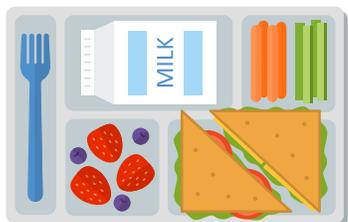


# Milk: School Supply Chain Challenges & Solutions

## Importance of School Meals & Milk

School meals are healthy meals and this year school meals are being offered free to all students. Meals eaten

at school are the most nutritious. Students who eat school lunch are more likely to consume milk, fruits and vegetables compared to students who eat lunches made elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>



**Milk plays a critical role in school meals providing 13 essential nutrients. And 77% of daily milk consumption for low-income children ages 5-18 came from the national school meals programs.<sup>2</sup>**

This underscores the importance of milk as part of school meals to help children meet their nutritional needs for growth and development.

## Supply Chain Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unforeseen [supply chain disruptions](#) that are affecting schools.

Challenges experienced at schools and with dairy suppliers include but are not limited to:

- Labor/staffing shortages
- Ingredient and packaging shortages
- Transportation constraints which may affect the frequency of delivery
- Minimal refrigeration space
- Limited number of dairy suppliers

## References

<sup>1</sup> USDA FNS Infographic: [Lunches Consumed From School Are the Most Nutritious](#). June 2021. Findings are from the School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study conducted by Mathematica.

<sup>2</sup> Cullen & Chen, 2017. [The contribution of the USDA school breakfast and lunch program meals to student daily dietary intake](#).

<sup>3</sup> USDA FNS: [Nationwide Waiver to Allow Specific Meal Pattern Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022](#). August 27, 2021.

## Solutions

To help mitigate some of the supply chain challenges, here are a few potential solutions:

### Communication

- It's essential for schools and dairy suppliers to effectively communicate any change or adjustment to orders or deliveries (including changes to fat-levels, flavors, quantity, delivery dates/times).

### Utilization of USDA's [Meal Pattern Waiver](#)<sup>3</sup>

- FNS waives the requirements to serve meals that meet specified meal pattern requirements during the public health emergency.
- Schools may request through their State agency a targeted flexibility to waive the normal requirements that -
  - More than one milk variety (fat level or flavor) be offered, and/or
  - low-fat milk be unflavored
- State agencies have discretion to determine the justification needed to approve a meal pattern waiver.

### Regulatory Flexibility

- [Under 7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(2\)](#), if emergency conditions temporarily prevent a school that normally has a supply of fluid milk from obtaining delivery of such milk, the State agency may allow the school to serve meals during the emergency period with an alternate form of fluid milk or without fluid milk.
- This does not require a waiver from USDA FNS, but a school needs permission from its State agency.
- Supply chain disruptions caused by COVID-19 would be considered a temporary emergency conditions for purposes of this flexibility.
- Schools must have documentation to support its use.

