are featuring six farms with farm to school sales experience and interest in growing sales. Walk the fields, greenhouses, orchards, and wash and pack areas, while learning about seasonality, ordering, pre-purchasing, and best practices when communicating with a farmer. These trips are free and will fill up quickly. All field trips are open to all school food administrators and team members.

Locations/dates

- Becket Farm, Glastonbury: October 19, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm
- Clover Nook Farm, Bethany: October 20, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm
- Maple Bank Farm, Roxbury: October 21, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm
- Holcomb Farm, Granby: October 22, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm
- Sweet Acre Farm, Lebanon: October 23, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm
- Steadfast Farm, Bethlehem: December 8, 2026, 2:30-4:00pm

For more details and to register, visit CT Fresh ED - School to Farm Field Trips 2026.

Operational Memorandum No. 01-27: Schedule for Submitting Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Monthly Claims for Reimbursement in Fiscal Year 2027

Operational Memorandum No. 01-27: Schedule for Submitting Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Monthly Claims for Reimbursement in Fiscal Year 2027, dated October 1, 2026, outlines important information regarding the monthly claim submission process and claim due dates for fiscal year 2027 (October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027). Please review and share with all staff members involved with preparing and submitting claims, e.g., claim preparers and claim submitters. This memo is available in the "CSDE Memos" section of the CSDE's Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs webpage and the "Claims for School Nutrition Programs" section of the CSDE's Claim Submission Schedule for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

New CSDE Form: School Food Authority Form for Sites Discontinuing Participation in the Child Nutrition Programs

School food authorities (SFAs) that participate in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) must notify the CSDE when sites discontinue operating the CNPs. SFAs must submit this information to the CSDE using the new form, School Food Authority Form for Sites Discontinuing Participation in the Child Nutrition Programs. This form is located under "S" (Sites Discontinuing Participation) on the CSDE's Forms for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

USDA Foods Reminder: Ordering USDA Foods in Pepper, Hartford Provision Company's (HPC) Online Ordering System

RAs should follow the guidance below when ordering USDA Foods in HPC's new Pepper Ordering System.

- Order only items listed on the RA's HPC allocation report. The system displays all foods available in the warehouse, but RAs may only order items allocated to the district.
- Double-check the item and material code. Similar products may have multiple listings (e.g., applesauce cups, apple juice, and applesauce #10 cans).
- Review the order before submitting. Incorrect orders require manual correction by HPC, so please confirm the correct items are ordered.

The CSDE FDP team thanks all RAs for helping to keep the ordering process accurate and efficient.

For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's 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/2026/slt_10_07_2026.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
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   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

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