

USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program

USDA’s Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) has begun partnering with regional and local distributors, whose workforce has been significantly impacted by the closure of many restaurants, hotels, and other food service entities, to purchase \$3 billion in fresh produce, dairy, and meat. They will begin with the procurement of an estimated \$100 million per month in fresh fruits and vegetables, \$100 million per month in a variety of dairy products, and \$100 million per month in meat products. The distributors and wholesalers will then provide a pre-approved box of fresh produce, dairy, and meat products to food banks, community and faith-based organizations, and other non-profits.

The procurement for USDA commodities usually takes months, but they plan to speed up the timeline for the new food boxes. Timeline of events are outlined below:

- April 24th: USDA issued a solicitation to invite proposals from offerors to supply commodity boxes to non-profit organizations
- May 1st: Proposals due to USDA
- May 8th: Awarded contracts announced and made public
- May 15th: First boxed shipments delivered to food banks, community and faith-based organization, as well as other non-profits in the region

Box Requirements:

- Program is only open to fresh produce (not canned or frozen), precooked chicken and pork and dairy products.
- Boxes will be divided into five separate categories: fresh produce, dairy product box, precooked meat box, a combination box and a fluid milk box.
- Contractors will buy the agriculture products they have included in their proposal, place them in the number of boxes outlined in their proposal and deliver them to the non-profits in their region.
- What types of commodities are eligible and how much should be in the box?

Any domestic fresh fruit or vegetable is allowable, including fresh-cut and value-added. Pork and Chicken, as well as dairy products will be included in the boxes. For the purpose of this program, only fresh commodities are eligible. The list will be specific to domestic commodities, the regions availability of certain commodities and most importantly will need to focus on the commodities that are in season.

Including more information below from the solicitation:

ITEM NO.	NAICS Code - SCHEDULE OF SUPPLIES/SERVICES <image002.png>	Examples of products that may be included* <image003.png>
----------	--	--

0001	311991 - Fresh Fruit/Fresh Vegetable Box	Mixed bags of vegetables (potatoes, onions, carrots), mixed bags of fruit (apples, pears, oranges), blueberries, strawberries, tomatoes, sweet potatoes
0002	<image002.png> 311513 - Dairy Products Box	Natural and processed cheeses, instant or UHT milk, yogurt, butter, fluid milk <image004.png>
0003	311612 and 311615 - Precooked Meat Box (Pork and Chicken)	Pre-cooked chicken nuggets, pre-cooked bacon, pre-cooked pork patties, pork or chicken taco filling
0004	<image002.png> 311999 - Combination Box (containing a combination of 1-3,5)	
0005	<image002.png> 311513 - Fluid Milk (priced by unit)	<image005.png> Gallons, Half Gallons

*these are examples only and not intended to be all-inclusive.

Additional items worth noting:

- The best option for a grower at this time would be to tap into their relationships with distributor contacts they may have previously worked with. Ask those distributors if they applied to the program last week. *As mentioned above, if you don't have connections with distributors, awarded contracts will go public and we can share the list then so growers can be aware of the distributors in the region.*
- At that time, the position of the grower should be to engage with the distributor to get their products in the box.
- Distributor will be awarded a certain dollar amount and then have the ability to submit invoices for up to that amount. Distributor will have to prove they are financially capable of pulling this off. Law requires USDA to pay in 10-15 days; contractors are then required to pay subcontractors (suppliers, farmers) immediately after that; USDA will urge prompt payment.

Relevant FAQs from AMS:

Q: Will different distributors handle specific types of products exclusively– for example, will some distributors only handle produce while other distributors handle all three product categories?

A: Distributors may submit a proposal to provide: a fresh fruit and vegetable box, a dairy products box, a pre-cooked meat box, a combination box that can contain any combination of those items, or fluid milk.

Q: How many pounds of food per box of dairy, protein and produce?

A: Distributors and non-profit organizations will be allowed to mutually agree on the size and weight of the box, as well as the pack sizes of products within the box.

Q: What are the “standard” contents per box?

A: While USDA will provide a list of desired products to support specific agricultural markets, the contents of the box can be determined by the distributor and the non-profit organization, based on local and national availability, local preferences, etc.

Q: For boxes containing produce, will there be a USDA inspection process for sites receiving product?

A: USDA will provide oversight throughout the contract period, conducting audits to ensure food safety plans are followed, that only domestic produce is provided, and quality products are delivered.

Q: Will USDA purchase bulk shelf stable items from food distributors?

A: USDA will **not** be purchasing these types of products through the Farmers to Families Food Box Program. However, through USDA's existing programs and additional funding provided by Congress USDA will be making additional purchases of these products. These will include purchases made with Section 32, Families First Coronavirus Response Act and CARES Act funds and made available to the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

Q: Will a box of each type of food be packed separately – meat box, produce box, dairy box?

A: Although not a requirement, for food safety reasons and differing storage temperatures, it is anticipated that produce will be in a separate box.

Q: I am a local fruit orchard; I do not supply fresh vegetables. Can a box include only fruit?

A: The RFP does not stipulate that you must include both fresh vegetables and fresh fruit together in your offering.

Q: For Fluid Milk (CLIN 0005), can the products offered include both regular pasteurized milk and UHT milk?

A: No, UHT milk should be included in the dairy box (CLIN 0002).

Q: Can milk be sent in a box or returnable milk crate?

A: Fluid milk does not need to be offered in boxes. It is incumbent upon the offeror to describe the type of packaging they will provide their product in.

For additional questions, please feel free to email USDAFoodBoxDistributionProgram@usda.gov

SECTION 32 PURCHASES

USDA will utilize other available funding sources to purchase and distribute food. USDA has up to an additional **\$873.3 million available in Section 32 funding** to purchase a variety of agricultural products for distribution to food banks. The use of these funds will be determined by industry requests, USDA agricultural market analysis, and food bank needs.

On May 4th, USDA announced details of \$470 million in Section 32 food purchases to occur in the third quarter of FY 2020. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will purchase a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy and seafood products. Specific purchase amounts for each commodity are included in the chart below. AMS will begin issuing solicitations in June and intends to begin deliveries in July.

Commodity – Purchase Amount

- Asparagus — \$5 million
- Catfish Products — \$30 million
- Chicken — \$30 million
- Dairy Products — \$120 million
- Haddock, Pollock, Redfish (Atlantic) — \$20 million
- Orange Juice — \$25 million
- Pears — \$5 million
- Pollock (Alaska) — \$20 million
- Pork — \$30 million
- Potatoes — \$50 million
- Prunes — \$5 million
- Raisins — \$15 million
- Strawberries — \$35 million
- Sweet Potatoes — \$10 million
- Tart Cherries — \$20 million
- Turkey Products — \$50 million

Total — \$470 million

Unlike the Farmers to Families Food Box Program which allows any grower to sell to a contract awardee without approval from USDA, these Section 32 purchases require any interested farmers who would like to sell their commodity to USDA to follow the necessary steps and instructions on how to become an approved vendor. If your commodity is listed above, we encourage you to apply to become a USDA approved vendor: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved>

For additional questions, please feel free to email NewVendor@ams.usda.gov

Great Plates Delivered: Senior Meal Delivery

The purpose of the Great Plates Delivered Program is to offer meals to adults 65+ who are high risk of contracting COVID-19 and are unable to access meals while at home and that such meals from local restaurants sourcing from California farms. The program will be administered by local governments (likely County Aging Agencies, emergency services or CBOs) leading implementation with guidance from the State.

Program costs are covered by a split between Federal (75%), State (18.75%) and local governments (6.25%). Program costs will be limited to \$66 for three (3) daily meals, inclusive of delivery. Local administrators will be required to apply to the State to participate and will be responsible for selecting food providers, delivery services and areas of service. The program is set to run through June 10th per FEMA's approval.

Food providers may include local restaurants, hotels, or licensed kitchens and must meet volume and nutritional standards along with prioritizing providers that source from California farms and ranches. For more information on the Program or state guidance, please visit [here](#).

Farm to Family Program

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has partnered with the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) to expand the Farm to Family Program. This program facilitates donations from farmer and ranchers to food banks by supporting producing, processing and distribution costs. Under the Program, CAFB will use its financial resources to reimburse growers for harvest and pack out costs willing to donate their agricultural products. CAFB will also utilize their own fleet for pick up and distribution. Once donated, products will be distributed through CAFB to their network of food banks and pantries.

The Program's initial \$3.4 million is provided by (1) the redirection of \$2 million of Specialty Crop Block Grant funds (CDFA), (2) \$861,854 from USDA's Farm to Food Bank Program (DSS) and (3) \$775,000 in private donations. Private donors have committed \$15 million to the Program for the duration of this year.

More about the Program and a list of participating contributors can be found [here](#). To learn about the California Association of Food Banks, please visit www.cafoodbanks.org.

If you are a grower, rancher or packer interested in participating, please contact Steve Linkhart, Director of Farm to Family, (510) 350-9916, stevelinkhart@cafoodbanks.org.