

# **Illinois Commodity System Instruction Manual**

This manual will provide guidance in the usage of the Illinois Commodity System. The Illinois Commodity System is used to order and manage the orders of United States Department of Agriculture commodities for schools in Illinois. Please print these pages and keep them as a reference. This manual will be useful as you use the Illinois Commodity System throughout the year.

## **Outline**

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## Accessing the Illinois Commodity System

The Illinois Commodity System (ICS) website is an interactive website that allows schools to access Annual Order Forms (AOFs), the Message Board, monthly delivery schedules, Monthly Commodity Bulletins, and Delivery Requests/Reports. This website can be accessed from any Internet-accessible computer. The computer does not have to be located in the school.

If you have not accessed ICS before, the following steps will get you started.

1. Before your initial visit to the ICS website, you must register as a first time user. To do this, call Food Distribution Program staff at 800-545-7892. (It will be helpful to have your 13-digit Food Distribution Program agreement number. This is your 11-digit National School Lunch Program agreement number plus two more digits, usually A1.) We will create a log-in identification which must be at least six characters (we recommend your first initial and last name) and a password which must be at least eight characters. Your password is private and will be known only to you. We recommend each school district only have a couple of personnel that have access to this system.
2. **Make note of your log-in identification and password for reference later and keep them in a safe place.** If you forget your password, the system will allow you to retrieve it by answering a security question you set up when you register. Please do not call our office to register as a *First Time User* again.
3. Connect to the Internet. This must be done with Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher.
4. Access the Food Distribution Program website address at [www.isbe.net/business.htm](http://www.isbe.net/business.htm). (You may want to mark this as a favorite to eliminate the need to re-enter it each time you log on.) In the middle of that page, click on the *Illinois Commodity System*.

Once you have registered on ICS, you only need to fill in your log-in identification and password and click *Login* to access the website.

## Message Board

One of the main features on ICS is the Message Board which contains current and time-sensitive information. This is on the first page when you have log into the system. This is our main method of communicating with Food Distribution Program sponsors, and should be checked at least weekly for new messages.

The Message Board shows a brief portion of each message. You can access the complete message by clicking on *Read More* and the complete message will appear. To go back to the full list of messages, click on *Return to Portal Page* at the bottom of the message.

Checking the Message Board on a regular basis will keep you better informed and provide you with a useful tool to assist you in managing your commodities. You may want to print each message and make a handbook for easy reference. Message topics range anywhere from food alerts, to new products being offered, to helpful instructions, and everything in between. There is an *update date* next to the message title to let you know if you have the most recent version.

If at any time you would like to make a suggestion for a message topic, please forward it to the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Food Distribution Program staff. On the right-hand side of the screen, under *Additional Links*, click *Contact Food Distribution Staff* and the system will create a blank email you can complete and send directly to our staff. We welcome any suggestions you may have.

## Placing Annual Orders

Annual orders are placed in January preceding the new school year (January 2006 for the 2006–2007 school year). A reminder is sent to each school district by U.S. Postal Service in December. Instructions for ordering are found on a link on the Food Distribution Program website ([www.isbe.net/business.htm](http://www.isbe.net/business.htm)). Orders are placed on the ICS website under *Annual Order Form*.

The cut-off date to place your annual order is generally around the first week of February. However, during the year, changes can be made to the Annual Order Form (AOF) if necessary. These changes are made in the same way the original order is placed (see *Instructions for Placing Annual Commodity Orders*). However, during the year, some Group B commodities may be *locked* and changes to those items cannot be made. The locked items appear gray and do not highlight when clicked. All changes must be made prior to ISBE completing that month's allocation for your updates to take effect. For example, for a change to be effective for January, all changes would need to be done by December 5. If your school participates in processing, no changes can be made after the annual order cut-off date.

## Warehouse Delivery Schedule

In Illinois, a contracted transportation company receives, stores, and delivers the commodities. Currently this contract is with Lanter Distributing, Division of Ozburn-Hessey Logistics. You can view their delivery schedule on this website as well. Go to the right side of the screen under *Additional Links* and you will see *Delivery Schedule*. Click on this link, and locate your county and then your school. This schedule will list the FRIDAY OF THE WEEK you can expect your delivery. Any questions regarding your schedule should be directed to Lanter at 618/452-2800.

## Monitoring Monthly Allocations

Your monthly allocations are available to be viewed and/or modified the month prior to the actual delivery. The resources available to help you monitor your monthly allocations are listed below. It is important to note that once commodities have been allocated to your school (they have been listed on the Monthly Commodity Bulletin), they belong to your school. Schools can then control when the product will be delivered via the Delivery Request.

### Monthly Commodity Bulletin

You can view and/or print a Monthly Commodity Bulletin for each delivery month. (Bulletins are not generated until the month prior to the delivery.) They are listed under *Reports*, then *Bulletin Report*. The Monthly Commodity Bulletin is a list of all products available to be delivered to you for that given month—AT THE RECIPIENT AGENCY LEVEL, as well as an account status section that gives you year-to-date commodity values. If your district has multiple sites, all commodities for all sites will be combined on the bulletin; it will NOT be broke down by delivery site. If you make any delivery request modifications for that given delivery month, the modifications will NOT be reflected on the bulletin either. You can run a Delivery Report to see what you actually requested to be delivered, as well as a break down by site (see below).

To print a copy of the bulletin, use the *Print* button at the top of the bulletin, or *File*, then *Print*.

The Bulletin is divided into three sections.

The first section is the *Messages* section. This section contains brief messages and may direct you to more detailed information. This is not to be confused with the Message Board on ICS.

The second section is the *Contract Summary* for the school year. This section contains year to date account information.

The *Beginning PAL* is the dollar value (of commodities) your school is entitled to based on your meals claimed in the National School Lunch Program multiplied by the federal assistance rate determined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This rate varies each year.

The *A PAL Allocated* is the value of all A PAL commodities that have been allocated to you so far this school year.

The *B PAL Allocated* is the value of all B PAL commodities that have been allocated to you so far this school year.

The *PAL Processing Deductions* are the value of all raw commodities you diverted to a processor.

The *Total PAL Deductions* is the sum of all PAL commodities.

The *Remaining B PAL Orders* is the value of Group B products you have ordered, but have not yet been allocated to you. This figure will decrease as the year progresses.

The *Available PAL*—if you have a negative amount, you have ordered more product than you are actually entitled to. This is acceptable, within reason, due to the fact you may not get everything you ordered, your PAL dollars may change due to your claims in the National School Lunch Program, USDA may cancel our orders, etc. If you have a positive amount, you need to order additional commodities if you can utilize them. We recommend you order approximately 20–25 percent over the PAL dollars you are entitled to. If you have a negative number in the Available PAL field, you have a better chance of fully utilizing your PAL dollars.

The *Value of Bonus Commodities*, located on the right side, includes the amounts of Bonus products allocated year-to-date.

The third section is the *Commodities Available for Delivery* section. This section is a complete summary of ALL commodities available for that delivery month. This would include any new allocations for that month as well as any commodities that have been held. Commodities that appear in bold, red text, are all or a portion of, in private storage or will be if they are not accepted the first month they are listed as private storage. Commodities will be listed as private storage if they have been held at least two months. The first time you see a commodity listed in private storage, as long as you accept it that month, there would be no private storage charges.

### Delivery Requests

Each month between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, you can make changes to the deliveries for the following month. Commodity deliveries take place from August through April, so Delivery Requests are made from July through March. The system is very time sensitive, so we cannot make changes outside of these dates. There are three options you can choose from. You can hold your complete allocation until the next month, you can hold a portion of your allocation until the next month, or you can move product between your sites for the month.

If you DO NOT RESPOND to your allocation online between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, everything will be delivered to you as shown. If you have more than one delivery site, the allocation will be divided among your delivery sites based on the percentages established by your district under *Participating Delivery Sites*. If you refuse any undamaged items at the time of delivery, you will be charged a backhaul fee by Lanter Distributing.

If you DO NOT want a delivery, you must indicate this online between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to the delivery. Go to *Monthly Process, Delivery Request, Place Request, Do Not Deliver*, then *Next*. (It is crucial that you click *Next*, otherwise the request has not been saved.) That is all you need to do at this time. The product listed on your current Delivery Requests will be on your next allocation.

If you want the current delivery but want to view and/or make modifications to it, you must go to *Monthly Process, Delivery Request, Place Request, Deliver*, then *Next*. You will be able to accept your delivery as listed, which if you have multiple delivery sites, is based on the percentages you indicated when you filled out your Annual Order online. You can also modify or delay the quantities you were allocated, or if you have multiple delivery sites, you can move your allocation from site to site. Click on *Select* next to the commodity you would like to modify; then in the site detail below, indicate the quantity you want delivered for that month; then click *Save*. Any quantity you do not accept this month will be on your next month's allocation.

If you modified your delivery request and saved it, you are finished. You can log off the system at any time or print a Delivery Report (see below). To log off the system, click on *Home* in the menu bar above, and then select *Logout*.

### Delivery Report

You can view and/or print a Delivery Report for each month after the 20<sup>th</sup> or after you have completed a Delivery Request. IF YOU ARE TRYING TO PRINT THE MOST CURRENT REPORT, THIS REPORT CANNOT BE GENERATED UNTIL YOU HAVE REACTED TO YOUR ALLOCATION (see *Delivery Requests*). The Delivery Report indicates the quantities to be delivered for that given delivery month, and if you have multiple delivery sites, it will break it down by site as well.

If you have completed a Delivery Request, just click on *Print* on the bottom of that page and the report will appear. If you are coming into the system at a later date, go to *Monthly Process, Delivery Request* and click on *Report* next to the month you want to see. You will have a choice to run it either in *Commodities by Site* or *Sites by Commodities* format. (It defaults to the *Commodities by Site* format.) This report would be very helpful for personnel at each site so they know what products will be on that month's delivery. You can print these reports by clicking the *Printer* icon located at the top of the screen.

### **Processing Commodities**

If the school chooses, commodities may be sent to a processor and converted into end products the school deems more acceptable.

Schools wishing to have commodities diverted for further processing need to indicate the pounds of commodity to divert and the name of the processor(s) on the Annual Order Form, Diversion to Processor. The value of PAL commodities diverted for processing is deducted from the school's PAL. If the commodity being diverted is a Bonus commodity, the value is not deducted from the PAL. These instructions are all included in the instructions for the Annual Order Form (AOF). Once the annual ordering period is closed, no changes can be made to processing diversions.

### **Preparations for School Auditors**

All schools are audited each year by their own independent auditors. Part of this audit includes the value of USDA commodities received by the school. Most of these audits are conducted during the summer or early fall of each year. It is the responsibility of each school to provide all needed information for the auditors, including the information regarding USDA commodities. Food distribution staff at ISBE will no longer be able to help with this effort.

The needed information is very easy to locate, and we suggest this be given to the school bookkeeper by the end of the school year. The information is on the last Bulletin of the year, which is the April Bulletin (available starting March 13).

In the *Contract Summary for School Year \_\_\_\_* section, the value of commodities received by the school for that year will be the total of the amounts shown in the **Total PAL Deductions** and the **Total Bonus Commodities**. If you are eligible for Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program, you need to include the value received from the DOD invoices as well.

For more detailed information, please refer to the Food Distribution Program Handbook, which is available on the Food Distribution Program website ([www.isbe.net/business.htm](http://www.isbe.net/business.htm)).