USDA

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United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

3101 Park Center Drive

Alexandria, VA 22302-1500

To: State Distributing Agencies

Re: Reminder about Storage and Handling of Dried Fruits, Fruit/Nut Trail Mix, Grains and Grain Products

FDD has received several complaints recently about dried fruit and grain products that became infested in storage. In each instance, it was determined that the product was in storage for an excessive amount of time under less that recommended storage conditions. Under these circumstances, the vendor has no contractual responsibility for the product. Therefore, **it is imperative that dried fruit and grain products are distributed to the end user as soon as possible** after receipt from the vendor to avoid problems with infestation.

Most commodity procurement contracts contain a warranty period within which a vendor is required to replace products that do not meet product specifications. There have been occasions where such replacement has been required. However, the warranty period should not be misinterpreted as a guarantee of vendor liability for less than desirable storage practices at the State and recipient agency levels.

Dried fruit and grain products are on the **short end of the storage spectrum**, unlike frozen and canned products that may be stored for a more extended period of time. Dried fruit products such as raisins, date pieces, fruit and nut trail mix, and grain products such as rice, flour, and pasta products are **susceptible to insect infestation** when they are not stored under **proper temperatures** and/or they are stored for extended periods of time. The potential for infestation increases considerably when these products are stored under relatively warm, humid conditions, which are prevalent in many dry storage warehouses from late spring into the fall months.

Most shipping containers of dried fruit and grain products are marked "Store in a Cool Dry Place". This phrase means the ideal temperature is 50° F and the relative humidity is between 50 and 70%. Dry storage warehouses often do not meet these conditions. **Therefore, we recommend that dried fruit and grain products be stored under refrigeration**.

State DAs should take every opportunity to instruct their sub-recipient and recipient agencies as to their responsibility to properly store and handle all commodities. As always, the most effective way to avoid product quality deterioration is to **only order quantities of commodities, particularly dried fruit and grain products, which can be distributed to the end user quickly.**

Cathie McCullough
Director
Food Distribution