



Quick Facts for Rice Manufacturers: Brown Rice in the New WIC Food Package

What is WIC? Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) is a USDA-funded, state agency-administered program for low- to middle-income mothers and young children with the goal of preventing children's health problems and improving growth and development. Working within the USDA WIC Rule, each state may create a list of approved food items for its state food packages based on product cost, availability, and the cultural preferences of WIC recipients in the state.

What Changes Were Made to the Food Package? In December 2007, a USDA Interim Rule approved the addition of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other healthy foods in the WIC Food Package for the first time to make it more consistent with *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Brown rice was included as an alternative whole grain option to whole wheat bread. Bulgur, barley, and soft corn and whole wheat tortillas are also alternative options. States can include alternative options or choose not to. In addition, the USDA Rule specifies both whole grain and refined grain cereals, which offers additional opportunities for rice.

When Will The Changes Take Place? Some states, such as New York, Colorado, and Kentucky have already launched their new food packages. USDA says all states must implement their new WIC Food Package by October 1, 2009. A comment period will follow to allow adjustments prior to USDA issuing a Final Rule.

Who Participates? WIC currently serves over nine million mothers, infants and children up to age five. Hispanics are the largest WIC demographic, followed by Caucasians, African-Americans, Asians and Native Americans.

How Does It Work? At local WIC clinics, participants receive checks (or vouchers) or electronic cards to purchase specific foods each month. They purchase from approved 'WIC vendors' (retailers) who purchase the items from 'suppliers' (food manufacturers).

What are the Brown Rice Specifications in the New WIC Package?

- The WIC Package contains 7 package options for participants based on nutritional needs. Brown rice is included as an alternative option in 4 of these packages covering 75% of recipients.
- In these 4 packages, the USDA Rule allows 1 pound of brown rice per month for women and 2 pounds for children.
- The USDA Rule states: "Whole grain brown rice (regular, instant or quick cooking) with no added sugars, fats, oils, or salt."
- Note: Since the initial Rule was issued, USDA has allowed states to authorize different package sizes based on product availability, provided that the maximum allowable size (1 pound, 2 pounds) is available in the state so that participants may receive maximum value from their benefits. This means that some states are allowing 14, 24, and 28 oz packages; others are allowing "up to one pound".

Do Specifications Vary By State?

- Yes. At this time, 95% of states have chosen to include brown rice. The few states that have not opted to include brown rice in Year 1 will reconsider adding it in Year 2.
- Within the overall USDA Rule, each state may specify size and type requirements, based on cost, availability and preference. Consult the state WIC agency Web site for each state's list of allowable foods: <http://www.nwica.org/?q=aboutwic/f4> and USA Rice's spread sheet of Preliminary 2009-2010 Program Qualification and Contact Information by State.

Outlook for Brown Rice in WIC: In 2010 the proposed WIC budget will increase to 7.7 billion to provide benefits to 9.8 million participants. As the new WIC program matures, it could become a significant market for increased brown rice sales for manufacturers with qualifying products.

For More Information:

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Food & Nutrition Services/USDA WIC Page:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>

WIC State Agencies: <http://www.nwica.org/?q=aboutwic/f4>



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