



“As Native people, and as Alaskans, we have always understood that no one lives in isolation – that we depend on each other, for our livelihood, for our happiness, and for our very survival.” *Gloria O’Neill, President and CEO Cook Inlet Tribal Council 2010 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention Keynote Speech*

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## Commodity Food Resource for Rural Alaskans - FDPIR

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Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) was authorized under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program, now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). FDPIR provides commodity foods to low-income American Indian and non-Indian households residing on a reservation or in a federally recognized (Alaska Native) tribal village, or households living in approved near areas which contain at least one member of a federally recognized tribe. Households are not permitted to participate in the SNAP/Food Stamp Program and FDPIR at the same time. Households are certified based on income and resource standards set by the Federal Government and must be recertified at least every 12 months. Elderly and disabled households may be certified for up to 24 months.

A 2009 Urban Institute report analyzed seven reservations participating in FDPIR. Results found FDPIR benefits some American Indian and Alaska Native households that are not eligible for SNAP/Food Stamps. The report estimates that in an average month, 13 percent of households eligible for FDPIR would not be eligible for SNAP/Food Stamps. Another 41 percent of the households eligible for FDPIR are eligible for SNAP/Food Stamps but would receive FDPIR commodities with retail value above the SNAP/Food Stamp benefit. Households with aged or disabled members tend to do better with FDPIR because fixed income from Social Security or SSI may leave them eligible for only a small SNAP/Food Stamp benefit. Households without aged or disabled members tend to do better with SNAP/Food Stamps whether they have children or not. What determines the choice between programs, among people who have a choice? The size of the benefit for which the household would qualify is certainly a factor, but administrators and participants suggest that the ease of enrollment, cultural compatibility, choice in food selection, and access to grocery stores also appear to affect participation decisions.

### **Program Administration**

FDPIR is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). FDPIR is administered locally by either Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) or an agency of a State government. Nationally, there are approximately 276 Tribes receiving benefits under FDPIR through 100 Independent Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and 5 State agencies. USDA purchases and ships FDPIR foods to the ITO and State agencies based on their orders from a list of available foods provided through the program. There are over 70 types of food offered through FDPIR, including frozen meats, canned fruits and vegetables, pastas, cereals, rice, milk products, oils, beans, cheese, and flour. These administering agencies store and distribute the food, determine applicant eligibility, and provide nutrition education to recipients. USDA provides the administering agencies with funds for program administrative costs. FDPIR is authorized under Section 4(b) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and Section 4(a) of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973. FDPIR is authorized through 2012.

## **Food Distribution Program in Alaska**

Since 2007, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) has operated FDPIR in Alaska. ANTHC currently partners with 19 tribal agencies around Alaska offering technical assistance, inventory management and other services to help Alaska village's access food. The program also helps tribal agencies provide nutrition education to those who participate in the program on how to maintain a healthy diet and best utilize FDPIR food. ANTHC partners with Food Bank of Alaska to store and ship the food. In fiscal year 2011, the program distributed 111,816 pounds of food. "Most Alaska communities already have a store to buy food, but not everybody can afford the food or is eligible for food assistance. Once tribal agencies started offering this program, it began to fill a gap where there was need." *Gregory Nothstine, ANTHC Food Distribution Program Manager*  
[http://www.anthctoday.org/documents/2012\\_Mukluk\\_jan\\_march\\_small%20file.pdf](http://www.anthctoday.org/documents/2012_Mukluk_jan_march_small%20file.pdf)

## **How to Participate in FDPIR in Alaska**

The federally recognized tribal agencies who administer FDPIR in Alaska can be found on the ANTHC website: [http://anthctoday.org/community/fdpir\\_tribes.html](http://anthctoday.org/community/fdpir_tribes.html) Any federally recognized tribe in Alaska interested in more information about the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations can contact Mr. Nothstine at (907) 729-2975 or Email: [glnothstine@anthc.org](mailto:glnothstine@anthc.org)

## **Resources**

FDPIR newsletters, publications and recipes  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/fdpir\\_rptspubs.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/fdpir_rptspubs.htm)

USDA/FDPIR  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/about\\_fdpir.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/fdpir/about_fdpir.htm)

ANTHC  
<http://anthctoday.org/community/fdpir.html>

House Committee on Agriculture - *Farm Bill Audit* (pg 11-14)  
[http://agriculture.house.gov/farbill/Questionnaire\\_Nutrition.pdf](http://agriculture.house.gov/farbill/Questionnaire_Nutrition.pdf)

Urban League: A Comparison of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)  
[http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412034\\_tribal\\_food\\_assistance.pdf](http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412034_tribal_food_assistance.pdf)

*The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available Online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> for additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: [afc@foodbankofalaska.org](mailto:afc@foodbankofalaska.org)*

**NEXT MONTH: Understanding the State Budget Process**