Illinois State Board of Education  
Nutrition and Wellness Programs Division  
Food Distribution Program

Illinois Commodity System Instruction Manual

This manual provides guidance in the usage of the Illinois Commodity System (ICS). The Illinois Commodity System is used to order and manage United States Department of Agriculture USDA Foods for schools in Illinois. Please print these pages and keep them as a reference.

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Revised December, 2014
Accessing the Illinois Commodity System

The Illinois Commodity System (ICS) website is an interactive site that allows schools to manage their PAL dollars online. You can access the Message Board, Annual Order Forms (AOFs), Monthly USDA Foods Bulletins, Delivery Requests/Reports, Anticipated Lenter Delivery Schedule, Anticipated USDA Foods Chart, and Approved End Products Reports. There are also links to many useful websites for your convenience. ICS can be accessed from any computer with Internet access; the computer does not have to be located in the school.

Each school should have one “user” and a back-up. If your school contracts with a food service management company (FSMC), it is still very important that someone from the school accesses the system on a regular basis. The school must authorize FSMC staff access if they so choose.

- Before you can access the ICS website, you must register as a first time user. In order to do this, click on ICS New User Registration Form located on the Food Distribution Program (FDP) website (www.isbe.net/business.htm). Print, complete, and fax the form to 217/782-4550. Indicate if you are replacing a former employee so we can make them inactive. After you register, you will receive an email from our office confirming your Login ID and password.

- Make note of your Login ID and password for later reference. 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 the first time you log in.

- Type in the FDP website address (www.isbe.net/business.htm). (Save this as a favorite to eliminate the need to reenter it each time you logon.) In the middle of the page, click on Illinois Commodity System. This will link you to the ICS Login screen. Login with your Login ID and password. (We recommend that you always access the FDP website first, and then link to ICS from that site in the event that the URL address has changed.)

Message Board

The ICS Message board is the first page you access when you logon to the ICS. This is our primary means of communication with Food Distribution Program sponsors, and should be checked 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. 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 USDA Foods. You may want to print each message and make a handbook for easy reference. Message topics range anywhere from food alerts, to workshops, to new products being offered, to important dates, 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 you would like to make a suggestion for a message topic, please forward it to Illinois State Board of Education’s (ISBE) Food Distribution Program staff. On the right-hand side of the screen, under Additional Links, click Food Distribution Program Staff E-mail and the system will create a blank e-mail you can complete and send directly to our staff. We welcome any suggestions you may have.
Placing Annual Orders

Annual orders are placed on the ICS in January/February pre-ceding the new school year. The Annual Order Instructions link is located on the Food Distribution Program website (www.isbe.net/business.htm) in the ICS section.

Once the cut-off date to place your annual order is past, changes can still be made to the Annual USDA Foods Order Form (AOF) if necessary. However, no processing diversions or DoD changes can be made after the annual order cut-off date. The AOF changes are made in the same way the original order was placed. 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 need to be done on the Annual USDA Foods Order Form by December 5.

Warehouse Delivery Schedule

In Illinois, a contracted transportation company receives, stores, and delivers the USDA Foods. Currently this contract is with Lanter Distributing LLC. You can view their anticipated delivery schedule on the Illinois Commodity System website. Go to the right side of the screen under Additional Links and you will see Anticipated Lanter Delivery Schedule. Click on this link, and locate your county and then your school. This schedule will list the FRIDAY OF THE WEEK they anticipate delivering to your school. They are required to call at least 48 hours in advance of your delivery, so do not expect your delivery until you receive your courtesy call. Lanter delivers based on normal business days, not school calendars. Any questions regarding the schedule should be directed to Lanter at 618/452-2800.
Monitoring Monthly Allocations

Allocations are done monthly for deliveries from August through April. They 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 USDA Foods have been allocated to your school (they have been listed on the Monthly USDA Foods Bulletin), they belong to your school. Schools can then control when the product will be delivered via the Delivery Request. This is especially important for the August delivery and months with school breaks. Remember, USDA Foods deliveries are based on normal business days, not school calendars.

Monthly USDA Foods Bulletin

Monthly USDA Foods Bulletins are generated by the 13th of the month prior to each delivery month. Delivery months are August through April, so bulletins are available July through March. They are located under Reports, then Bulletin Report. They list all products available to be delivered to your recipient agency for that given month, as well as a contract summary section that gives you year-to-date information. The bulletin is a “snap shot” so it does not change after it has been prepared.

The Monthly USDA Foods 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 the ICS.
- The second section is the Contract Summary for the school year. This section contains year to date account information.
  - Beginning PAL—dollar value (of USDA Foods) your school is entitled to based on your lunches 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.
  - YTD PAL Allocated—value of all PAL USDA Foods that have been allocated to you so far this school year.
  - PAL Processing Deductions—value of all PAL raw USDA Foods diverted to a processor.
  - DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables—PAL value you designated for fresh fruits and vegetables.
  - Total PAL Deductions—sum of all PAL dollars deducted year-to-date.
  - Remaining PAL—PAL dollars still available as of this allocation.
  - Remaining PAL Requested—value of PAL USDA Foods requested, but not yet allocated.
  - YTD Bonus Allocated—value of Bonus USDA Foods that have been allocated to you so far this school year
  - Bonus Processing—value of bonus USDA Foods diverted to a processor.
  - Total Bonus—Sum of all Bonus USDA Foods that have been allocated to you so far this year.
  - PAL Allocated for Current Month only—value of all PAL USDA Foods allocated for this month only.
  - Bonus Allocated for Current Month only—value of all Bonus USDA Foods allocated for this month only.
  - Total PAL Deductions + Bonus Deductions—value of ALL year-to-date USDA Foods deductions.
- The third section is the USDA Foods Available for Delivery section. This section is a complete summary of ALL USDA Foods available for that delivery month. This would include any new
allocations for that month as well as any USDA Foods that have been previously held. All USDA Foods held at least 2 months will be listed in bold, red print and considered in private storage. If they are accepted the first month listed in red, there will be no private storage charges. Product can be held up to 6 months.

Delivery Request

The Delivery Request is available from the 13th through the 20th only each month, prior to the delivery month. USDA Foods deliveries take place from August through April, so Delivery Requests are available from July through March. They are located under Monthly Process, then Delivery Request. Click on Place Request to the right of the open period.

During this “window of opportunity” you have four delivery options available to you. You can accept your allocation as is, accept a portion of it, move product from site to site if you have multiple delivery sites or hold your complete allocation. It’s always a good idea to see if your allocation is big enough to warrant the minimum delivery fee of $45.00 per delivery site, per month during this timeframe. Each month you have the opportunity to choose the best option for your school.

Option 1.) You want your allocation as is. You do not have to do anything. You actually do not even have to access the Delivery Request screen at all. If you have multiple delivery sites, your allocation to each site will be based on the percentages you indicated when you filled out your Annual Order. So, if you do not access this screen for whatever reason, you will get everything as allocated. However, you can access it and accept your allocation as is.

Option 2.) You want a portion of your allocation, but would like to postpone the rest of it, click on Deliver, then Next. Click on Select on the row that you want to postpone. In the Delivery Site Detail area at the bottom of the list, indicate the Deliver quantity and Save. The portion you postpone will then be listed in your balance column and will be on your next month’s bulletin. Keep in mind; once USDA Foods are listed on a Monthly USDA Foods Bulletin, they are yours! You are only postponing these products.

Option 3.) You want to move product from site to site. This is recommended if your allocation to each site is small, but you would still like to receive it keeping in mind the minimum delivery fee. Historically there have been small deliveries the first half of the school year, so be sure and check your allocation to avoid costly delivery fees. Click on Deliver, then Next. Click on Select next to the USDA Food you would like to modify; then in the Site Detail below, indicate the quantity you want delivered for that month to each site, then click Save. Any quantity you do not accept this month will be on your next month’s bulletin.

Option 4.) You want to hold your complete allocation. Click on Do Not Deliver, then Next. (If you do not click on Next, you will not save your request and you will receive everything!) This is all you need to do at this time. All items will be listed on your next month’s bulletin. You have the option of holding products for up to 6 months. There is no charge for the first 2 months. Each month after, there is a private storage fee of $.30 per case, per month. This is the option you want to consider if you have a small allocation.

If you missed the deadline and you will not be in school the day of your delivery, you will need to have someone accept the delivery. You can contact Lanter with an alternate contact name and number of someone that can meet the driver on the day of delivery. If no one is at the delivery location to accept the USDA Foods, the delivery will be considered refused and you will be charged.
the following refusal charges: the normal delivery fee, fuel surcharge, backhaul fees and if applicable, storage charges, then 2 months later when it is delivered again you will be charged those delivery fees as well. Please do everything possible to avoid refusing a delivery; it is very expensive to do so.

The same fees will apply as listed above if you ever refuse any undamaged items at the time of any delivery.

**Delivery Report**

You can view and/or print a Delivery Report after you have completed a Delivery Request during the 13th & 20th. Click on *Report* on the bottom of that page and the report will appear. 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. This report is beneficial for staff at each site so they know what products will be on their delivery.

If you come 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.
Processing USDA Foods

If the school chooses, USDA Foods may be sent to a processor and converted into end products the school deems more acceptable. Before placing an order to divert pounds to a processor, you need to verify with your distributor that they carry the end products you want, and if you processed in the previous year, you need to check K12 and/or ProcessorLink to make sure you do not have large balances remaining.

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

Excess Inventory at Processors

United States Department of Agriculture regulations require USDA Foods inventories held at further processors be monitored. The regulations require no more than a six-month inventory level be maintained based on the processor’s average monthly usage. To ensure this requirement is met, the inventory level procedures below were implemented.

For any given school year:

- Any processor inventory balance rolled over from the previous school year by a school must be used by October 31.
- On November 15 any prior year inventory not used by October 31 will be removed from the school’s account and transferred to a State of Illinois account.
- Schools should direct their inquiries regarding any available pounds to individual manufacturers or their brokers.
- No credit will be given to the school forfeiting the inventory and nothing will be charged to the school claiming the inventory.

Preparations for School Auditors

All schools are audited each year by their own independent auditors. Part of this audit includes the value of USDA Foods 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 Foods. On the Food Distribution Program website, we will post a report with all the values for all schools. It will be available by August 1.