

HOW TO SELL FISH TO USDA-AMS

This pamphlet covers some of the specific requirements needed to sell fish products to AMS.
Last Updated: August 2015

Fish Products AMS buys

The Agricultural Marketing Service buys fish products for feeding programs like the National School Lunch Program. Currently, AMS only buys canned Pink Salmon, canned Tuna products, frozen, breaded Catfish, and frozen Alaska Pollock. **If you do not produce one of these products do not be discouraged.** See the next page for how to propose a new food commodity to AMS.

Where to find Commodity Specifications

AMS posts all of the Commodity Specifications on their Commodity Purchasing webpage. Don't forget the Commodity Specifications supplement the AMS Master Solicitation. These two documents along with the individual Solicitation will make up your contract with the government when you win a bid. Make sure to read them all carefully and ask an AMS representative for help or clarification.

Find the AMS Master Solicitation here:

www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved

Commodity Specifications for fish here:

www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/product-specs



4 TYPES OF FISH PRODUCTS:

Frozen, Breaded Catfish

Frozen, Alaska Pollock

Canned Tuna Products

Canned Pink Salmon



What you'll find inside:

Brief overviews for the additional requirements for Salmon and Alaska Pollock.

NOTE: Please evaluate these requirements even if you do not produce these specific products. There is potential for New Hampshire fish producers to propose similar products for AMS to purchase in the future.

Please be aware:

This booklet is ONLY a brief overview of the Commodity Specifications for selling fish products to AMS and is NOT legal advice. Everything within is subject to change. If you need help or advice please contact AMS directly. Resources for help are located at the end of each product overview.

Proposing a New Food to the USDA

If AMS does not buy the commodity you produce you can propose new foods for AMS to consider.

Contact AMS with your product proposal. Keep in mind a new product must be:

1. 100% produced and processed in the USA;
2. Available, commercially, from other suppliers;
3. In compliance with USDA specifications or requirements;
4. Able to fill an existing demand, a new need, or replace an existing USDA product which is no longer available; and
5. Available in quantities capable of supplying national programs.
 - This does not mean your business needs to be capable of supplying a national program with all of a commodity, but rather, that there is enough of the product being produced in the nation to supply a feeding program. This way if the USDA chooses to add a new product it will be able to get a variety of vendors to supply enough of the product for their feeding programs.

Frozen Catfish Products

Once you have completed and submitted your application to become a new vendor to the USDA AMS, you will need to evaluate the Commodity Specifications for the product you wish to sell. These documents also include the Federal Purchase Program Specification (FPPS) for each product.

You will then need to gain approval as an **eligible supplier** by submitting a Technical Proposal and a Product Sample to the **Food Safety and Commodity Specification (FSCS) Division**, Livestock, Poultry and Seed (LPS) Program of AMS.

Technical Proposal

- * The commodity specifications for Frozen Catfish Products includes a template for the technical proposal. The template includes all of the things you should include and is in the format that AMS would like. All parts of the technical proposal are in a **Plan and Do, Check, and Act** format.
 1. **Plan and Do** - detail each catfish item and the production steps your company will use to meet the minimum product requirements outlined in the commodity specification.
 2. **Check** - detail the quality assurance methods your company will use to prove you are complying with the specifications. Include any monitoring or measurements taken during the productions process.
 3. **Act** - describe any corrective actions your company will take should your process deviate from the requirements. Outline any preventative actions that will be used to prevent the deviations from happening again.

Product Sample

- * You will need to submit a 10 pound sample of each product you intend to sell to AMS with product labels that comply with the commodity specifications. Include an ingredients statement, nutritional facts, and any allergen declarations that are needed. All samples need to arrive in the frozen state at 0° F or less.
- * Keep in mind the **Food Safety and Commodity Specification (FSCS) Division** will need 10 working days to evaluate your Technical Proposal and your Product Sample.

Once you have been deemed eligible by FSCS they will notify you of your eligibility status. FSCS will also inform the **Quality Assessment Division (QAD)**. QAD will then contact you to set up a **Pre-Award On-Site Capability Assessment**.

Additional Costs:

Costs for audits or inspections are your responsibility. Usually, these costs are based on an hourly fee for the inspector or auditor. These costs differ depending on many factors, but are generally one administrative fee plus travel expenses and an hourly fee for the inspector.



Product Description	WBSCM Material Number	Packaging	Minimum amount
Catfish Strips, Breaded Oven Ready - PKG 4/10 LB or 8/5 LB	100201	Strips should be about 2 ounces, individually quick frozen (IQF), breaded, and oven ready. Packaging can be 4 - 10 pound or 8 - 5 pound packages equaling 1 - 40 pound case. Child Nutrition Labeling or a Product Formulation Statement must be submitted for this product.	1000 cases = 40,000 pounds
Catfish Strips, Breaded Oven Ready - PKG 20/2 LB	100200	Strips should be about 2 ounces, individually quick frozen (IQF), breaded and oven ready. Packaging should be 2 - 20 pound packages equaling 1 - 40 pound case.	1000 cases = 40,000 pounds
Catfish Strips Breaded Raw - PKG 20/2 LB	110155	Strips should be about 2 ounces, individually quick frozen (IQF), and breaded. Packaging should be 2 - 20 pound packages equaling 1 - 40 pound case.	1000 cases = 40,000 pounds
Catfish Fillets Unbreaded Raw - PKG 20/2 LB, 4/10 LB, 8/5 LB	110390	Fillets should be about 4 ounces and individually quick frozen (IQF). Can be packaged in 20 - 2 pound, 4 - 10 pound, or 8 - 5 pound packages equaling 1 - 40 pound case.	950 cases = 38,000 pounds

Pre - Award Onsite Capability Assessment

This evaluation is done by the **Quality Assessment Division (QAD)** and will include, but is not limited to, an evaluation of:

- * Facilities of Contractors and Subcontractors,
- * Processes,
- * Food Defense Plans,
- * Quality Control Programs,
- * Equipment,
- * Procedures,
- * Interviews with management and production personnel, **and**
- * Documents and Forms used during production that show the products:

1. Comply with the applicable Commodity Specifications,
2. Comply with the approved Technical Proposal, **and**
3. Comply with the Food Defense Plan

(Other documents needed might include: records relating to purchasing, receiving, production, quality control, inventory, and shipping records.)

All facilities must comply with FDA regulations, and DOC, **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)** inspections may include:

Type 1 - Integrated Quality Assurance (IQA), or HACCP - QMP

Child Nutrition Labeling

If you wish to sell products that require Child Nutrition Labeling or a Product Formulation Statement refer to the Frozen Catfish Commodity Specifications and, for more information, contact the

Child Nutrition Labeling Program Operations Office
202-720-9939

Or visit:
www.fns.usda.gov/cnl/labeling/child-nutrition-cn-labeling-program



Post - Award Assessments

If you win a contract with AMS you will need to have your documented Food Defense Plan, Technical Proposal, and any supporting documents available for review by AMS at any time. QAD will complete onsite audits of facilities and processes when production starts for the first contract awarded, and any other audits that might be needed for continuous contracts, or new contracts.

The Final Approval

When you have completed the necessary audits or inspections, and all of your paperwork is submitted and reviewed, your Contracting Officer will evaluate everything and officially approve you as a Qualified Vendor to the USDA and you may begin bidding on solicitations posted on WBSCM.

Nutritional Requirements for Catfish Products

- Catfish must be U.S. farm-raised, freshwater from the *Ictalurus* family:
Channel Catfish, Blue Catfish, and White Catfish and its hybrids are acceptable.
(*Ictalurus punctatus*, *Ictalurus furcatus*, and *Ictalurus cauts*)
- Fish must be fresh and not previously frozen with flesh that is of good quality in regards to flavor, texture, and odor, at the very least.
- Catfish which has been injected with added ingredients is not acceptable.
- **Batter/Breeding** must be a cornmeal based breeding and for the National School Lunch Program must be either whole grain or whole grain-rich.
- **Monosodium Glutamate** (MSG) is not allowed.
- **Sodium** - 380 mg or less per 100 grams.
- **Fat** - 9 grams or less per 100 grams.
- **Trans fat** - 0 per 100 grams.

Make sure to review the Commodity Specifications for the products you wish to sell to find more information about labeling, ingredients, freezing, metal detection, delivering and more.

Resources

Northeast Inspection Branch

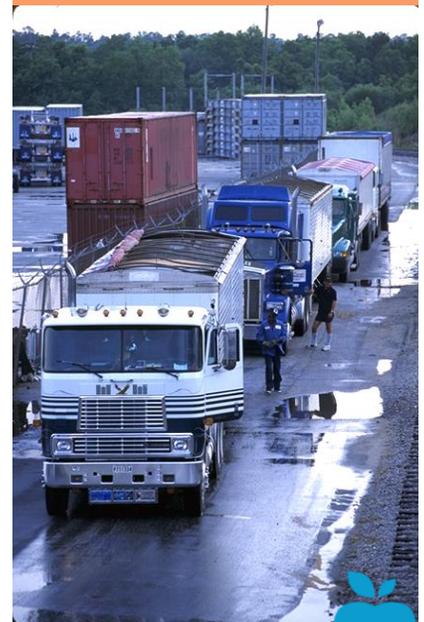
NOAA Fisheries
55 Great Republic
Drive, Suite 01-500
Gloucester, MA
01930
P 978.281.9228

Food Safety and Commodity Specification Division

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW STOP
0249
Washington, DC
20250
Director - Dr. Carl
Schroeder
Carl.schroeder@am
s.usda.gov
P 202.692.0342

Quality Assessment Division

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW STOP
0249
Washington, DC
20250
Acting Director -
Stephen Cave
Stephen.cave@ams.
usda.gov
P 202.720.3271





There are similar requirements for the different types of fish AMS buys, but there are also some important differences. Make sure to read the Commodity Specifications for your product carefully.

Additional Costs:

Costs for audits or inspections are your responsibility. Usually, these costs are based on an hourly fee for the inspector or auditor. These costs differ depending on many factors, but are generally one administrative fee plus travel expenses and an hourly fee for the inspector.



Frozen Alaska Pollock

Once you have completed and submitted your application to become a new vendor to the USDA AMS, you will need to evaluate the Commodity Specifications for the product you wish to sell. These documents also include the Federal Purchase Program Specification (FPPS) for each product.

You will then need to gain approval as an **eligible supplier** by submitting a Technical Proposal (no Product Sample needed) to the **Food Safety and Commodity Specification (FSCS) Division**, Livestock, Poultry and Seed (LPS) Program of AMS.

Technical Proposal

* The commodity specifications for Frozen Alaska Pollock includes a template for the technical proposal. The template includes all of the things you should include and is in the format that AMS would like. All parts of the technical proposal are in a **Plan and Do, Check, and Act** format.

1. **Plan and Do** - detail the production steps your company will use to meet the minimum product requirements outlined in the commodity specification.
2. **Check** - detail the quality assurance methods your company will use to prove you are complying with the specifications. Include any monitoring or measurements taken during the productions process.
3. **Act** - describe any corrective actions your company will take should your process deviate from the requirements. Outline any preventative actions that will be used to prevent the deviations from happening again.

All facilities must comply with FDA regulations, and DOC, **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)** inspections may include:
Type 1 - Integrated Quality Assurance (IQA), or HACCP - QMP

Product Description	WBSCM Material Number	Packaging	Minimum Amount
Frozen Pollock Block, Bulk	100892	16 and 1/3 pound frozen blocks packaged 3 to a case at about 49 pounds per case. Blocks should be U.S. Grade A	816 cases = 39,984 pounds

Pre - Award Onsite Capability Assessment

This evaluation is done by the **Grading and Verification Division (GVD)** and will include, but is not limited to, and evaluation of:

- * Facilities of Contractors and Subcontractors,
- * Processes,
- * Food Defense Plans,
- * Quality Control Programs,
- * Equipment,
- * Procedures,
- * Interviews with management and production personnel, and
- * Documents and Forms used during production that show the products:

1. Comply with the applicable Commodity Specifications and Item Description and Checklist of Requirements (IDCR) (this document can be found with the Commodity Specifications),
2. Comply with the approved Technical Proposal, and
3. Comply with the Food Defense Plan

(Other documents needed might include: records relating to purchasing, receiving, production, quality control, inventory, and shipping records.)

Resources

Northeast Inspection Branch
National Seafood Inspection Program
DOC, NOAA, NMFS
11-15 Parker Street
Gloucester, MA
01930
P 978.281.9292

Keep in mind:

Alaska Pollock (*Theragra chalcogramma*) must be U.S. Grade A, once-frozen, whole fillets, with no sodium phosphates present.

Post - Award Assessments

If you win a contract with AMS you will need to have your documented Food Defense Plan, Technical Proposal, and any supporting documents available for review by AMS at any time. GVD will complete onsite audits of facilities and processes when production starts for the first contract awarded, and any other audits that might be needed for continuous contracts, or new contracts.

The Final Approval

When you have completed the necessary audits or inspections, and all of your paperwork is submitted and reviewed, your Contracting Officer will evaluate everything and officially approve you as a Qualified Vendor to the USDA and you may begin bidding on solicitations posted on WBSCM.

Make sure to review the Commodity Specifications for the products you wish to sell to find more information about labeling, ingredients, freezing, metal detection, delivering and more.



United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service
Commodity Procurement Staff
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
S-0239
Washington, D.C. 20250
(202) 720-4517

The Commodity Procurement Staff are your best place to start if you have questions. They can answer questions about becoming a vendor, inspections and certifications, contract compliance and much more. Below is a link to the CPS staff contact list.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Contact%20List%20-%20CommodityProcurement.pdf>

NH Farm to School

New Hampshire Farm to School works to create a more local food system by creating relationships between food producers and schools here in New Hampshire.

NH Farm to School can help you connect with schools. You can sell directly to schools or follow the instructions in this brochure and sell to the USDA AMS through contracts with the government.

Visit our website to learn more about what we do to help get local food into New Hampshire schools.

www.nhfarmtoschool.org



**University of
New Hampshire**

**The Sustainability
Institute**



Contact Us

NH Farm to School at the Sustainability Institute of the University of New Hampshire

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