



Food and
Nutrition
Service

1320
Braddock
Place
Alexandria,
VA
22314

January 11, 2022

Cheryl Johnson
Kansas State Department of Education

Re: Response to FR Docket ID FNS-2021-0044

Dear Cheryl Johnson:

Thank you for your response to the Federal Register Notice requesting comments on the proposed information collection for the 2023 Farm to School Census, published December 2, 2021. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is committed to generating national and state-level data reflecting the scope and details of U.S. school food authority participation in farm to school activities, and we appreciate your comments.

We agree that SFA directors may not have access to all the information required to answer each survey question. As you suggest, other SFA staff or stakeholders in the farm to school program might be better able to provide requested information. The 2023 survey will be shareable using the SFA's unique link (provided by email), and anyone with the link will be able to open the survey, respond to questions, and save their answers. Where possible, we will work with the survey programmer to make collaboration on the survey as intuitive and convenient as possible, for example, by offering an option to send links to specific questions. We will adjust our communications with SFA directors to highlight these features and to encourage directors to reach out to other staff for information they might not know.

We are aware that the section on local food spending may be particularly difficult for SFAs to complete, as they may not be able to easily access this information, if they have it at all. However, estimating SFA spending on local foods, to the best of our ability, is a key outcome of the Farm to School Census. We will emphasize in our communication to SFA directors that estimates are acceptable, and that if it is impossible to provide the information, the respondent should still continue with other questions on the survey. We have also rearranged the 2023 survey instrument such that the most burdensome questions come last, which should minimize the potential for respondents to "drop off" when they reach the questions that ask for detailed information on food spending.

Your comment also notes an emphasis in the Census on fruits and vegetables. We are interested in procurement of *all* types of local foods, including meats, grains, dairy, and other items that may be easier to access in regions with a shorter growing season. We have adjusted language in the Census to make it more clear that our interest in local foods applies to any type of food or beverage that meets the SFA's definition of local.

Your comment notes the time lag between administration of the survey and the release of the results. We try to share the findings as soon as possible; however, we require sufficient time to process, analyze, and prepare the data for public release as well as to go through required clearance processes.

Finally, your comment also suggests that the Census collect data on the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). As in 2019, the 2023 Census will ask about service of local foods in several Child Nutrition programs operated by

SFAs, including the School Breakfast Program, CACFP, CACFP At-Risk Afterschool, NSLP After School Snack Service, and the summer meal programs (SFSP and Seamless Summer Option). However, the Census is not distributed to CACFP or SFSP sponsors that are not SFAs so we cannot collect information on farm to school activities within this population.

Thank you again for your comments and your support of USDA school meals programs. We appreciate your time and attention in providing feedback to make the 2023 Census more successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Rosenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Rosenthal, PhD
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