



Food Distribution National Policy Memorandum

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Alexandria, VA
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POLICY NO.: FD-022: Food Distribution on Indian Reservations

SUBJECT: Adjusted Guide Rates for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Fresh fruit is available as an alternative to, not in addition to, canned fruit and vegetable products already available in the food package. Participants may choose to select fresh produce in lieu of all or a portion of the canned fruits and vegetables in their food package. Each participant, with approval of the ITO, may substitute fresh produce for up to 9 pounds of fruit for 9 cans of fruit and 9 pounds of vegetables for 9 cans of vegetables, in keeping with the total household substitution rates demonstrated in the guide rate. Additionally, a recipient agency may allow recipients to substitute 1 pound of vegetables for 1 pound of fruit, replacing up to 4 pounds of fruit per person.

Many produce items are currently available in 1 lb., 2 lb., 3 lb., and 5 lb. packages. For these items, the exchange rate for canned goods will be for the exact number of pounds versus cans involved. We are trying to limit the number of pre-bagged fruit and vegetable items since they cost almost one-third more per pound than the loose packed fruits and vegetables. The mixed fruit bags and the soup mix packages will continue to be available; however, no new pre-bagged combination items will be added to the list of fresh items available without prior approval and notification by Headquarters. Because fresh produce is variable in size, shape, and yield, guide rates cannot achieve exact equivalency. The following rates equate the approximate amount of fresh product that will be equivalent to a #303 can of product.

Food Package Items Available Year-round

Carrots, Loose – Seven medium carrots will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Dry Onions, Loose – Two yellow onions will equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Squash (available only in bulk) – One small to medium acorn squash will be equivalent to two cans of vegetables.

Sweet Potatoes – Two medium sweet potatoes will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Turnips (available only in bulk) - Five medium (2.5 inches) turnips will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Green Bell Peppers – Three small to medium green bell peppers will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Cabbage – We have been informed that this particular item has large variations in unit weight. We have discussed this problem with staff from the Department of Defense (DoD). DoD has notified its vendors that cabbage is to be packed 22 to 24 heads per case which will result in each head weighing approximately two pounds. One head of cabbage would then be equivalent to two cans of vegetables.

Cucumbers – Three small to medium cucumbers will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Red Onions – Three medium red onions will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Celery – One Medium stalk of celery will be equivalent to two cans of vegetables.

Seasonal Food Package Items
(Available beginning Summer of Fiscal year 2003)

Fresh Corn on the Cob – Two ears of ears of corn will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

Fresh Peaches – Three medium peaches will be equivalent to one can of vegetables.

All the above figures are approximate and may need to be adjusted depending on the unit weight of the product the DoD vendors can obtain at any given time. In our discussions with DoD, we established that the exchange rates listed above should apply to the majority of product that is typically ordered for use in military food service operations where portion control is an important consideration. We realize that product individual unit weight inconsistencies cause problems in distributing produce equally to program participants. DoD has issued instructions to its vendors to request that products ordered for Indian Tribal Organizations be packed uniformly. Therefore, each of the units of produce contained in a case should weigh approximately the same amount.

However, it may not always be possible to provide potatoes, carrots, or other produce of the above listed sizes/weights. Unit weight depends on the particular variety of a produce that is currently available at a reasonable price and the area of the country where the product was grown. When ITOs notice a significant variation from the norm in the weight of the produce, it will be necessary to adjust the exchange rates. Two methods are available. First, the average weight of the units in a case can be determined by counting the total number of units in the case and dividing that total into the total weight that is marked on the case. A second method would be to individually weigh several units. For example, the warehouse manager notices that

the carrots are much larger than usual. Therefore, the standard rate of seven carrots per can of vegetables is inapplicable. The manager weights out five or six carrots individually, and they have an average weight of 4 ounces, or one-fourth pound.

Therefore, the equivalency for this case of carrots is four for each can of vegetables. Significant variations in unit weight should be minimal, both within a case of produce or between cases over time. As we stated above, the standard exchange rates provided

in this memorandum should be applicable most of the time and, therefore, should be posted. DoD is developing a chart with the guide rates as they appear in this memorandum. When it is finalized, copies will be provided to the ITOs.

Rather than using these exchange rates, an ITO may chose the more labor-intensive procedure of weighing all produce in order to be able to exchange a pound of produce for a can. It is doubtful that the marginal added precision in the exchange of fresh for canned fruits and vegetables will justify the extra effort of weighing all produce.

When entering bulk fresh produce in AIS, pounds rather than units must be used. The two-pound cabbage would be entered as two units, and seven carrots would be entered as one unit.



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