

APPENDIX U9.

60-DAY FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE COMMENTS RECEIVED HERALD



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Submitter Info

Comment:

My name is Vanessa Herald and I serve as Farm to Institution Outreach Specialist at University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. I rely on the USDA Farm to School Census on a regular basis to communicate the growth and needs of schools in Wisconsin, and to justify resource requests and grant project proposals. I would like to ensure the F2S Census remains a relevant and impactful tool, I recommend the following considerations or changes: I appreciate the opportunity to see which school districts have not completed the Census before the Census formally closes. Having the chance to actively send reminders to school districts that have yet to respond increases our response rate and better reflects the farm to school efforts occurring in my community. When we have had the opportunity to send reminders in the past, we have increased our participation rate significantly. Wisconsin is one of the 8 states participating in the USDA Pilot for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. In reading the previous Census questions, the section about local food purchasing EXCLUDES DoD Fresh and USDA Foods. Im not sure what the right answer is, but it may help to clarify if districts should or should not include local purchases through the USDA Pilot program. Personally, I dont feel the question about frequency of serving local foods (especially with the breakout of what foods are served how often) is particularly useful. It may be perceived as an overwhelming question. Be clearer about what aspects of the ECE setting are captured. If the Census expands beyond ECE sites within school districts, the questions may not be relevant or feel like the right fit for ECE providers. As the current survey collects information from school-based CACFP sites, this provides limited information to us because Wisconsin has very few of these sites. Asking school districts to report on spending from the previous school year may lead to inaccuracies that underestimate or overestimate local purchasing taking place at the district level. Please be advised that school food authorities are incredibly busy with commodities purchasing in January and February. Requesting that the Census be completed at this time may decrease our response rate and not accurately reflect the farm to school efforts in my community. I have noticed that the previous Census was sent to the food service department via the district Business Director or other administrator. Business Directors or administrators do not have the knowledge to complete the Census, and transferring the request to the food service director may not occur. If each future Census is going to be linked to a specific email address within the district, it may be limiting because the food service director may not be able to complete the survey. The length of the survey (22 pages) is very long and takes a toll on busy food service directors. Opportunities to celebrate their efforts, like the One in a Melon award, are helpful in communicating the importance of their work. If there are any opportunities to streamline the Census it would be helpful and increase participation rates. *🌐

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