

USDA Foods: Product Labeling and Information Gathering

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What's in the Brown Box?



- * **Old Way:**

- * USDA Food Fact Sheet, or
- * Call the Manufacturer

- * **Surprise...** Calories, Allergens, Gluten? Oh my!

- * **New way:** Call USDA!

- * (SFA asks SDA asks FNS asks AMS asks YOU)



USDA Must Have the Info:

- * **High Priority for FNS and AMS**

- * Frequent Information requests from recipients
- * Schools need info to plan safe meals to students with sensitivities, allergies, other special dietary needs.

- * **For SY15, we'll request, at a minimum:**

- * the commercial product code;
- * nutrition facts label;
- * ingredient list; and
- * allergen statement (if applicable).



Vendors Supply Info:

- * **As Part of Technical Proposals:**

- * Pre- Bid Vendor Approval (Meat and Fish Suppliers)
- * Response to long-term RFP Solicitations (e.g., F&V IDIQ);

- * **Along with IFB/Sealed:**

- * Each Time an Offer is Entered (Monthly, Quarterly, Biannually)

- * **Ideas? Concerns? Suggestions on how to gather the info thoroughly but with minimal burden on YOU?**

- * **Email or Call me...**

... but don't send me flowers →



Other Labeling Topics/Issues/FYIs

- * **America's Finest Labels** (Canned Fruit and Vegetables)
 - * Pursuing a simple update to replace MyPyramid with MyPlate graphic
 - * We Encourage vendors to include MyPlate on their own labels
- * **Improving Commercial Labels**
 - * Less white space, increase the appeal for Household programs
 - * Drafting language detailing 4 color
 - * May affect commercial labeling of some products?

Love those patriotic colors ! →



USDA Foods: New Product Exploration

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Basic Process Components

- * **FNS Identifies a Need:** FNS must ID purpose, outlet/demand, & product restrictions; OR
- * **Industry Proposes a Product:** Industry must ID the outlet/demand, capacity & suppliers
- * **AMS Market Research** may include: RFI, Conference Calls, Draft Specs, discussions with suppliers and program recipients
- * **Report and Recommendation to FNS:**
 - * **Go:** Specification, Plan, Order, Procure and Monitor Performance
 - * **More Info Needed:** Repeat Market Research with modified requirement, more focus and/or additional information
 - * **No Go:** Product not ideal; no available supply; no demand; etc.



Request for Information (RFI)

- * *An early step in the information gathering process-*
 - * Market Research - info gathering; supplement more research, discussion, further refinement of requirement/program
 - * Sources Sought- gauging interest and supply for an already-identified product or program
- * **Results may be:**
 - * **Conclusive- Sufficient number of responses (at least two)** with information pointing to a definite way forward- (**Go or No-Go**)
 - * **Inconclusive-** insufficient or widely-varied responses (**More Info Needed**)

* **BUT NOT A BE ALL END ALL TO THE PRODUCT EXPLORATION PROCESS!**



Request for Information (RFI)

- * **RFI/Sources Sought: Buffalo/Bison Products** (Sept 2012)
 - * **Inconclusive**; some subsequent interest in supplying; program pending
- * **RFI/Sources Sought: Kosher Canned Poultry** (May 2013)
 - * **Conclusive**; no suppliers/supply identified
- * **RFI/Market Research: Chicken Products for NSLP** (Mar 2013)
 - * **Inconclusive**: Responses too varied; *2 subsequent RFIs*
- * **RFI/Market Research: Shelf-Stable Fruit Cups** (July 2013)
 - * **Inconclusive**; but invaluable information on current capabilities; USDA is refining
- * **RFI/Sources Sought: Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program** (Aug 2013)



Case Study: Chicken Products for NSLP

- * FNS requested we explore chicken products that are:
 - * “from scratch” friendly/minimally-processed alternatives to USDA 8-pc cut and chicken leg products, that would more easily fit new CN rules
- * **Nov. 2012-** AMS issued a Notice to the Trade asking for industry suggestions to change the 8-pc cut-up program – received no suggestions
- * **Mar. 2013-** AMS issued RFI on “chicken products;” Received **3 responses:**
 - 1) Shelf-stable cooked chicken (suitable program already exists)
 - 2) Cooked chicken strips, breaded boneless wings, or diced chicken
 - 3) Cooked drumstick possible, indicated limited supply and high cost



Case Study: Chicken Products for NSLP

- * **March 2013 RFI = Inconclusive:**
 - * RFI too broad; unclear in need and objective
 - * Responses too varied to extrapolate clear next-step (needed 2 similar)
- * **AMS-FNS Discussion:**
 - * FNS: asked us to try again with more focus



Case Study: Chicken Products for NSLP

- * **IF Cooked Chicken Strips- RFI/Sources Sought (July 2013)**
 - * **Why this product?**
 - * Suggested on the original RFI and meets recipients' criteria
 - * Similar Fajita strip product has 6 suppliers; is popular, but limited use
 - * Similar commercial products, but unknown interest
 - * **TWO Response, indicating TWO Interested and Capable Suppliers**
 - * 1) suggested basic description left too much variability between suppliers; provided info on two different formulations/products
 - * 2) provided info on one formulation/product
 - * **Draft specification circulated (December 2013)**
 - * To attract additional vendor attention, especially those already approved.

* **Next Step ?**



Case Study: Chicken Products for NSLP

- * **IF RTC Chicken Drumstick- RFI/Sources Sought issued in August 2013**
- * **Why This Product**
 - * Recipient feedback on 8-pc cut-up parts indicated easiest in application
 - * Popular school lunch product; easy preparation, versatile application
 - * Similar commercial products, but unknown interest for supplying to USDA
- * **One Response for RFI**
 - * Indicated Capability but limited interest
 - * Additional Market Research inconclusive
- * **Draft specification circulated (December 2013)**
 - * Last Attempt to get vendor attention.

* **Next Step ?**



In the Future:

- * RFI process may not be the best in every situation, but we will continue to use, being more considerate of when it is most appropriate versus....

- * **More “Informal” information gathering**
 - * **Conference calls, Notices to the Trade, good old fashioned conversations**
 - * So let’s talk... today!



QUESTIONS and COMMENTS

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