



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

Washington, DC  
20250

January 31, 2008

## NOTICE TO THE TRADE

### Low Sodium Vegetables

At our April 2007 industry conference in Chicago, we announced that the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requested that we reduce the sodium content in USDA purchased canned vegetables. The FNS administers the school lunch and other nutrition programs that receive the products we purchase. The reduction was requested as part of FNS' initiative to improve the nutritional profile of USDA commodities, and to assist recipients in meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

This past summer, we purchased canned beans (#300), tomato sauce (#300) and spaghetti sauce (#300) with a low sodium formulation of 140 milligrams per serving, with a serving equaling ½ cup. These products were selected because they are normally produced according to the specification of the customer.

Recently, FNS asked us to continue our efforts and consider purchasing all canned vegetables with a total sodium formulation of 140 milligrams per serving. We understand this change to be a major departure from our prior purchasing practices and we are aware that you may have concerns.

At this time, we anticipate future purchases for canned vegetables to be similar to purchases made in prior years, and we have provided a chart that shows the purchases by product in fiscal year 2007. Although we believe our future purchasing will be consistent with prior years, the quantities listed in the chart are not to be construed as a promise or an obligation on the part of AMS.

We request your input regarding the challenges if we were to require canned vegetables with a total sodium formulation of 140 milligrams per serving, with a serving defined as ½ cup. We realize that production plans may have been made for the upcoming crop year, and our request may be too late. However, we would appreciate any information you are willing to share regarding the quantities, delivery periods, and pack sizes of low sodium canned vegetables that you may be able to provide this upcoming crop year. We also would appreciate communication on any issues with this proposal, as well as suggestions for rolling out this requirement in the future.

We also understand that there are commercial low sodium product canned vegetables that do not exactly match the 140 milligram level. If your low sodium product is not 140 milligrams per serving, we would appreciate knowing the sodium level in your current commercial product(s) for our consideration.



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As you know, the FNS is our customer, and as our customer we desire to provide them with the products they request. However, to accomplish this goal we need your partnership, and we do not want to make requirements that will negatively affect our ability to purchase product. Please provide your comments to Ron Ulibarri at [ronald.ulibarri@usda.gov](mailto:ronald.ulibarri@usda.gov). Thank you in advance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Tuckwiller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Tuckwiller, Chief  
Commodity Procurement Branch  
Fruit and Vegetable Programs