

# Illinois Commodity System Instructions

**Illinois State Board of Education**

**Nutrition Department**

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## Additional Resources

- ISBE Food Distribution Program Website  
<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/School-Nutrition-Programs-Food-Distribution.aspx>
- USDA Food Distribution Program Website  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-fis>

## Overview

Participants in the Food Distribution Program will use the Illinois Commodity System to manage entitlement funds, place USDA Foods orders, allot funds to the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh program, divert funds to processors, and stay informed about the program.

Please refer to the [Food Distribution Program section of the School Nutrition Programs Handbook](#) for detailed information about the Food Distribution Program.

## Access

The Illinois Commodity System (ICS) is an online data system, accessible from ISBE's Food Distribution Programs webpage at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/School-Nutrition-Programs-Food-Distribution.aspx>.

ICS users need a login and password. New users must complete and submit the [ICS New User Registration Form](#). The form must be signed by a district level administrator, approving access. School food authorities are limited to two users.

## Message Board

The ICS message board is also the user's ICS homepage. The message board is a means for ISBE to communicate with participants about important dates, upcoming events, food recalls, order timeframes, and much more. Please check the message board weekly.

The right side of the ICS homepage contains a list of helpful links, allowing access to related systems and information, without having to leave ICS.

## Annual Order

The annual order is generally placed in January, for the following school year, July 1 to June 30. The specific order period dates will be posted on the ICS message board in November.

School food authorities (SFAs) have three options for spending Food Distribution Program funds. SFAs can choose any or all options:

1. USDA Foods
2. DOD Fresh
3. Diversion to Processor

All options are selected as part of the annual order in ICS. If DOD Fresh and/or diversion to processor are selected, the SFA will utilize additional data systems to place and/or track orders during the year.

To place the annual order, follow the steps below.

### Step 1 Login to [ICS](#)

### Step 2 Update Contact Information

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on Agency Info
- Update all white boxes with current contact information
- Click Save

### Step 3 Update Delivery Site(s) and Site Contact Information

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on Participating Delivery Sites
- Select School in the Program drop down box
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Click Next
- Ensure all delivery sites are listed. Ensure all have an Approved status.
  - If a site does not have an approved status but should be approved, call the Nutrition Department at 800-545-7892.
  - If a site is not listed but should receive a delivery, complete, and submit the [ICS Delivery Site Change Form](#).
- Ensure the correct distribution percentages for all sites. If more than one site receives deliveries, ensure the sum of the distribution percentages totals 100%. Adjustments to the distribution percentages can be made at any time. **NOTE:** Please consider the number of delivery sites and the distribution percentage for each delivery site, in relation to the total value of USDA Foods requested for the year. There is a 5-case minimum delivery per delivery site, per month. Please ensure that the 5-case minimum can be met.
- Click Save
- Click the Edit link on the right, for each site. Update all white boxes with current site contact information. If gray boxes need updated, complete and submit the [ICS Delivery Site Change Form](#). **NOTE:** Deliveries are made to the Delivery Address located on this screen. Delivery invoices are mailed to the Delivery Site Mailing Address located on this screen.
- Click Save

#### Step 4 Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Option

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on DOD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Click Next
- Select yes to participate in DOD Fresh, or select no to not participate.
- If yes is selected, enter a dollar amount to allot to DOD Fresh. The minimum allotment is \$150. The maximum allotment is 100% of the beginning PAL balance.
- Click Save

The PAL funds allotted to DOD Fresh will be deducted from the beginning PAL balance. If funds remain, proceed to Step 5. If 100% of PAL funds were allotted to DOD and no funds remain, you are finished with your Annual Order.

Orders for DOD Fresh fruits and vegetables are placed in FFAVORS, a data system maintained by the Department of Defense. Please refer to the [DOD FFAVORS Ordering Manual](#) for step-by-step instructions on placing orders and receipting orders. It is important to track the usage of DOD Fresh funds throughout the year in FFAVORS.

ISBE will contact SFAs that are new to DOD, to set-up a SFA account in FFAVORS, and to establish new user accounts for FFAVORS.

New staff of existing SFAs must contact ISBE to set-up a new user account for FFAVORS.

#### Step 5 Diversion to Processor Option

Please review the Diversion to Processor section of the [Handbook](#) before proceeding.

To determine items to divert, to select processors, and to calculate pounds, follow the steps below to generate a report.

- Click on Reports
- Click on Approved End Products Report
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Check or uncheck the Product Type boxes desired, which include Fee for Service, Net Off Invoice, and Rebate
- Select a processor **NOTE:** If a desired processor is not listed, contact the processor directly to obtain end product information.
- Select a USDA Foods category

- Enter an End Product Code and/or End Product Description if known, or leave blank
- Click Next
- An ICS National Approved Processed End Products report will generate. Use the report, SFA menus, SFA production records, and the [Processing Calculator](#), to calculate the number of pounds needed for diversion to processor. **NOTE:** Some processors and/or distributors provide pre-filled processing calculators to assist in the calculations. Repeat the report process for each end product desired. Once all calculations are complete, proceed to placing diversion requests below.

To place diversion requests, follow the steps below.

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on Diversion to Processor
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Click Next
- Click Add
- Select a Processor
- Select a USDA Food from the USDA Foods category drop down box. Ensure the USDA Food selected matches the USDA Food on the National Approved Processed End Products report.
- Enter the number of pounds to divert. Ensure the number of pounds diverted is enough to equal at least 1 case. A minimum of 100 pounds must be diverted for chicken, turkey, pork, beef and eggs.
- Click Save to commit to your diversion. **NOTE:** Rows cannot be deleted once saved. If a row is not needed, enter a zero in the pounds field and click save. Repeat the diversion request process for each end product desired.

When processing, it is very important to check the ICS message board throughout the annual order period, to stay informed of important deadlines and information. Two deadline dates are given during the annual order period for the diversion to processor option. The first deadline allows ISBE to review requests and build truckloads. ISBE may round up or down (no more than 20 percent) to create full truckloads. Processors that do not receive enough requests will not receive a truck. SFA diversions to those processors are changed to zero, and the SFAs have an opportunity to adjust their order form. Adjustments can be made to DOD, diversion to processor, and USDA Foods prior to the final deadline.

Since ISBE may have to adjust diversions up or down (no more than 20 percent) once all final diversion requests are submitted, SFAs should check ICS a few weeks after the final order period deadline, to see the final diversions to processors.

The PAL funds diverted for processing will be deducted from the beginning PAL balance. If funds remain, proceed to Step 6. If 100% of PAL funds were allotted to DOD and/or diverted for processing, and no funds remain, you are finished with your Annual Order.

ISBE will provide diversion information to the processors, including the SFA name, agreement number, contact information, commodity number, commodity name, and number of pounds diverted. Processors will set-up SFA accounts in K12 and/or Processor Link.

New staff and/or staff new to processing must visit [K12](#) and/or [ProcessorLink](#) to set-up a user account.

Orders for specific processed end products are placed through the SFA's distributor and/or directly with the processor. It is important to track the diversion and usage of USDA Foods in [K12](#) and/or [ProcessorLink](#).

### Step 6 USDA Foods Option

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on Annual USDA Foods Order Form
- Select School in the Program drop down box
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Select a Product Category. There are five product categories, including dairy/grains/nuts/oils, fruits, meats/alternates, poultry/eggs, and vegetables. Once the order is complete for one category, the remaining categories can be accessed from within the order form.
- Click Next
- Check the Accepted box next to each food requested
- Enter the maximum number of cases desired, for the entire school year, in the Requested column, for each food requested. **NOTE:** For detailed information on a particular USDA Food, click the magnifying glass icon to the right of the row, and scroll to the bottom of the screen.
- Click Save
- Use the drop down box beneath the PAL budget summary to navigate to the next product category. Repeat the order process for all USDA Foods desired.

The value of USDA Foods requested may exceed available funds by up to 35%. SFAs are encouraged to order up to 35% over available funds, in case certain USDA Foods become unavailable. USDA Foods requested will display on the Value of USDA Foods Requested line of the PAL budget summary. Ensure the Value of USDA Foods Requested line is equal to or greater than the Available for USDA Foods Requests line. The goal is to order 100% of the Beginning PAL Balance, or more, if ordering USDA Foods. The annual order process is now complete.

After SFAs place USDA Foods orders with ISBE, ISBE places orders with USDA. USDA specifies delivery periods for certain USDA Foods. In an effort to help SFAs plan menus, ISBE creates an [Anticipated USDA Foods Chart](#), which lists the month(s) each USDA Food is planned to be delivered to schools. ISBE updates the Anticipated USDA Foods Charter throughout the school year. Be sure to refer to it often.

## Annual Order – Additional Information

The annual order is generally placed in January, for the following school year, July 1 to June 30. The specific order period dates will be posted on the ICS message board in November.

USDA Foods orders can be adjusted by the SFA throughout the school year. ISBE will do its best to accommodate changes, but there is no guarantee. Accommodations are dependent upon order deadlines, inventory, and budget considerations.

DOD allotment can be adjusted by the SFA for a period of time after the annual order period deadline. Once the DOD screen in ICS becomes unchangeable to the SFA, the SFA may contact ISBE if an adjustment is needed. ISBE will make adjustments if possible, based upon budget and contract considerations.

Diversions to processors cannot be adjusted by the SFA after the annual order period deadline.

## Bonus Orders

At times, ISBE has extra USDA Foods inventory. When available, an announcement is posted on the ICS Message Board.

To place an order for bonus items, follow the steps below.

- Click on Annual Order Forms
- Click on Annual USDA Foods Order Form
- Select School in the Program drop down box
- Select 2025 in the Program Year drop down box
- Select a Product Category. There are five product categories, including dairy/grains/nuts/oils, fruits, meats/alternates, poultry/eggs and vegetables. Once the bonus order is complete for one category, the remaining categories can be accessed from within the order form.
- Click Next
- Select the Bonus tab
- Check the Accepted box next to each food requested



- Enter the maximum number of cases desired, in the Requested column, for each food requested. **NOTE:** For detailed information on a particular USDA Food, click the magnifying glass icon to the right of the row, and scroll to the bottom of the screen.
- Click Save
- Use the drop down box beneath the PAL budget summary to navigate to the next product category. Repeat the bonus order process for all USDA Foods desired.

## Monthly USDA Foods Allocation

ISBE generates an allocation of USDA Foods planned for delivery each month from August through April. The allocation is displayed in ICS as a Delivery Request. SFAs may view and/or modify the Delivery Request between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of each month, in the month prior to delivery. For example, from July 13 to July 20, a SFA may view and/or modify the Delivery Request for August.

Planned deliveries are allocated to each approved delivery site as indicated on the Participating Delivery Sites screen. See the Annual Order section, step 3, for more information about delivery sites.

If a SFA does not view and/or modify the Delivery Request between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, the full allocation will be delivered.

Please be aware, that once the allocation is complete for a given month, the SFA is responsible for accepting the USDA Foods listed on the Delivery Request. Adjustments to USDA Foods orders must be made prior to a monthly allocation. For example, if a SFA originally ordered 10 cases of beef patties, received 8 cases by December, and decided it does not wish to receive any more beef patties this school year, then the SFA must reduce the USDA Foods order by 2 cases, prior to December 13, in order to prevent a delivery of beef patties in January or subsequent months.

### Delivery Request

To view and/or modify the planned delivery each month, follow the steps below.

- Click on Monthly Process
- Click on Delivery Request
- Click Place Request to the right of the open delivery period
- If the planned delivery is acceptable as is, no further action is necessary; if modification is desired, there are three ways to modify the delivery
  1. Accept a portion and hold/postpone a portion
    - Click on Deliver in the upper right corner

- Click Next
  - Click Select next to an item to modify; a Delivery Site Detail section will appear at the bottom of the screen
  - Enter the number of cases you want delivered. If you wish to hold/postpone all cases for a particular item, enter zero. **NOTE:** This process holds/postpones delivery for one month. The item/cases will re-appear on next month's Delivery Request.
  - Click Save
  - Repeat the modify process for all items to hold/postpone
2. Move items among sites
- Click on Deliver in the upper right corner
  - Click Next
  - Click Select next to an item to modify; a Delivery Site Detail section will appear at the bottom of the screen
  - Enter the number of cases you want delivered to each site
  - Click Save
  - Repeat the modify process for all items to move among sites
3. Hold the full delivery
- Click on Do Not Deliver in the upper right corner
  - Click Next **NOTE:** This process holds/postpones delivery for one month. The item/cases will re-appear on next month's Delivery Request.

If a SFA did not hold/postpone the delivery and school will not be in session on the day of delivery, the SFA must make arrangements to accept the delivery. If no one accepts the delivery, it will be considered refused and additional delivery charges will be assessed. Please refer to the [Handbook](#) for full delivery details.

## Delivery Report

For a printer friendly version of the Delivery Request, ICS has a Delivery Report. To view and/or print a Delivery Report between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of each allocation month, click on Report at the bottom of the Delivery Request screen. A Delivery Report will appear. It indicates the quantities to be delivered that month, and if the SFA has multiple delivery sites, the report lists the delivery breakdown by site. This can be helpful to site staff, so that they know which items to expect with each delivery.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of each allocation month, the Delivery Request changes to a Delivery Report. This signifies that the request can no longer be modified. Delivery Reports are viewable/printable from that point forward.

## Contract Summary / PAL Tracking

The contract summary or planned assistance level (PAL) tracking is displayed in ICS on the Annual Order Form screen, the DOD screen, and the Diversion to Processor screen. It provides the following information.

- **Beginning PAL Balance** – the SFA’s portion of state entitlement dollars, for the given school year (July 1 to June 30)
- **DOD Fresh Allotment** – the portion of PAL allotted by the SFA to DOD Fresh
- **Diversion to Processing** – the dollar value of USDA Foods diverted by the SFA to processing companies
- **Available for USDA Foods Requests** – the dollar amount available to spend on USDA Foods; the result of Beginning PAL Balance, minus DOD Fresh Allotment, minus Diversion to Processing
- **Value of USDA Foods Requested** (can exceed available by up to 35%) – the dollar value of USDA Foods requested on the Annual Order Form, which can exceed the Available for USDA Foods Requests line by up to 35%
- **USDA Foods Received YTD** – the dollar value of USDA Foods delivered and received by the SFA year to date
- **Remaining PAL Balance YTD** – the dollar value of USDA Foods remaining year to date; the result of Beginning PAL Balance, minus DOD Fresh Allotment, minus Diversion to Processing, minus USDA Foods Received YTD