



USDA Nutrition Programs Vendor Pathways

As of June 2025

OVERVIEW

What research should a Tribal farm/ranch or agricultural producer do to become a USDA vendor?

- **Learn what is being bid on.** Subscribe to [USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement News](#) for updates on solicitations to learn what is being bid on.
- **Understand the requirements you will go through.** [Look at the USDA Vendor Requirements webpage](#) and review [USDA's New Vendor Qualification Checklist](#) to understand registration, documentation, and food safety certifications your products will need to go through.
- **Research when products are bought.** [Review purchase announcements](#) for products like yours. USDA has strict commodity specifications and technical requirements. New vendors may need to submit samples, production plans, and facility inspections.
- **Use USDA technical assistance for potential vendors.** The department has a short webinar explaining the [process here](#). The slides and notes from that are [here](#). On the USDA vendor application process, email NewVendor@usda.gov.

What programs offer vendor opportunities?

Whether through joint bidding, culturally tailored products, or bulk distribution, vendors can strategically engage with these programs to expand their market and contribute to food security efforts.

- **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)**
- **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**
- **Multiple certified vendors can come together to complete one bid.** For example, wild rice was able to be included as a permanent part of the FDIPR food package because two Tribally owned businesses were able to become vendors and submitted a joint bid to AMS.
- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**



What can a smaller Tribal vendor do to get started?

Sometimes, the simplest way for smaller operations to get started is to become a vendor through a Tribal government.

- **Explore becoming a vendor for Tribal government programs, enterprises, or food sovereignty initiatives.**
- **Farm to School** - USDA staff work with Tribal communities by promoting food sovereignty and the integration of traditional food ways into Tribal meal programs.
- **FDPIR Self Determination Demonstration Project** - This initiative empowers tribal self-governance by allowing Tribes to select foods that align with their dietary preferences. It gives Tribes the freedom to purchase from commercial vendors of their choice. Additionally, it provides the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) with valuable insights into how Tribal procurement functions across different regions, program sizes, and food selections within a food distribution model.
- **Contact a Tribal agriculture, natural resource or food sovereignty department for information on becoming a vendor.** Sometimes the contact information for these entities is on the Tribal website. Sometimes, potential vendors should call Tribal administration and ask for the department that does farming, agriculture or nutrition buying.
 - **BIA Tribal Leaders Directory** – Potential vendors can find nearby Tribes by using this map. They are not advised to contact Tribal leaders on these inquiries, but the map can help potential vendors locate nearby Tribal governments.
 - **Contact the Intertribal Agriculture Council** – IAC’s regional technical assistance network is available across the U.S. Often the TA network can provide input or contacts for those interested in becoming Tribal vendors.
 - **Look into Food Safety Trainings** – Vendors trying to access institutional markets may often have additional food safety certification requirements. IFAI offers free grower food safety trainings.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON AMS’ ROLE IN FDPIR USE THE LINK BELOW

https://indigenousfoodandag.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ams-role-in-fdp_44038196.pdf