



State of New Jersey

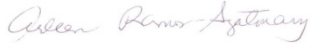
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To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Non Public School Administrators; Food Service Directors of Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator 
School Nutrition Programs

Date: May 1, 2015

Subject: Requests for Exemption from the School Meals' Whole Grain-Rich Requirement for School Year 2015 - 2016

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently issued memo SP 20-2015 *Requests for Exemption from the School Meals' Whole Grain-Rich Requirement for School Years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016*, which allows State agencies that administer the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to grant a temporary exemption from the regulatory whole grain-rich requirement in the meal pattern to a local educational agency (LEA) that demonstrates a hardship in procuring, preparing or serving compliant whole grain-rich products that are acceptable to students.

An LEA may submit an exemption request for specific whole grain-rich products based on written justification or other documented evidence demonstrating the hardship experienced by the food service department. Documented evidence for each product may include, but is not limited to, meal count records, production records, student surveys, and invoices demonstrating cost increases.

The approval process will begin July 1, 2015, and will be effective for school year 2015-2016. LEAs granted the exemption must comply with the SY 2013-2014 requirement to offer at least half of the grains as whole grain-rich products. It is the responsibility of the LEA to ensure compliance with this requirement, and grain offerings will be monitored as part of the administrative review. The LEA will also be required to work with the State agency to identify, evaluate and incorporate compliant whole grain-rich products into school menus to the extent possible. This may include, but is not limited to, participating in webinars and communicating challenges and successes to the State Agency during the exemption period. A copy of the Exemption Request Form, State Agency notification of approval and any other documentation to support the request should also be maintained on file.

LEAs may retain previously approved pasta exemptions and do not need to reapply for the pasta items already approved by the State Agency.

The New Jersey Whole Grain Rich Exemption Request Form is available in SNEARS under the tab "Resources" and then in the subcategory, "Equipment Requests/Waivers." The completed form and any supporting documents **must** be sent by email to: snpspecialprojects@ag.state.nj.us. Direct any questions to the School Nutrition Programs unit at 609-984-0692.