



Appendix B2. Frequently Asked Questions

USDA's School Food Purchase Study IV Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for School Food Authorities

What is the School Food Purchase Study (SFPS)?

- The School Food Purchase Study IV (SFPS-IV) is the fourth in a series of U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA, FNS) studies on food purchases made for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), known collectively as the school meal programs. Prior food purchase studies were conducted in School Year (SY) 1984-1985, SY 1996-1997 and SY 2009-2010.

What is the purpose of the School Food Purchase Study IV?

- USDA is conducting this study to obtain updated national estimates of food acquisitions and a description and analysis of food purchase practices of SFAs in the school meal programs. The estimates will provide information on the type, volume and source of foods acquired (USDA Foods and commercial products), the relative importance of USDA Foods, and changes in food acquisitions and costs over time.
- The results will provide current information about how Federally sponsored school meal programs are operating since the last study more than 10 years ago. Information about food buying efficiencies will be useful for SFAs as they strive to maximize available resources and improve food service operations. Food purchase data may also be used to help determine future USDA Foods offerings.
- The study will supplement data provided by SFAs with those gathered from State Directors (State Distributing Agencies). Additional information about this study is available at www.PurchaseStudy.com

Who is invited to participate in the School Food Purchase Study IV?

- About 600 SFAs were selected randomly from a list of all public SFAs that participate in the school meal programs. Your SFA is part of a nationally representative sample. By taking part in this study, you represent many SFAs like yours across the country. Your experiences are extremely valuable to USDA, FNS as it continues to provide USDA Foods and procurement guidance to SFAs.

Do I have to participate?

- While the participation of *individuals* in the study is voluntary, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires SFAs participating in the school meal programs to cooperate with USDA studies:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is conducting this study to obtain updated national estimates of food acquisitions and a description and analysis of food purchase practices of school districts participating in the Federally supported school meal programs. The estimates will provide information on the type, volume and source of foods acquired, the relative importance of USDA Foods, and changes in food composition and cost over time. Participation in this study by individuals is voluntary and the information collected will be used to understand school meal program trends and practices associated with food buying efficiency. According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0471. The time required to provide this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather and maintain the data needed, and complete and review the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314 ATTN: PRA (0584-0471).

“States, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, schools, institutions, facilities, and contractors participating in programs authorized under this Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C 1771 et seq.) shall cooperate with officials and contractors acting on behalf of the Secretary, in the conduct of evaluations and studies under those Acts.”

- We understand that your time is valuable. The data collection activities are carefully designed and were pretested so that the required information can be provided with minimal burden to you and your staff.

What will I have to do?

- As a study participant, you will be asked to:
 - Participate in a Study Overview Webinar or view the webinar recording available on the study website. This 1-hour webinar will review study activities and how study results are used, prepare you to complete the study survey, and review the various study resources available to support you.
 - Complete an online Survey of Food Purchase Practices at the beginning of the study in SY 2021-2022. The survey will take about 90 minutes to complete. We will provide you with a list of documents you will need to complete the survey, and a PDF copy of the Survey for reference. You can complete the survey in multiple sessions and resume from where you left off.
 - Participate in a Food Purchase Data Webinar or view the webinar recording available on the study website. This 1-hour webinar will provide information on the data elements needed for the food purchase study, provide examples, and include time to address questions from SFAs.
 - Submit details for food purchases made in one quarter along with meal counts and total food expenditure and revenue data for the same quarter. Depending on your recordkeeping systems, this activity will take about 5 hours. You can upload multiple files in a form that is easiest for you.

Who approved this study?

- This study has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the office that reviews all Federally-sponsored surveys. The OMB approval number for this study is 0584-0471.
- The study also has been approved by committees that protect human research subjects at Westat.
- The School Nutrition Association (SNA) and the American Commodity Distribution Association (ACDA) provided letters of support for the study.

How does USDA, FNS protect the privacy of information that is provided?

- USDA, FNS and the study team from Westat and its partner in the study, Agralytica, will use your responses only for statistical and descriptive purposes, including summary tabulations.
- Your responses will not be disclosed or used in identifiable form for any other purpose unless otherwise compelled by law. This means that SFA responses will be identifiable to the Westat/Agralytica Study Team; however, your personal information (name, telephone number, etc.) will be kept private and the responses you provide will not be associated with your personal information.

Will I be paid for my participation?

- We will mail your SFA a check for \$300 after you have completed all study activities. We encourage you to use it towards attendance at a conference or other professional development activities.

Are there any costs to me to take part in the study?

- No, there are no costs to you to take part in the study.

- You will complete the online Survey of Food Purchase Practices and upload the purchase data to the secure study website. You do not have to travel anywhere to take part in the study.

If I use my computer to participate in this study, will I be at risk of identity theft, viruses or spam?

- No, your online interactions with the study website will take place on a secure website.
- Other parties will not be able to access your information or your computer.

Who do I call if I have questions?

- You may reach the Technical Assistance Center by calling, XXX-XXX-XXXX or emailing PurchaseStudy@westat.com. By phone, the TAC is available weekdays from 9am to 4pm EST and the message line is available 24/7, with responses provided the following business day.