*Date:* August 18, 2014

*To:* Food Service Directors of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs

*From:* Jessica Sharkus, RDN, CD

Director, School Nutrition Team

*Subject:* Whole Grain-Rich Pasta Waivers for School Years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

Beginning July 1, 2014, federal regulations required that all grains offered in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program must be whole grain-rich. Whole grain-rich pasta, a commonly served grain based menu item, has presented challenges in many school food services. As such, USDA is prepared to offer continued flexibility in this area for those SFAs that removed previously popular pasta menu items that, when produced with whole grain-rich pasta, did not hold well or were not accepted by students (meaning students no longer consumed or selected the popular item), and the SFA has demonstrated hardship in obtaining acceptable whole grain-rich pasta for that item. Therefore, if acceptable products for previously offered items are not available or accepted by students, the School Nutrition Team may approve the SFA’s request to continue to serve enriched pasta during SY 2014-2015 and SY 2015-2016, if needed.

If your SFA is experiencing these challenges you may apply for this annual waiver by completing the survey found on our website at <http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_menupln#gb>. **All survey requests must be submitted by October 1, 2014.** After completing the survey you will be notified as quickly as possible as to whether or not your waiver has been granted. Until your SFA has an approved waiver, whole grain-rich products must be served to meet meal pattern requirements. It is also important to know that this flexibility is available only while acceptable products are not available and while you can demonstrate a continued negative impact of serving whole grain-rich pastas. Therefore, SFAs must apply for this waiver annually for SYs 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. The second waiver will end on June 30, 2016.

For your reference the USDA *Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs,* found on our website at <http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/files/fns/pdf/wgr_nslp_sbp.pdf>, provides information to help SFAs identify foods that meet the whole grain-rich criteria and offers suggestions for incorporating whole grain-rich foods into school menus. In addition, for a current list of available whole grain-rich pasta products, SFAs may search:

* The USDA Foods available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SY15_Foods_Available_List_3_27_14.pdf>,
* CN Labeling authorized list available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/authorized-manufacturers-and-labels>, and
* The Alliance for A Healthier Generation website available at <https://schools.healthiergeneration.org/resources__tools/>.