



Food Distribution Director's Column

We are looking forward to your upcoming ANC in Orlando, where we plan to participate in sessions on ECOS, processing, ordering and entitlement, regulations, household programs, and food safety and defense.

Since your last newsletter, we have a new Division training coordinator. As you may be aware, Steve Thomas left us in October for a job as Officer-in-Charge of the FNS field office in Richmond, Virginia. His replacement is Barry Shutt, the former commodity program director for Pennsylvania, who joined the Division on February 20th. Barry comes to us with extensive commodity program experience based on his 20 years working at the State agency level, and he will be a valuable asset to the Division.

We will be holding another "Food Distribution-101" training session in May here in Alexandria. As in the past, this session will cover program history, legislation, policy, funding, ordering, processing, ECOS, disaster feeding, commodity complaints, and more, for both school and household programs. We are already over-booked for this training, and we will possibly schedule another for next fall.

USDA Farm Bill Proposals

The USDA's Farm Bill proposals demonstrate a substantial commitment to promoting fruit and vegetable consumption through the nutrition assistance programs. Under this bill, an additional \$2.75 billion over ten years would be available for Section 32 spending on fruits and vegetables distributed through food assistance programs. In addition, USDA is proposing to increase mandatory funding for the purchase of fruits and vegetables to use in school nutrition programs by \$500 million over ten years.

Another proposal in the bill would make TEFAP State plans permanent. Under this proposal, State agencies would submit amendments to the plans as necessary, reducing the administrative burden imposed on States without limiting their ability to make changes in their distribution systems. This approach is consistent with State plan requirements for other

continued page 4

President's Message

By Donny Cooper

I hope your plans have been made to come to Orlando, Florida to join us for the 32nd Annual National Conference (ANC) of the American Commodity Distribution Association (ACDA). Phil Gambutti and the Conference Planning Committee have been hard at work preparing to make this our best conference yet. Your attendance and participation will determine the success of this year's conference. Please come determined to be actively involved in each session you choose to attend.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the chair and members of each committee for their contributions of time, effort and expertise during the year. I also want to thank each ACDA member for their time spent in reviewing, and commenting on the two

proposed rules which were opened for comment this year. These rules, when final, will determine how we operate those segments of the food distribution programs for years to come.

Thanks to Phil Gambutti and Rick Betsworth for working so hard to keep the conference planning moving along on a good timeline and for keeping the ACDA web site up to date and current realizing that both have other full time jobs. It has been a pleasure to work with a very cooperative Board this year, and I am grateful for your efforts to push things forward in the best interest of the association. I have felt good about the open lines of communication that we have had and I thank each of you for making my year as your President a very rewarding experience.

continued on page 2

Table of Contents

Director's Column	1
President's Message	1
President Elect's Message	2
Vice President's Message	3
A Few Words for Schools	3
CSFP Lives On	5
Industry News	6
Hispanic Marketing in Schools	6

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
continued from page 1

A special word of thanks to Ken Shifflett, our Executive Secretary, for his extraordinary service to this association, for his assistance to me this year, as well as his commitment to the association during his numerous years of service as our Executive Secretary.

Bob and Eleanor Upton started working with us on a limited basis with our conference in Rapid City, South Dakota and have worked with us ever since. They have been a valuable asset to us in our conference planning and negotiations. We thank you for a job well done.

I also need to say a special word of thanks to Frank Speed and Becky Greene in my office for all the extra work they have done for me while I was involved in ACDA business. I am truly blessed to be able to work with two such fine folks who have been willing to pitch in and do whatever it takes to keep our Alabama work moving forward.

In closing, let me say thanks to each member of ACDA that I have known through the years, and especially to those who helped me along the way with your suggestions and comments. Thanks for the encouragement of those of you that had been around a while and were willing to help the "new kid on the block," when I was getting started. I have been blessed to know each of you and I thank you for the contributions you have made both in my job and in my life. I hope each of you will continue your efforts to support American Agriculture through our Food Distribution Programs. Commodities not only help provide nutritious meals to our nation's school children, but they also help feed those who are hungry in our country. I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked in these programs for the last twenty-three years. May God continue to bless each of you and may God Bless America!

PRESIDENT ELECT'S MESSAGE
By Phillip J. Gambutti

By the time you are reading this message, hopefully you have registered for the ACDA conference in Orlando!

Being the conference planning chairperson has been an interesting and adventurous experience for me! Prior to planning the conference, my experience in this regard was pretty much limited to planning the occasional poker game with my buddies, and my responsibilities were limited to insuring there was enough beer and change! Well, there is much more to planning the conference, let me assure you.

There were many challenges to face, beginning with the need to change the dates due to the conflict with the Jewish holiday of Passover. This change resulted in competition with another group for the meeting rooms. Although I anticipate each room having sufficient seating for all who wish to attend, a number of membership group meetings will need to be held in "alcoves," located throughout the hotel. In between every session there is a break of some type. My advice to you all is to arrive at your session early to ensure a good seat!

I do apologize for the unavailability of rooms at the Rosen for the entire duration of the conference. Again, having to share the space with other conventioners, coupled with a number of folks arriving early or staying late to enjoy Orlando resulted in a room shortage. Hopefully, the Quality Inn, located next door, will prove to be a satisfactory alternative.

Still, the conference planning committee has put together an outstanding program. We strived to have something of interest to all attendees occurring all the time. In addition, we have provided 2 free evenings book ending the two networking events occurring during the conference. The president's reception will feature a performance by the Liberty Voices, the country's most renowned a'capella singing group, who will be performing a program of patriotic, traditional and Americana folk songs. Saturday evening we will all be making the short trip to Sea World. After enjoying the park on your own for two hours, we all meet for a grand networking event that is sure to please everyone!

In planning the conference, we took careful note of the comments received in Denver. I hope that you will agree that our conference continues to improve every year. I encourage you all to take the time to complete this year's evaluation forms, as I am sure next year's committee will find them a valuable resource. Finally, I would like to thank this year's conference planning committee, Eleanor and Bob Upton, Ken Shifflett and the staff of the Rosen Hotel for their assistance. I look forward to seeing you all in Orlando. I'll be the one with the bag over his head!

And by the way, the poker game is Friday @ 9:00. You bring the beer and change!!

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Rick Betsworth

As I come to the end of my first year of service to ACDA I find that I have gained a better appreciation of the challenges and rewards of serving. I want to thank all of you who have helped me along the way with advice, suggestions, corrections, and just plain hard work!

We have tried to continue the progress on our website this year and have added several new features as well as attempted to lay the groundwork for future enhancements. Much work remains to be done here though and my successor will certainly be busy too. I invite you to attend the website update session at ANC to find out what has been done, what is being contemplated, and to provide your input to the process.

As you may know, Kansas City has been selected as the site of next year's ANC. I will be soliciting help for the planning of this conference in the near future. This will not be an easy task as all of the conferences I have attended since joining ACDA have been superb and Phil has certainly not lowered the bar with the 2007 ANC program!

Some of you already know that I am moving from the NSLP Processing Program to managing the Household Programs for Kentucky. I believe this will help me to gain a broader perspective and understanding of the needs of another category of members and I hope that will allow me to serve you better.

I'll see you in Orlando!!

A FEW WORDS FOR SCHOOLS' ACDA MEMBERS

It's February 20, 2007 and I have an e-mail in my "inbox" from Rick Betsworth. It is a gentle reminder that today is the deadline for the (mandatory) article for the spring issue of our Commodity Keys. For a while I was toying with the idea that I would pretend that I didn't receive the e-mail; or that I will play the older people senility card... That didn't work either as the Outlook reminder notice jumped at me as soon as I opened my computer this morning.

The last ten months, since I was elected to the ACDA Board, were rather educational for me. I attended two Board meetings. First one (middle of September '06) was in Orlando. We stayed at the '07 ACDA Conference hotel and I truly believe that you will enjoy the conference, the city and the hotel.

Donny always keeps our agenda very busy, and it was not any different during our second Board meeting in January. This time we met in Alexandria, VA. Nothing against Alexandria (it's definitely close enough to the USDA offices), but if they asked me for my opinion I would rather go back to Orlando...

I can tell you without any doubt that our '07 conference in Orlando is going to be great! Phil and his conference committee put together a great program (good speakers and good workshops) and I'm absolutely positive that everyone will love the social event at Sea World.

The ACDA Board was able to secure CEU's (credentialing educational units) for SNA members participating in our conference – thank you Patti Montague for helping us with the application.

Other good news is that the ranks of school food service administrators who are becoming members of ACDA are growing and I have good reason to hope that this year's conference may see the biggest number of school RA's yet.

California SNA decided to establish a new CSNA Board of Directors position: ACDA Liaison. I consider this as very good news as it signals a new stage in the relationship development between the SNA and ACDA.

Well, it's late afternoon and after several interruptions I just may need to finish this short article so Rick cannot complain anymore. I hope to see you all in Orlando and some of you probably even before in Washington, DC at LAC.

Thank you for your support.

DIRECTOR'S COLUMN *continued from page 1*

nutrition assistance programs. A second proposal would provide national uniform rules for TEFAP contracts, which would allow greater competition for program participation among local organizations, including faith-based organizations. The proposed bill would also increase the availability of fruits and vegetables through TEFAP. We will discuss these issues in greater detail at your upcoming conference.

FY 2008 Budget Proposals

The President's FY 2008 budget continues to propose elimination of the CSFP as a means of targeting resources toward programs such as Food Stamps and WIC, which have nationwide availability. The budget includes funding to provide a transitional benefit to elderly participants, to absorb CSFP participants who would be eligible for WIC, and funds for outreach grants for Food Stamp agencies in CSFP States.

Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM)

We awarded a multi-year contract to SRA International Inc. for the development and implementation of a Web-Based Supply Chain Management System (WBSCM) to replace the current system used by USDA to buy and manage commodities for our programs. The current system, the Processed Commodity Inventory Management System (PCIMS), is at the end of its useful life cycle. It is based on antiquated technology that limits efficiency and effectiveness. Using Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) software, WBSCM will allow USDA and its customers and suppliers to use browser software and the Internet to electronically bid, award, and pay for commodities, and manage orders, inventory, and distribution. The COTS selection process will be completed in July 2007. System design and

development work will begin shortly after the COTS product is selected.

Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS) Update

We continue to enhance the functionality of ECOS. Some of the major changes undertaken in 2006 upgraded the technical architecture to ensure sufficient capacity and performance for our expanding user base. At this time ECOS has over 6,000 registered users, and we anticipate that number will double over the next two years.

USDA recently made changes to the household programs multi-food shipment ordering and distribution business process. This change required creation of a multi-food ordering capability and inventory management function in ECOS. The new multi-food features will be available to the supported programs and our National Warehouse distribution network in the second week of March 2007.

ECOS now has the capability to support Co-op structures. The SDA will be able to create and assign recipient agencies to a Co-op organization. The Co-op structure allows the participating recipient agencies to pool their purchasing power for sufficient quantities of product to assemble a complete order. The ability to create a Co-op order will improve the probability that smaller agencies may obtain desired commodities. This enhancement also will allow States to monitor planned assistance levels at the Co-op level by aggregating individual districts' entitlement and commodity requests.

Other ECOS functional changes implemented in 2006 included improvements to various reports. We can always be contacted for assistance at ECOS-HelpDesk@fns.usda.gov.

Change in Buying for Turkey Products for School Year 2008

In order to better serve school needs, AMS has agreed to test long-term contracts for some turkey products.

States must submit orders by March 2007. This should enable us to secure more competitive pricing and better meet growing demands for a variety of turkey products. We will continue bi-weekly purchases for orders submitted after this March deadline for the same turkey items. However, there are no guarantees of fulfilling the regular bi-weekly orders based on the past history of the volatile turkey market. Bulk turkeys and turkey taco filling will continue to be on the bi-weekly purchase schedule as usual. We are still reviewing the possibility of offering bulk ground turkey for School Year 2008.

Entitlement Spending and Challenges for School Year 2008

Orders should be evenly divided throughout the school year due to the increases in entitlement and the additional 12% provision commodity support funds. Typically, early school year purchases have been restricted due to limited funds available at the beginning of the school year. With the long-term turkey contracts for this year and the additional 12% commodity support funds, we are optimistic about earlier deliveries this school year.

Food Safety Unit

A recent Food Safety Unit education project involved producing a workbook and plan template to accompany a self-instructional video on school food safety programs based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point principles, to help program operators comply with food safety requirements.

Addressing commodity food safety issues, FNS used the Rapid Alert System for several Hold/Recall actions, significantly reducing the time it takes to notify State Agencies with accurate, detailed information on suspect products. The Unit also used ECOS to post news and links to information about non-commodity recalls, such as spinach.

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DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

As you know, DoD is changing the way they procure products for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. They will be instituting the use of long-term Prime Vendor contracts that will divide the country into 13 contract service regions. Under the new business model, States and locals will be using a new electronic ordering system, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipt System (FFAVORS) to place orders and receipt for them. Any school currently using TAP-IT will be transferred over to the new system, which is just as easy to use.

Three highlights of FFAVORS Web are:

- Actual market prices versus estimated prices will be listed. The school will be billed at the price they see at time of order.
- Federal and State balances will be available at time of order. Schools will not be able to place any order that exceeds the available balance.
- After delivery, the school will go back into the FFAVORS Web system to enter the actual receipt of items received. The vendor's invoice must match this receipt prior to the bill being generated to the school (or USDA for federal funds).

This system will improve monitoring of orders at all levels. DoD hopes to implement the new produce contracts and the FFAVORS system beginning in School Year 2008.

National Processing Agreement Update

As of February 2007, the National Processing Agreement program has 109 approved processors. These include: 20 poultry, 7 egg, 5 peanut, 7 grain, and 7 oil processors; 33 cheese processors; 21 beef and pork processors; and 30 fruit and vegetable processors. (Note that some processors utilize multiple commodities, so the

number of processors is less than the number of processor categories.)

We have currently approved over 4,300 End Product Data Schedules for National Processors. Our FDD website is frequently updated with the latest listing of approved processors. You can access it at: www.commodityfoods.usda.gov (click on "Food Distribution Programs Home Page," then on "National Processing Agreement (NPA) Demonstration Program.") Please take a look at this list and encourage any multi-state processors eligible to apply to submit a National Processing Agreement (NPA) and their End Product Data Schedules (EPDS) to us for approval. Questions and document submissions should be directed to: NPA@fns.usda.gov.

Regulations Update

The proposed rule, "Management of Donated Foods in Child Nutrition Programs, the Nutrition Services Incentive Program, and Charitable Institutions," was published in the Federal Register on June 8, 2006. The proposed rule, "Revisions and Clarifications in Requirements for the Processing of Donated Foods," was published in the Federal Register on August 24, 2006. We have reviewed the comments received in response to both rules, and are currently drafting final rules. We project the publication of both final rules in the Federal Register before the end of calendar year 2007.

We will also complete a draft of a third proposed rule this year. This rule will propose to revise and clarify requirements to ensure that distributing and recipient agencies order, distribute, and control donated foods safely, efficiently, and cost-effectively. It will also propose to reduce administrative and reporting requirements. We expect to publish this proposed rule in fiscal year 2008, after publication of the two final rules described above. This rulemaking (including proposed and final rules) will complete our "rewrite" of 7 CFR Part 250.

For Information & Suggestions

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Despite Elimination in President's Budget CSFP Lives On

Sam Varela

Non-School Program Representative

The administration's 2007 budget eliminated CSFP. But Mark Twain once said; "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." And, for the moment at least, the same can be said of CSFP. The program lives on and, in Texas, cases increased by 3,545.

We understand Texas' increase was in part due to the number of Katrina Evacuees remaining in Texas. One survey by the state indicates about 250,000 evacuees still remain in Texas.

To help offset the costs of Katrina, Texas received 19,077 Supplemental CSFP cases for the period of July through December 2006. The supplemental caseload was distributed to four areas of the state with Houston receiving 8,500, Dallas receiving 2,250, San Antonio receiving 6,000 and McAllen receiving 2,327.

In January, after the supplemental period expired, USDA notified Texas of the 3,545 increase in cases. We allocated the additional caseload among our CSFP contractors with Dallas receiving 191, Laredo receiving 1,200 and McAllen receiving 2154.

The President's 2008 Budget also excludes CSFP, but there are some indications that Congress may continue the program.

Industry News

Carolyn Gooch, Industry Representative

It is hard to believe that it is almost time for the 2007 ANC. I am not sure where all my time goes. My dad at 83 tells me that the older we get the faster time travels. It is hard for me to believe that time could pass any faster. I will try to provide an update of activities that have occurred since ANC in Denver.

Each of the commodity and/or processing issues presented during the Industry meeting in Denver were forwarded to the processing committee and then forwarded to the appropriate sub-committee for action. You will receive a complete written update at the first Industry Meeting in Orlando.

Several members volunteered to serve on an industry committee addressing the issue of excessive inventories. I have your names on the volunteer list, but with the re-write of the processing regulations and work with the processing committee, I was hoping this

issue would be resolved. From recent discussions with industry members and reports presented at the January Board meeting, inventory issues remain with commodity processed items and brown box items. I believe this will be a focus for the organization in the coming year.

We will again be posting a calendar detailing commodity and/or SNA shows in the members section of the website. If you have dates after March 1 that need to be included, please email to cgooch@criderinc.com prior to conference.

Please take a moment, pay your dues and register for the upcoming ANC in Orlando. You will find the complete information—hotel and conference registration forms, plus the entire agenda—on the ACDA website, www.commodityfoods.org. There are many sessions designed to update and explain current changes

in the program. General Sessions will explain the timetable for issuance of the final processing regulations and activity on changing the meal pattern requirements.

In earlier emails, I have asked for input on topics you would like discussed at our industry meetings', if you haven't submitted your thoughts; please do so. These meetings are designed for industry members to receive updates, education, etc. Thanks for your assistance.

During the first meeting we will be electing the Industry Representative to serve on the ACDA Board. I am completing my 2-year term and am eligible for one additional term. I will be placing my name on the ballot, but welcome any member that is interested in seeking the position to email your information to me prior to March 9.

I have enjoyed representing each of you to the board for the past two years and look forward to seeing each of you in Orlando!

HISPANIC MARKETING IN SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE: "Latino Parent Workshops" in California

Judy Hirigoyen,
Allied/Ag Membership Group

In school food service, outreach to the Hispanic family is proving to be a helpful communications tool by the California School Nutrition Association (CSNA). Most states have Spanish-speaking constituents and have struggled with finding effective ways to inclusively market their programs to this segment. For those considering implementing an Hispanic marketing program, the CSNA events are discussed here, with several lessons from their experience that can be extrapolated and applied to other events.



continued on page 7



continued from page 6

Event Overview

Briefly, CSNA took “Latino Parent Workshops” to nine cities throughout California. The project was funded by Health Net of California and designed and executed by The Wild West Gang agency with the support of the SND in each school. The events had the look and feel of a health fair, since these events are typically well-attended by the Hispanic population in California. The educational presentation portion of the event lasted one hour with a Q& A period, and another hour allowed for visiting exhibits.

Presented entirely in Spanish, Gabriela Pacheco, RD, LD, SNS spoke to parents about good nutrition and the particular health risks to Hispanics, such as Diabetes. Emphasizing that obesity is a serious concern for the whole family, her presentation cites the NSLP as a key tool for childhood wellness and learning readiness.

Dovetailing with Pacheco’s nutrition presentation, a Health Net educator presented a physical fitness

component, driving the point that a healthy weight is maintained by both good nutritional habits and increased physical fitness.

In all, more than 750 Spanish-speaking parents attended the Workshops. Thirty-seven community-based organizations supported the events with exhibits at the Workshops, which were held in the host school’s cafeteria. Thanks to advance media relations efforts, positive publicity such as Spanish and English television and radio interviews were achieved in each city, positioning the School Food Service program as providers of good nutrition and nutrition education. Each school district has invited the program to return and more than 20 new districts have requested events.

Planning your event

Whether you call it Hispanic marketing, education or outreach, it’s well worth addressing this “customer” of your programs by planning onsite educational events. Here are some lessons from CSNA’s program to keep in mind if you offer an outreach event in your area:

- Parents are aware of the issue of childhood obesity. They are interested in detail, such as Diabetes prevention, and are motivated to make changes in their homes.
- Parents may be critical of school food, so be prepared to explain the difference between school food and similar foods from other sources.
- Use Spanish-speaking professionals to speak at events, rather than trying to speak in English with Spanish translations.
- Translate all materials that go home to parents into Spanish.
- Make sure Spanish-speaking parents understand the school meal programs are available to children regardless of citizenship. Have a table set up with applications for free and reduced-price meal programs if applicable.
- If you’re planning an event for Hispanic parents, consider offering transportation.
- Enlist appropriate local community-based programs in getting the word out, and exhibiting their educational programs at the event. You might include migrant programs, churches, health organizations, city recreation departments, and so forth. Ask them to contribute a door prize.
- Offer healthy recipes for your audience’s cultural cuisine, particularly those that contain commodity ingredients.
- Door prizes are helpful to attract an audience if publicized in advance.
- Offer food samples and bottled water from your vendor partners.
- Provide onsite child care, but expect attendees to keep their children with them.
- Allow a Q + A session.

A complete overview of CSNA marketing programs will be at the ACDA Conference on April 1 at 2:45.