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SOME FACTS ABOUT The School Lunch PROGRAM

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Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation
Purchase and Distribution Division
1012 5th Street, N.W.,
Washington, D. C.

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SOME FACTS ABOUT SCHOOL LUNCHES

All of the States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands now have school lunch programs to which surplus commodities are made available. Numerous questions relative to the use of commodities have been presented by sponsors and others who are making an effort to obtain greater expansion of these programs.

This bulletin has been prepared by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, in order to make more generally available the answers to some of these questions. It is hoped that the material will interest those with experience in the program as well as those who are initiating a new program.

GENERAL

Q. 1. What is a surplus commodity?

A. When agricultural commodities, such as wheat, cabbage, or oranges, are produced in quantities sufficiently large to depress prices, with the result that such commodities are declared as surpluses by the Secretary of Agriculture, the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation purchases a proportion of such surpluses in order to prevent substantial reduction in the income of the farmers who produce them. Surplus commodities, therefore, are those which are produced in such abundance in certain areas that they exert a depressing effect upon wholesale and retail prices. By removing these commodities from normal trade channels, a wider market outlet is created and the price of the commercial supply is thus stabilized.

Q. 2. What is the source of the money for the purchase of surplus commodities?

A. Money for the purchase of surplus commodities is made available under the terms of Section 32 of the Agricultural Adjustment Act, as amended August 24, 1935, and subsequent amendatory legislation. This legislation makes available for programs to increase distribution an amount equal to 30 per cent of annual customs receipts.

The legislation specifically provides that "funds of the Corporation, may be used for purchasing, exchanging, processing, distributing, disposing, transporting, storing and handling of agricultural commodities and products thereof . . .".

Q. 3. How can commodities be obtained for school lunches?

A. Generally application is made locally to the Department of Public Welfare or an authorized agent of the State Welfare Department. The application will be forwarded to the state agency responsible for approving such application, or the applicant will be referred to the local agency which has been established as a clearing house for all school lunch activities.

Q. 4. What state officials are most familiar with the School Lunch Program?

A. In most states, the Director of the Department of Public Welfare and the Director of Commodity Distribution are prepared to give information about the program or to refer the interested individual to the agency responsible for a specific phase of the work. County and district school superintendents also have offered considerable assistance to the expansion of the program.

Q. 5. Does the FSCC have local representatives who will confer with school officials and sponsors to assist in initiating school lunch programs?

A. Yes, the FSCC has special representatives in most of the states and the District of Columbia who are prepared to assist in expanding the School Lunch Program.

REGULATIONS

I. Eligibility of Schools

Q. 6. What schools may receive surplus commodities?

A. Schools that make application and have been declared eligible to receive surplus commodities by the local certifying agency may participate in the School Lunch Program. These may be schools supported by funds derived from federal, state or local government subdivisions. Other schools supported by funds derived from educational, religious or charitable organizations may, at the discretion of the state or local certifying agencies, be determined eligible.

The policy of the Corporation in regard to making surplus commodities available to public, parochial, or private schools is that an undernourished child is entitled to commodities regardless of what type of school he attends. (See question 7.) This is not an innovation. Many state and city governments have included all such institutions in school services. The Corporation recognizes only the welfare of the child and in no instance recognizes its participation in the lunch program as a subsidy to the institution in which the child is enrolled.

Q. 7. Are resident schools eligible to receive surplus commodities for use in lunches?

A. In a number of states, resident care is provided in some colleges or secondary schools for students from relief families, from Farm Security families, or who are receiving NYA student aid. These schools will be considered as quasi-institutions and special procedures have been set up for such certification. Although blanket eligibility has not been granted such schools and institutions, the Corporation may consider such a group if all the pertinent facts about the situation are presented in writing to the state or local welfare agency. Applications from this type of institution are subject to approval of the Washington office.

Q. 8. What provisions must be met by a school to which surplus commodities are made available?

A. Schools which make application to the state welfare agency for surplus commodities must present evidence of malnutrition and/or actual need of the children within that school. The eligibility of each school is determined by the approved state or local certifying agency responsible for proper investigation and certification. Provisions outlined by the FSCC are: (1) The school or sponsoring agency must operate the lunch program on a nonprofit basis. (2) When these lunches are served, the children must not be segregated in any way that would indicate a distinction between the paying and the nonpaying children. (3) Where, in preparing and serving the lunches, it becomes necessary to commingle the surplus commodities with additional commodities supplied by the sponsor, a charge may be made to the paying pupils for the portion of the meal served to them, provided: (a) That there has been a proper determination by the state or local certifying agency of the number of pupils within the school eligible to receive free lunches, and that the percentage of paying and nonpaying pupils has been established. (b) That the total of the surplus commodities allocated to the school does not exceed the maximum amount allowed for all eligible children; and (c) that the sponsoring agency will supplement each surplus commodity with a quantity of the same commodity equal to the amount of the surplus commodity served to the paying children.

Q. 9. What is meant by "equal to" in the phrase, "the sponsoring agency will supplement each surplus commodity with a quantity of the same commodity equal to the amount of the surplus commodity served to the paying children"?

A. In this statement, "equal to" is interpreted to mean that the school will supply an amount equal to the surplus commodity served to the paying children. If there are no paying children, obviously, the school does not have to match commodities. If, however, a specific amount of a commodity is made available as a monthly allotment to a school in which commodities are commingled with those served to children who are able to pay, that portion of the surplus commodity consumed by the paying children must be replaced.

For example, if in one month 30 pounds of butter are made available to a school in which 30 children are eligible for a school lunch; and, if 70 additional paying children participate in the lunches in which these commodities are commingled, these children may share in the butter provided that the portion of the butter consumed by the paying children, namely, 21 pounds, is replaced within 30 days of receipt of the commodity by the school.

Q. 10. Will commodities be provided on the basis of the enrollment of the entire school or on the basis of the number of children actually certified?

A. The quantity of commodities will be determined on the basis of the number of children certified. For example, if a school has an enrollment of 200 and it is necessary to furnish free lunches to 150, commodities will be provided for 150 children.

Q. 11. Is a school required to accept all commodities offered or may a choice be made from among those which are available?

A. It is not the intention of the FSCC to force any particular commodity upon a school lunch program because a sufficient quantity of surplus commodities is not available to meet all demands. The point at which the school shall have a choice in a selection from available commodities shall be determined locally among the sponsors and the commodity distribution division.

Q. 12. In a number of schools in which a lunchroom is operated, parents who can afford to cooperate have been asked to pay through a person designated as the treasurer. Under such circumstances, would surplus commodities be made available for the entire enrollment of the school?

A. Out of the total enrollment in such a school, a certain proportion could be certified on the basis of definite need or malnutrition. That percentage of the entire enrollment is the only figure that can be used for allocating surplus commodities to that particular school. The question of who pays and who does not pay is determined at the discretion of the approved state or local certifying agency.

Q. 13. Is a school operating a school lunch program on a contractual basis or through a concessionaire, eligible for surplus commodities?

A. No.

Q. 14. Are surplus commodities made available to cafeterias?

A. Surplus commodities may be made available to a school lunch program conducted in connection with a cafeteria provided that no element of profit is realized from it except that which is reinvested in operation of the lunch program.

Q. 15. If the only lunches served are to nonpaying children and if the remaining children not certified either bring their lunches or go home, is this considered segregation?

A. Children who do not eat lunches served by the school need not be considered in this program and the school should not be penalized on the strength of the fact that children go home for lunches. The omission of this group would not be looked upon as segregation.

2. The Undernourished Child

Q. 16. Who determines which children in a school are "undernourished" or "needy"?

A. Local school or health officials assume this responsibility.

Q. 17. Does a child have to be either needy or undernourished in order to participate in the free lunches?

A. Yes, such determination has to be established before a child is eligible.

Q. 18. In schools to which surplus commodities have been made available, is there any objection to having the teacher give needy pupils money taken from the profits of the lunchroom with which to purchase lunches?

A. Every effort should be made to discourage such a practice, although it can be done in a small school where the teacher can check on the amounts given out and the amounts spent. It cannot be done, however, in a large school where there would be no means of checking as to whether all of the money was spent in the lunchroom.

Q. 19. Youngsters often come to school in the morning without having had any breakfast. Can arrangements be made to serve breakfast to them?

A. Yes, some schools are now serving breakfast as well as lunch. In California, for example, the legislation makes specific provision for school authorities to provide both breakfast and lunch for pupils who do not otherwise receive proper nourishment.

Q. 20. Will needy children be provided with lunches during the summer months?

A. Playground lunches have been provided in some states and the District of Columbia during previous summers; and it is hoped that plans for such lunches will expand during the coming summer.

Q. 21. Is it permissible to serve a special reduced-price lunch for the children who cannot contribute any money to the School Lunch Program?

A. No, such a lunch would indicate which children had not paid and this practice would be considered segregation.

Q. 22. In operation of a school lunch program to which surplus commodities are made available, what provisions have been made to comply with the regulations that the children who are unable to pay must not be segregated from those who can pay?

A. This end has been accomplished in many ways. One of the more satisfactory methods is the serving of a similar plate lunch (without selection) to both paying and nonpaying children and making no charge to any child at that time. The parents of those children able to pay in whole or in part for their lunches make regular monthly contributions of money or food toward the sponsor's share of the cost of the program. This plan virtually assures saving the nonpaying children the embarrassment which would naturally result from segregation.

Another method which has met with success provides for the use of meal tickets. Classroom teachers are provided with lists of those children certified as eligible to participate in the free lunch program. Based on these lists, the teachers sell the tickets to the children who can afford to pay and give them without charge to needy children. Of course, this must be done in such a way that none of the children know who has paid and who has not.

The methods of serving lunches set forth above are not by any means the only ones but are merely given as illustrations. The principal purpose is to see that no embarrassing discrimination is made between the paying and nonpaying students.

3. Surplus Commodities

Q. 23. Could that portion of a surplus commodity consumed by paying children be supplemented by some other surplus foodstuff, that is, could apples be replaced with beans?

A. No, that would defeat the original purpose of the program. Inasmuch as the Corporation's only justification for purchasing a commodity is that the surplus exists, adherence to the legislative restrictions governing the Corporation's functions requires that the commodity be replaced by the same quantity of the same commodity.

Q. 24. If a school is not equipped to prepare hot lunches, can it be certified to receive available surplus foods which need not be cooked?

A. Yes, if a state or local certifying agency determines that a school is eligible for surplus commodities but that it is not in a position to develop a hot lunch program, available commodities which do not require cooking, such as fresh and dried fruits and fruit juices should be made available.

Q. 25. Where can quantity recipes be obtained for dishes based on surplus commodities?

A. The local welfare representative will have such recipes available or will be able to give the address at which they may be obtained.

4. Sponsors

Q. 26. Is it necessary to have a sponsor to carry on a school lunch program to which surplus commodities are made available?

A. Yes, a sponsor (this may be an agency, organization, or individual) is necessary to provide such nonsurplus foodstuffs, facilities, and equipment as may be required by a school for preparing or serving a school lunch.

Q. 27. What individuals or organizations can be expected to cooperate in this school lunch program?

A. Parents, who are able to do so, usually expect and prefer to contribute regularly to the program in cash. Such contributions, if properly solicited and collected, will often pay a large part of the cost of the school lunches. Some parents who cannot pay cash, will contribute food or supplies.

State Directors of Commodity Distribution and State Directors of Public Welfare may be expected to be very cooperative, and in most states they are prepared to give information relative to this program.

Numerous organizations such as State and City Boards of Education, Boards of County Commissioners, Boards of Public Welfare, the Parent-Teachers Association, WPA and NYA, and numerous local and civic organizations have been included among sponsors in the various localities.

Q. 28. What are the duties of the sponsors?

A. The principal duties of the sponsors are to underwrite the school lunch program and arrange for the procurement of facilities and equipment for the preparation and serving of the lunches. Sponsors also provide or raise funds for the purchase of nonsurplus foodstuffs needed for the preparation of balanced meals. Although many schools have lunchrooms and kitchens already available, a sponsor may have to provide adequate space for preparing and serving the lunches as well as for storing food. Parents who are able to do so usually expect to and prefer to contribute regularly to the program, but the balance of necessary funds may have to be raised by the sponsor.

The methods for raising funds must be determined by the local sponsor and adapted to the local community.

Q. 29. If the sponsor of a school lunch program needs food items not available among the surplus commodities, for example, spices, could they be provided by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation?

A. No, the FSCC purchases a commodity only when it has been determined that a surplus exists.

Q. 30. If an organization interested in the school, e.g., The Parent-Teachers Association, operates a school lunch program and all profits are reinvested in the lunch program, will surplus commodities be made available to it?

A. Yes, if other requirements are met, surplus commodities will be made available to such an organization as sponsor. Attention is drawn to the fact that the profits from such operation would have to be devoted to the lunch program and could not be reinvested in any other activity of the school. Investments in the lunch program may include such equipment as pots, pans, dishes, and ranges.

5. Equipment

Q. 31. Must a school have the necessary equipment before commodities which require cooking are made available, or can such commodities be prepared in a neighboring church, town hall, or similar place and brought to the school to be served to the children?

A. This question must be answered by the local certifying agency which is in a position to consider whether or not lunches served under these conditions will meet the proper standards of the board of health and are prepared under conditions which meet the regulations of the local fire department.

Q. 32. How have meals been prepared in one-room schools in which cooking facilities are not available?

A. In some one-room schools cocoa or soup has been made on the heating stove. Ovens have been improvised by inverting an iron kettle or a tin pan on the stove top.

DELIVERY AND DISTRIBUTION

Q. 33. How will FSCC foodstuffs be delivered and distributed?

A. The school will obtain the commodities in accordance with the method determined by the State Director of Commodity Distribution.

Q. 34. Who determines the maximum amount of a surplus commodity to be allotted for each child served by a school lunch program?

A. This rate is prescribed by the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation in cooperation with the Bureau of Home Economics of the Department of Agriculture.

Q. 35. What determines the maximum quantity of a surplus commodity that may be released to an eligible school?

A. This quantity is determined by multiplying the number of children eligible to receive lunches by not more than the approved maximum distribution rate per child, established as set forth in the preceding answer.

Q. 36. How often will surplus agricultural commodities be made available to schools?

A. The regular distribution periods are determined by the State Director of Commodity Distribution. To care for perishable foods special distributions are usually made very soon after such commodities are received at the warehouse.

Q. 37. Can the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation give advance notice to a State Director of Commodity Distribution, a County Superintendent of Schools, or any other interested individual concerning what specific commodities will be available at a particular future date?

A. The State Director of Commodity Distribution will be currently informed, when practical, as to available commodities and allocation. Little specific information can be given on future purchases of surplus commodities by the Corporation. The nature of the program of the FSCC makes this impossible. The Corporation purchases some of the price-depressing surpluses which develop in certain crops. Just which commodities will be available cannot be stated definitely in advance; however, the Corporation makes every attempt to keep State Directors of Commodity Distribution informed.

ADDITIONAL GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q. 38. Will the School Lunch Program be provided for in cities which are changing the form of commodity distribution under the Food Stamp Plan?

A. In those cities where it is anticipated the Food Stamp Plan may be inaugurated, it is required that provision be made for continuing the School Lunch Program.

Q. 39. Are health certificates required of personnel employed in the preparation of school lunches?

A. It is necessary that state and local laws applicable to the preparation and handling of food, and to the health of persons engaged in such work be complied with; however, if health certificates are not required in a state, a careful selection of personnel is recommended on the basis of cleanliness and personal habits.

Q. 40. Are schools required to report to the Corporation on the surplus commodities received?

A. The FSCC does not request reports directly from the schools. Schools report to local and state agencies. The agencies, in turn, provide this information to the FSCC.

Q. 41. What other community projects would be of assistance to the School Lunch Program?

A. Gardens are a most desirable adjunct to the School Lunch Program. Canning of garden produce should be encouraged.

Q. 42. What other agencies functioning within the states will cooperate in the advancement of this program?

A. The local welfare agency can point out to what extent other federal and state agencies are prepared to assist in the initiation and development of the School Lunch Program in a particular community.

Q. 43. Does the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation expect to continue to make surplus commodities available to school lunch programs during the school year 1940-41?

A. Yes, the assistance extended to the School Lunch Program this year by all cooperating organizations warrants continued expansion of this outlet for agricultural surpluses in so far as such surpluses are available.

For information about the FSCC School Lunch Program inquire of the nearest public welfare agency. State welfare agencies are generally located in the state capital but representatives of these organizations are usually located in each county seat.