



USDA Continues Urgent Actions to Address Infant Formula Shortage

Urges states to adopt flexibilities to support families amid recall

Press Release

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WASHINGTON, May 13, 2022 – As part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s [coordinated drive](#) to end the infant formula shortage, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is urging states to take advantage of flexibilities the department is offering in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, commonly known as WIC, to help families get the safe formula they need.

“We’re acutely aware that the ongoing recall has left many parents and caregivers concerned about access to formula and how they will feed their babies,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Our team is committed to the health and safety of all Americans and is calling on states to act immediately to offer maximum flexibility, information, and support to WIC participants. Meanwhile, USDA will continue the work we started in February, working not only within our department, but across the federal government, suppliers and partners to end this infant formula crisis as quickly as possible.”

Since the recall was first announced in February, USDA has been working closely with FDA to ensure program participants and stakeholders have the information they need to keep infants safe. USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) immediately reached out to states to offer support and within days, [announced](#) a suite of [flexibilities](#) available, such as allowing states to broadly offer alternate sizes, forms, and brands of formula and allowing stores to accept exchanges of formula purchased with WIC benefits.

USDA is also in communication with Abbott, the manufacturer at the center of the [recall](#), with Secretary Vilsack today calling on the company to redouble their efforts to ensure WIC participants have access to safe formula, especially those who rely on specialty formulas produced by Abbott.

WIC supports the purchase of formula for moms and families of young children. Typically, there are rules about what products families can purchase with WIC benefits and what stores can allow. USDA has been working with states to relax those rules to help deal with the impacts of the shortage.

To date, [not all states](#) have adopted all flexibilities. With today's [letter](#) and ongoing technical assistance efforts, President Biden and USDA are strongly urging all states to immediately take advantage of those flexibilities to alleviate burdens across the supply chain and stand ready to assist with their requests.

USDA continues to work closely with WIC agencies as they review and implement these flexibilities, in coordination with their vendors and local offices. USDA also asked WIC agencies to encourage families to exchange their recalled formula, issued reminders about [options for returns and exchanges](#) of recalled products, and posted several resources on [infant formula safety](#) including [guidance for parents and caregivers](#).

Over the last several months, the federal government has worked round the clock to address the production shortfall brought about by the recall. As a result of ongoing work, more infant formula has been produced in the last four weeks than in the four weeks that preceded the recall, despite one of the largest infant formula production facilities in the country being offline during that time.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, ensuring access to healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.

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