United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

September 24, 2001

SUBJECT: Buy American Provision

TO: State Directors
All State Agencies

Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

Section 104(d) of the William F. Goodling Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998 requires schools and institutions participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) in the contiguous United States to purchase, to the maximum extent practicable, domestic commodities or products for use in meals served under the NSLP and SBP. The legislation defines "domestic commodity or product" as one that is produced in the United States and is processed in the United States substantially using agricultural commodities that are produced in the United States. The report accompanying the legislation stipulated that "substantially" means that over 51 percent of the final processed product consists of agricultural commodities that were grown domestically. Regulations implementing these requirements were published on September 20, 1999. Nevertheless, the domestic food industry continues to express concerns that program funds are being used to purchase foreign agricultural products. In response to this concern, report language accompanying the Agriculture Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2002 requires the Department to report to Congress on its activities directed toward enforcing the Buy American provision. Therefore, I am writing this memo to reiterate the requirement of the "Buy American" provision of the law.

Given the importance that Congress attaches to the "Buy American" provision and the role this provision plays in helping to stabilize the American agricultural economy, it is essential that local operators understand the need to ensure that all purchases of agricultural commodities and food products comply with this statutory provision. The provision should be included in bid specifications to ensure compliance. Local operators must also be aware that, as a result of explicit language also contained in the report noted above, this provision now applies to all funds in the food service account and not just to Federal reimbursement. Please ensure that all local operators are aware of their responsibilities in this respect.

STANLEY C. GARNETT
Director
Child Nutrition Division