

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Thank you for standing by. All participants will be in the listen only mode for the duration of today's call. I would also like to remind participants that today's call is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. Now I would like to turn the meeting over to the Undersecretary, Mr. Kevin Concannon. Sir, you may begin.

Well, thank you very much, and I'd like to welcome everybody who is on the line out there in Indian country to our tribal consultation on the FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot. This is going to be a new concept to some of you, but it's going to be an answer to a long-sought-after proposal for many communities in Indian country over the years. I'm the Undersecretary for Food and Nutrition and Consumer Services at the Department of Agriculture, and I want to welcome all of the tribal leaders who are joining us today or their designees, tribal members, FDPIR program directors and support staff in FDPIR. And by the way, I've seen the program first hand. I'm a big fan of it. I know it makes a difference in the lives of people, and I'm very excited about what we're going to talk with you today to adhere or give the opportunity for consultation as it pertains to a pilot program that I think would be very responsive to many of the requests that we've received, and the program's received long before I came here on wanting to have access to regional foods, to foods that are more culturally linked to Indian tribal organizations and locations across the country, and so I, again, very much appreciate you joining us today. I look forward to continuing a discussion with you. But first I'm going to turn it over, before we really get started, to Barbara Lopez from the Food and Nutrition Service, whose going to talk about the logistics of this meeting today, which is taking place both in person here and over the phone for you folks who are joining us.

Thank you Undersecretary. Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to today's consultation. As the Undersecretary mentioned, today's session is available both in person and over the phone, and we recognize that most of you are attending over the phone, so I'd like to go over just a couple logistics. First you are currently joining us in what's called conference mode, which means that your phone line is muted. However, if you press star one on your phone, you'll be able to enter the phone queue where the operator will be able to assist and you'll be able to join us for today's session and dialogue with us and consult with us. So again, that's star one on your phone, and the operator will assist you in opening up the line. Also, if you registered in advanced we emailed to you yesterday and again earlier today several handouts that we prepared that we think would be helpful for today's consultation meeting. The handouts include two documents that describe the concept of the pilot. We also included a FDPIR ITO map which shows you which – where the locations of the FDPIR tribes are located across the country, and we also included our quarterly consultation schedule which shows the dates and the times for our consultation sessions for the remaining year of 2011 and into 2012. If you did not receive those documents, that's okay. I will be able to provide those to you. We have two options. One, you can go to our website and download those documents directly to your computer. I'll go ahead and give you that web address. It's www.fns.usda.gov/fns/tribal. If you go to that website you'll be able to access the four documents that I just described. Also, we'll be doing introductions over the phone, and at that time you'll be able to let us know if you received the handouts, and if you did not you can provide us either your email address or a fax number and we'll be happy to either email them or fax them to you within the next five to ten minutes. So again, during introductions over the phone, we'd love to hear from you and you'll let us know if you have those handouts. I also want to mention that today's consultation session is being recorded and transcribed and will be included as part of the official USDA Consultation record. Since the session is being recorded, it will be very helpful if at the time of introduction you can let us know your name, the tribe you're representing, if you're a tribal leader or a designee or tribal member or FDPIR program director or program staff, we just want to make sure we capture your information correctly for the transcript. But we'll go ahead now and start with introductions. We'll do introductions here in the room first. Joining the Undersecretary Kevin Concannon we also have -

Cathie McCullough with the Food Distribution Division.

Rogelio Carrasco with the Food Distribution Division.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Duke Storen, with the Office of Outreach and Partnerships.

Tommy Openchowski, also at the Office of - SSO, it's (inaudible) nutrition systems.

Great. We'll go ahead now and do introductions over the phone, so again, please press star one and you'll be able to join us for introductions, and we'll have the operator assist us please.

One moment. Our first introduction is from Connie Martinez. Your line is open.

Connie Martinez with the Pueblo of Acoma Distribution Program as the Program Director.

Hi, Connie. Welcome.

Hi.

Did you receive our handouts?

Yes. All except for the schedule of the consultation sessions.

Okay. We do have that schedule available on our website.

Okay.

Great. Wonderful. Thank you.

Next is Charles Red Gates.

Good afternoon everyone. This is Charles Red Gates, I'm the designee for the Tribal Chairman Charles W. Murphy. I'm Program Director with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North Dakota and South Dakota.

Thank you. Welcome. Did you receive our handouts?

Yes, I have them.

Wonderful. Thank you.

Louise Hankins, your line is open.

Hi. Liz Hankins with USDA Food and Nutrition Service Southwest Region.

Wonderful. Hi, Liz.

Hi.

Mountain Plains, your line is open.

Hi. This is Greg Brazier and Sally Soja in Mountain Plains Regional Office in Denver.

Welcome. Thank you.

The next line there was no name recorded. Your line is open. Please check your mute button.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Operator, we can move on to the next one, please.

Our next line is from Lisa. Your line is open.

Lisa Mullins, Choctaw Nation, Southwest Region. Chief is Gregory E. Pyle, and yes, I did receive the information.

Wonderful. Thank you Lisa. Welcome.

Thank you.

Our next line is Susie Roy.

I'm Susie Roy, Program Director and a designee for our Tribal Chairman Archie Aroz. And I'm a Program Director.

Wonderful. Welcome, Susie. Did you receive our handouts?

Yes, I did.

Perfect.

I did get them.

Thank you.

Our next line comes from Nelson, your line is open.

Hello. My name is Nelson Harjo. I'm from the Muskogee Creek Nations and today I'm acting as the official liaison between the USDA and the Creek Nations.

Wonderful. Welcome, Nelson. Did you receive our handouts?

Yes I did.

Thank you.

The next line comes from Clarissa. Your line is open. Please check your mute button. Your line is open.

Hello?

Hi, welcome.

This is Florissa Kanuho with the Pawnee Nation Food Distribution and I'm a director and I did receive the information.

You did receive it?

Yes I did.

Wonderful. Welcome.

Uh huh.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Thank you.

Our next line comes from Ms. Owens. Your line is open.

Yes, this is Lonnie Owens with the Navajo Nation. I'm a warehouse supervisor, and yes I did receive the information packet. Thank you.

Welcome, Bonnie, thank you.

The next line is Roxanna.

Hi. This is Roxanna Newsom. I am President of NAFFDPIR and I do have the materials.

Welcome. Thank you, Roxanna.

Thank you.

The next line is Christine Henley. Your line is open.

Yes, this is Christine Henley. I'm with USDA's FNS Southwest Region, and I did receive the attachments.

Thank you Chris.

Uh huh.

Next line is Dee Maddox, your line is open.

Hi. This is Dee Maddox. I work with Chris and Lou in the Southwest Regional Office of Food and Nutrition Services.

Wonderful. Welcome. Thank you.

The next line from – is from Kristine Schwiderson. Your line is open.

Good afternoon. This is Kristine Schwiderson from Bay Mills Indian Community along with Max Smith. I am the Director.

Hi. Welcome Kristine and Max. Did you receive our handouts?

Yes we did.

Thank you.

The last line comes from Shanna. Your line is open.

Hello. I am Shanna Wemigwase calling from Little Traverse Bay (inaudible) of Odawa Indians, designee for Tribal Chairman Ken Harrington, and I am the program specialist. I have all the materials.

Wonderful. Welcome, Shanna.

Thank you.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

And we have one more. Lorraine, your line is open.

Yes, good morning, My name's Lorraine Davis. I'm with Navajo Nation, warehouse supervisor, and I do have the handouts.

Wonderful. Thank you.

Our next line comes from Roy. Your line is open.

This is Troy Little Raven with the Cheyenne Arapaho Tribe. I'm Director of the program.

Welcome, Troy.

I, too, have all the attachments.

Thank you.

Next line is Patty.

Hi. This is Patty Schock. I work for the Food Distribution Division.

Hi, Patty. Welcome. Did you receive our handouts?

I do have them.

Great. Thank you.

Next line comes from Ariana. Your line is open.

I'm Ariana Garcia from the Makah Tribe. And we got our handouts.

Great. And you did receive the handouts?

Yes.

Great. Thank you. Welcome.

We have no further questions.

Great. Thank you so much again. I'd like to welcome everyone. I'll send it back to Undersecretary Kevin Concannon.

Again, excuse me, let me thank all of you on the line for joining us today, and I especially want to thank you because we had relatively short period of time, just several weeks, prior to this call, and I want everybody on the line to realize that we take our obligation, our commitment to do robust consultation with tribal organizations seriously, and while it was a very short period of time between this call and this – this particular step in the process, there will be a much longer period for organizations to respond and to – to consider the opportunity that we're going to talk about here today. The reason for that, for that relatively short period of time, just several weeks, is while we have been working on this for some time, matters like this, this, this proposal to have a- a pilot project for the first time like this, though I guess there was one some ten years ago or so, but the first one in recent years, we need to have approval, not only within the Department of Agriculture but within other parts of the federal government, and we're very pleased to receive that approval and we made a very strong case for its importance. The concept of a regional

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

vendor pilot in the FDPIR program has been part of many, many discussions. We've heard it. I know even in my limited time, I've been here about two years and was most recently out at the FDPIR meeting in Tucson, in Oklahoma, I'm sorry.

Yes, somebody's just reminding me of that. That – but this came up as well. The desire has been to have the opportunity to be able to purchase and include in the person more locally-grown and traditional foods that – that can, again, represent, for example, when I was way up in Minnesota last year, people spoke to me from tribal organizations about their desire to have access to wild rice, for example. And we've heard similar comments in other parts of the country. So we're very anxious, as you know right now we have a national distribution system. And what we are hoping to do today, and I'm going to turn it over to Cathie McCullough here shortly to talk about some of the thoughts we have initially, and we really want to invite your reactions, your thoughts about how this might work or aspects of it that would be important to you. But the thinking anyway today is maybe we could identify a region of the country where tribal organizations would want to test a regional acquisition and distribution program that would again provide foods that are more traditional, that are fresher in the form of, you know, they don't have to be trucked across the country from Missouri or wherever you may be, wherever the tribal organization may be located, and one that again reflects the desires of the tribal organizations in the FDPIR programs in that particular region of the country. So it's an effort. Our thoughts are something like this could operate for a year. We could test it then and see, hey, did it work out, was it cost effective, was the tribal organization satisfied with this, did it help us with participation. Because I'm concerned about the loss of enrollment in FDPIR over the last couple of years. There are some factors that are beyond our control and beyond the FDPIR program's control that are contributing to that, but I think if we have the opportunity with – in a pilot like this, this might be a way to insure that we maintain, if not increase, enrollment in those tribal regions. So we're anxious to try it. We really want to hear your thoughts on it. And with that I'm going to turn it over to Cathie McCullough, known to many of you, who – who has a long history with this program but also I think an answer, at least some of the preliminary, just thoughts that we had. But we want to hear your thoughts on this. So, Cathie.

Thank you, Mr. Undersecretary. And thank you all for joining us on the phone. We really appreciate the attention that's being paid to this. I can't tell you, for those of you who were on the phone with us Tuesday, you know how excited I am to be able to put the wheels in motion to get this regional distribution pilot off the ground. So this is a very exciting time for me, and I do very much appreciate all the input that we are receiving from the IPOs. So let me just walk through a little bit. Everybody who's in this program understands that the current system is – is set up for USDA to buy the foods for the tribes, send them into two centralized warehouses, both in Missouri at this time, where they are broken down into smaller – stored for some time, at times, and broken down into smaller shipments and sent to your outlets, to the tribes. I don't think that's the best (inaudible) and I think all of us would agree on that for a number of reasons. As Mr. Concannon talked about, there's a – there's a time lag to the central warehouse and back out again that causes extra transportation and the time that is lost between the – taking foods from the manufacturer to the end user. And there's also, what's extremely important to us and what we're really excited about trying here, is it's difficult in the current system to, as Mr. Concannon said, to reach local purchases and to – and to – for us on a national basis to get foods that are responsive to your traditional, you know, desire for traditional foods. So this just presents a lot of opportunities for us here and we sure hope that we can piece together something that's going to be a successful model going forward, and ideally that's something we can make into a national model. So some of you on the phone and some – and the rest of us remember that about ten years ago we did a pilot in the Midwest Region to try a very – very much like what we're talking about today where there's a regional distribution system and USDA is not buying the food but the vendor that is selected to run the show does the buying and transporting and makes his own distribution arrangements with the tribes that are selected for that – for that pilot.

Everybody knows it was well loved and we received some testimony about that on Tuesday and I imagine several of you will speak up on that point again today, but as much as it was – as it was liked by all of us,

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

unfortunately the cost comparison did not play out in our favor. It was over thirty percent more to run that program and we were not able to continue that and/or go to a national basis. I'm very, very hopeful that as we try this again in calendar year 12 that we can balance those costs out. That the times are different. That because of the transportation costs being so high now and because probably the, you know, I suspect that the commercial world has risen to the occasion and figured out how to do a better job reaching rural locations that we're going to have a better run at this than we did last time. That's my greatest hope and I'm also looking for help from all of you because out there in – in your tribal locations, if there is a distributor that's working in your area or that can reach your area, let them know. Give them a conversation so that we can add them to the pool. We want to make sure that we get as many people coming to the table as we can on this. So as – as we talked about before, we – we did just recently get the go ahead to move forward on a pilot, and we're setting aside some money in our fiscal year 12 budget so that we can get this set up and running in calendar year 12. We would like to run at least a year – I'm sure it would take at least a year to get reasonable data to be able to compare the current system to the – to the regional pilot, and we will put together a team to figure out how to set this up and I think that should be a cross section of tribal members selected by NAFFDPIR and a couple of us USDA folks to – to tee this up, figure out our – our comparisons in an – what we, you know, what to analyze to make sure that we get the best possible information to compare, and we will move forward with it. So today's session, not unlike Tuesday, is to talk about who might be interested in participating, and actually as we're thinking about that, the – there's a letter that's going out to the tribal leaders as we speak that's – that's going to ask for interested parties to let us know. At the same time, we're sending through the Regions a letter to the Program Directors. It's the same letter so that both – so that both the tribal leaders and the Program Directors are receiving the letter so that you know how you can get to us and let us know if you are interested in this pilot. We have options to mail this informa – to mail your request in, to email your request in, to fax your request in. Am I missing any?

No.

So we're littering the air waves with possibilities to – to submit your interests. We do have more – I do have a little bit more to talk about, but we have a new member joining us at the table we may want to introduce.

Hi everyone. My name is Crystal (inaudible). I'm with the National Congress of American Indians.

Welcome.

Thank you.

So, what we were talking about is – is one thing that's important today is to be sure to have communication between the tribal leader and the program director and let us know if you're interested. Take a look at the letter as you receive it. Another thing we're hoping to figure out, well, through this process, is where should this pilot be conducted. We don't – we're not able to – to go across the country and just flip to a new system. We've got to try it in a segment of the population, just like we did ten years ago in the Midwest Region. This doesn't, in my mind, have to be necessarily lined up with an FNS region, but it probably does need to be some sort of a grouping of – of tribes where we can get a good read. A number of things were mentioned on the call the other day about a mix of small tribes and large tribes, and those are exactly the kinds of information we need to pull together, to assess where the best location is to run a pilot. In addition to that, we would be talking about what foods to put in the – in the region pilot. I think the team will need to figure out, once the region is established, and here's the critical part and the reason we needed to jump quickly into this consultation, is depending on where this is going to be, the food package desires might be different. For example, if it's in the north – it's up in the Northwest Region, maybe salmon is of interest or maybe several other things whereas, you know, wild rice, there's been an interest expressed in wild rice and my favorite walleye in the Midwest Region. So, we want – we want to establish the location and then we want to go through a process to figure out what – what foods would be

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

contained in that package. I can, now speaking personally, I can say that I would envision the basic food package that's available across the nation but with further discussion about things that would be of interest to – to the region that is selected. So there would be another vetting process to – to see what foods could be – could be reasonably had and – and meet the dietary guidelines and be a good addition to the – be a good addition to the food package to try out. What else? What else, and well, what else? What else is important to gauge as we figure out how – how to best build this – this regional pilot? And after we finish these discussions, as I was saying before, the tribal leaders and – and the program directors are getting letters to let us know if they're interested. I think that's all I have to tee it up. Should we start our discussion at this point?

And for those on the phone, if you'll press star one you'll be able to join us in the discussion. The operator will assist you. Again that's star one. And operator, please.

Yes. And if you would record your name after pressing star one so I can introduce your question. Thank you. And just one moment for the first question.

While we're waiting I –

Our first question comes from Roxanna Nixon. Ma'am, your line is open.

Hi Cathie. I guess one – one of the questions that I have that I don't think we fully got into on the phone call of Tuesday is do you all have in mind anything – any kind of timelines as to when you would like to have the – the panel established and when you would like to have the selection made of the programs that will participate? Actually, is there a deadline for when programs would need to notify you that they were interested? I guess that's the first – one of the first things to do.

Yes. The letter is going to ask for responses by August fifth. And again, that's very quick, and I apologize for pushing this thing so hard in a hurry, but I guess I didn't really explain before, we're also kind of competing for time with the fact that, that USDA is also in the process of going through to re-compete the existing distribution systems with – with Americold and with Paris Brothers, and so we have to – we have to kind of hurry this along to figure out what segment of the population is going to be pulled out of those contracts. So that's why as you see the letter coming through will show, please let us know, even if it's by email, so I'm – I'm – I'm, you know, hoping that we're allowing sufficient time because there are so many ways that you can let us know, even with an email, that you're interested. If we close that on August fifth – if I had my way, we would start on August sixth with a team. But I don't know that that's reasonable and I don't hear you laughing as I say it.

Well I'm – I'm wondering if, and I can tell you the – the letter did go out by email yesterday.

Okay.

And so if the other, any of the other programs on the – on the call did not receive the email, if they'll contact their Regional Office, I believe their Regional Office does have the letter and the information now. And I'm wondering if we can go ahead and work to have the panel in place so that as quickly after this August fifth date as possible we could get, you know, this group to start working on it.

Yes, I think that's a good point. And in fact I'm going to keep you on the hook here, Roxanna, to make sure that I've answered the other questions that you brought up on Tuesday which helped us shape this conversation. So thank you for that and thank you for these questions today. But, sure, from the USDA side, we're talking now about who we could designate for this panel. Now for – for the tribal members that – that should be a part of this, can I ask that NAFFDPIR take care of that end of the deal?

Yes, you want NAFFDPIR to take care of –

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDIPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Take – selecting your members.

And how many members are you requesting that – that be from this side?

Okay. I would – let me just say I would suggest that, you know, so that we can have a transparent process, let's definitely have USDA folks and tribal folks. And what comes to mind is maybe three USDA folks and three – and three tribal representatives, but I'm open to whatever conversation all of you want to have about that.

Cathie, can I ask if – if by being on this panel, can that tribal organization apply for their region? Because that might affect a willingness of somebody to participate on it to say I'm happy to help, but our – our tribe may want to be part of the regional, so –

Right.

Does that adversely affect that?

Now see, the beauty of having NAFFDIPIR decide is – is – is – we can put that question to NAFFDIPIR to think about whether if somebody wants in – if somebody wants into this pilot, are they eligible – are they eligible to be a team member on the – on the selection committee. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Well, it's no. I think that's a tough one. I would really like to hear from – from the other membership what their feelings are. I feel like if we – if we said yes, someone that is on the selection committee could be on this – could also submit to participate as one of the pilot programs, we would need to have some definite – we would need to have some definite guidelines laid out that – that – there would have to be part of the process I feel like that you couldn't participate in. Now there's a lot to be done other than the final selection of who gets to participate in the program. So, I don't know. I think we'd have to have some discussion and thought on how that would work.

I agree. Part of a lot of challenges we have going forward, right?

Right. Because, I mean, just selecting who participates is not the whole – the whole process. There's quite a bit that has to happen before you get down to who gets to participate. So, there is definitely work to be done.

So, thank you for bringing that up. And you had mentioned some things on Tuesday. Have I covered that today in discussions of how we see this shaping up?

I think so. I – I think it's a – I'm excited about it. I'm excited for the opportunity for – for some of our programs to participate in a pilot project and hopefully – see, I think the benefits are – there's definitely a lot of benefits to this – this initiative. I hope that it would increase our program participation and I think that it might be a definite improvement in the delivery of services and in the food package itself, and I think it really does lend to the opportunity to be able to tailor the food packages a little more to the regions and getting in touch with the regional foods and the cultural foods more.

Great. Thank you, Roxanna. And also – are there more in the queue? I was – it reminded me of something that Red Gates said on Tuesday, and Red, please feel free to correct me or add on to this, but you were talking about this probably needs to go for more than a year to get – to get valid data. And so I needed to talk though that, too. I hope that we can go as long as we need to go to – to succeed in the end. We do have some budgetary limitations so I can't promise too much, but we're going to do everything we can in the first year. We're going to fight for the opportunity to go forward with this, with both the pilot and a national basis, so – so cross your fingers and wish us luck.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Are you ready for the next question?

Yes we are.

Okay. The next question from Tony Nartoli. So your line is open.

Well, good afternoon everybody.

Afternoon.

Cathie, Tony here. And anyone else that's listening. The Midwest Region before was a part of the initial demonstration project and it went extremely well. Again, as you said, it was the cost USDA didn't do it, and I think one of the comments you made, Cathie, is well worthwhile in the fact that had you looked at it as a national basis we may still be working at it. The second – a couple other issues to deal with it, in terms of NAFFDPIR, I recommend that, two things. One that all the regional – regions, and the regional vice presidents, appoint someone to this panel and that someone is on that panel from a tribe who is not eligible to receive. Unfortunately there's the politics that goes on with it. I think those – that's a consideration that has to be made. My other question comes back to how will this all work with our webscan system because of the different foods and purchasing and all of that. And then the other question that I have in line with that is what type of vendor because right now the delivery is still small America and someone that can handle this on a regional or a national basis would be of, oh, you know, like Gordon Food Service or up in this area we have Reinhart, those are large companies. So, are we bidding the small American type company or are we still sticking with anyone that can bid on it?

Okay. Thank you, Tony. Actually, I should have brought those things up before, so thank you for bringing them up. On the first thing, how will it work with the web base system?

Yep.

We have to – we have to figure out, I think we're not going to land on that answer until we figure out who the vendor is because a web based system sort of has two sides to it for – to explain it with my simple-minded thinking. There's the ordering side, which you see now, that feeds in – that feeds into the back end of the deal, I will call it, where USDA is making the purchasing, so when we go to a regional vendor, the back end is going to be different. So we would either have to re-route our ordering system and tie it to the vendor, or we would need to have the, like we did in the Reinhart case of the earlier pilot, we would have to have the vendor use its own distribution system. And probably the answer to that will depend on who can do it better at what cost. Does that make sense?

Yep.

Okay. And the second part about are – are we looking at GFS or Reinhart and are we looking at smaller shops, I think that's your question, right?

Correct.

Okay. So our sister agency, Farm Service Agency, is going to help us with that because they're the ones that are running the – the bigger multi-foods pilots, but I know that they go across small businesses and try to expand the reach as far as they can. Our most – I mean, what seems to me to be most important is that the vendor be capable of performing a quality service. So, so personally, and I can't speak for the tribes, but personally I – I would think it's the best service that's the most important. And the – and the – whether it's a small business or a large business is secondary to my way of thinking. Do you – do you want to add to that?

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

I think the Midwest, probably there's nothing available right now, but as I get older I can remember things from ten years ago that I can't remember ten minutes ago.

Me, too.

Reinhart was a excellent provider. And it, you know, in terms of delivery to the tribes, in terms of the quality of the food. I'll speak just for my tribe, okay, for myself. It was excellent. They were very, very accommodating and, as you said before, this is similar but that was ten years ago and times and delivery systems, food costs, all that has changed immensely and they – they, you know, it will be interesting, whoever gets it. It worked well and I enjoyed it. Then my – as a comment. Now as a question, I seen the letter and all that and already replied to the stuff in there. I know the tribe wants to go along with it so I hope that was – the other things that I appreciate is that this came under tribal consultation with USDA and the Undersecretary, we have moved to a different level of communications through yourself and through the Undersecretary and the rest of them. I'm appreciative of that. And I know that it's a lot of work by different organizations.

Thanks.

Thank you.

And also, Tommy, I don't know if you have any contacts over at Reinhart or if anybody else does or with GFS, actually we've – we've – we've absconded a couple people from GFS, Gordon Food Service, but if you do, send them our way so we can be sure to get them on the communications chain for whatever goes out.

Sure.

Sources. Thank you.

Operator, we're ready for the next question.

Our next question comes from, I believe the name is Red Gates. Your line is open.

Thank you. Again, good afternoon, and I have a couple of questions with a couple of comments. I'll go with the comments first. Undersecretary, I guess I would like to – to just say that I hope – I hope that no one is looking to this pilot project being the lifesaver for the declining participation. I think there's a – we all know for quite some time now that SNAP, I won't go into great detail, can purchase, they don't have any restrictions really on a whole lot of them, if they do I'm not aware of them but they can buy just about anything they want. And we're restricted in – in what we can even come up with in our food package review. So again, my comment would be I hope nobody is – is – is going to think this pilot project will stop the declining participation. I think we're dealing with a younger, faster, in a hurry generation, and it's going to be tough to turn them around. I'm not saying that this is not a good pilot project because I think it would be. But we'll be still restricted to the types of foods we can bring into the warehouse for our participation. And again, I'm not saying that we should open it up like food stamps. You'd be duplicating your programs. And so those are my comments to you Undersecretary on that part of it.

Appreciate it. Yep.

Yep. And not just to you but to everyone on the – on the conference call, or on the consultation. Which leads me to a – I met with my tribal Chairman. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is not really considering these as true tribal consultations, but they understand the reason to get it – it's on a fast track. When it does come time for a decision to be made, they would respectfully request that it be done in a fashion

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

that some of the other agencies do. It's a face-to-face consultation with – with as many tribes as – as there is possible to gather. That's my second comment. Cathie, yes, I still have a problem with this being a one year pilot project. I started to think of the nutrition education. Not that we don't like it, but it's – we sometimes don't get the – the – the go ahead to send in our proposals til the middle of the year and then we've got a short window with which to spend the money. This may be handled a little differently financially and I hope it takes into consideration that you may not have all of the pilot tribes on board. So I'm hoping that once it's – that selection has been made, that it go another year, and I fully understand the – the financial end, too. I guess, again, the – the selection panel, I'm not sure who they're going to be composed of, but I'm hoping NAFFDPIR will be involved in some manner. I think our involvement and headquarters willingness to meet with NAFFDPIR face-to-face in the food package review committee is a key to – to coming to a good, good plan to – to start the pilot project. I don't have any questions. Still a lot of enthusiasm that this is going to happen. We order through the State of North Dakota warehouse, and they have to order through the main warehouse, so it's going to be a big change for us if we – if our tribe wishes to participate. And so I hope we – that the selection panel will also give us some time to – to receive training in how to deal with it. Those are my comments. Thank you.

Thank you, Red.

Thank you.

And there are no other questions at this time.

This is a reminder you can press star one on your phone. By pressing star one you'll be able to join us for today's consultation session. I just want to give a couple updates. On our website, and I'll give that URL. It's www.fns.usda.gov/fns/tribal. You can find our handouts. If you joined today's call a little late, we did do introductions, and you're – love to hear from you if you joined a little late, so press star one and you can introduce yourself. Today's consultation session is being recorded and will be part of the official USDA consultation record, and we'd like to know everybody that was attending on the phone. So if you did join a little late and did not get a chance to join us in introductions, you can press star one on your phone, and we'd love to hear from you.

And we do have a question from Tony Nartoli. Sir, your line is open.

Um, more of a comment, again supporting Mr. Gates. I think the idea of the demonstration project, two ques – or comments. I though the last one didn't get out, as I expressed earlier, didn't get out to enough tribes to find out the quality of the service that came back, and the second thing is I also agree with Red and I think most of the tribes would do that but I'll speak for myself, is that this was a help but is in no way an answer to participation, and again it goes back to, you know, we're competing with SNAP and everything that Red has said. I stand in grocery lines and, again, it's – being I'm of the older generation, all the younger ones, you know, pop, potato chips, plus if you go out in the grocery stores, fantastic cost of food. So some of this stuff, though we don't appreciate it, that's what younger people buy because you can get more of it. So just thanks for the comments and I support Red wholeheartedly on that. Thank you.

Thank you, Tony.

And our next comment comes from Lorraine. Ma'am, your line is open.

Good morning. I have a couple questions. I'm with Navajo Nations. In the past you said the pilot was ten years ago. Do you know what was the largest RTO that participated? Did they encounter any barriers or any problems in the process? And if Navajo Nation was to be selected or wished to participate, would this affect any of the direct shipments of how we order our food?

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDIPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Is that – is that it, Lorraine?

Yes.

Okay. no, I don't know who the largest ITO was but we can certainly find out and Tony, or – or somebody else from the Midwest Region may know off the top of their heads, but we certainly have their materials. And would it affect the direct shipments. Well, that's a good question. I don't think so because – I don't know if the numbers are still holding up but it used to be the rule of thumb was about eighty percent of the distribution went through multi-food was to the smaller outfits and about twenty percent of our shipments – the outlets were big enough to take large quantities. So assuming that's still holding true, and I think it is, I – I do not see the direct shipments being affected by this. But it's a really good question because what do you do when you get to providing different foods. Say you have a regional pilot and you have – and you have an arrangement to provide walleye, but your direct ships aren't under – your direct ship outlets are not under the – under the pilot. What will happen there? I think that, you know, that is something we need to explore. Don't know if we can build it in necessarily to the pilot, but it's a fair thing to think about. Thank you, Lorraine. Is there more? Did I answer your question?

Yes.

Okay. And our next question comes from Sicilia Gonzales Lyons. Ma'am, your line is open.

Yeah, from a – I'd like to first of all tag onto Red's comment that he made, but my question is as it regards to that, too, is that we're dealing with a younger generation. Are the menus or the food that will be purchased be more direct to accommodate, because we do have rice and a lot of younger generation don't know how to cook rice. Are we going to be like adding instant rice and Kool-Aid and things like that to the menus that would appeal to the younger generation? That's it.

All good questions. I think in terms of any foods, if, okay, so if we take the regional pilot and we run the food package like the procedures that we've ironed out for the national scope, I think there needs to be a – an identical or similar vetting process of new foods. So if somebody comes forward and says for my reasons I'm in the pilot and I want to add Kool-Aid or – or wild rice, then that needs to be discussed with all the nutritionists in the room and if, you know, it meets the dietary guidelines and is – is – has some nutritional value, then it's probably a good shot to be added. But – but just like on a national basis, we'd have to make sure that the vendor would be able to get the food. It's a hang up, as you all know, well know, painfully well know, sometimes we just can't get the foods that we want. So we have to – so there's always the supply side of the question, too. Does that answer your question?

Yes, but also I would like to add that if we could add to our wish list, multivitamins.

I – I'll tell you right now, we – we get questions like that once in a while on all of our programs, not just food distribution on Indian reservations, but we're – we're sort of mandated to buy food so we, you know, we can't venture into – to vitamins.

Okay.

SNAP can't be used for vitamins either.

And are you ready for the next question?

Yes we are.

Denise Dodson, your line is now open.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDIPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Yes, thank you. I'm with Ho-Chunk Nation and I respectfully beg everybody's forgiveness because I'm relatively new in my position. I'm not actually the Food Distribution Director. That position falls to Andrew Rave, who's also listening in on this conference call. I'm Director of our nutrition program here at Ho-Chunk Nation, and as such oversee the Food Distribution Program, and – and so I thank you for the ability to be able to participate and once again, excuse my inexperience. I've been very interested in some of the comments that I've heard and appreciate the history about the Food Distribution Program that I'm picking up as part of this process. I'm also a registered dietician and so I appreciate some of the questions that are being posed in terms of what would constitute acceptable foods for the packaging that we're proposing. I've also worked with WIC and was very happy to see a revision in their food package that fell more in line with the dietary guidelines and think there are a lot of regional and traditional foods that will prove to be as nutritious and may be more readily accepted by the participants that we're trying to serve. I'm not going to go on any longer because I think Andrew Rave would like an opportunity to speak on behalf of Ho-Chunk Nation, other than to say that we are very interested in being part of the pilot program. I thank you for your consideration.

Thank you for participating.

Yeah, terrific. That's great. Thank you.

And we do have one other question. I believe the name is Frank Morris. Your line is open.

We're just listening in and we're interested in the – in the program – in the pilot program and (inaudible) got to follow through and see how it goes. Do I need to press something?

(inaudible) the next question.

We'll go back to the question that was just asked. Operator, is Frank still on the line.

I'll go open his line. Just one moment. And Frank, your line is now open.

Hi, this is Frank (inaudible) and Elaine Wade of (inaudible) Nation. Yeah, we're just listening in and we're just interested in the pilot program.

Great. Terrific.

Thank you. Operator, we'll go ahead with the next.

Okay.

Before we go on to the next question, and this is Cathie, I just want to make sure because this is the first series of consultations that I've been involved with, so, Frank's comment that we want to be interested in the pilot, we would probably need that in – in the letter format as well, right?

That's correct. So just as a reminder, a letter was sent to your tribal leaders with a copy of that letter to your FDIPIR program director, and in that letter it does describe three different options that you can let us know if your tribe is interested in participating. You can mail us your interest, you can email us, or you can fax us and let us know, and all that information is captured in the letter that went to your tribal leader as well.

And just one moment for the next call. It does come from Roxanna.

I wanted to speak to Lorraine's question earlier about the size of the programs that were in the pilot project. I was looking back through to the evaluation of the prime vendor pilot project, and it's – that's a

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDIPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

very good point that Lorraine makes that we definitely need to keep in mind because it appears that the largest program that was in the pilot was – it looks like it was Tony's program and they served a little over eleven hundred participants. So I would like to – to make the suggestion that when – when the selection is made that there is a nice cross reference of a variety of sizes of programs to – to be sure that the model that's being used will – will meet the needs of all the programs regardless of their size. One of the other notes here that I wasn't sure how it might work, it addressed the bonus items. At the time that this pilot project was done, and it appears that bison and almonds were bonus items, and I didn't know if that – either that being handled the same way the direct shipments were handled or those separate from the pilot project.

You know, that's an interesting perspective. I was reading through the – the last pilot's notes, the executive summary, and noticed the reference to the bonus items. Now back then we were getting a couple – for what, a couple of years we received a special appropriation from Congress to get the bison and we had a few dollars worth of other bonus commodities, and that, I think, affected the outcome of the – of the cost comparison. Fortunately or unfortunately in these days our bonus pickings are slim and so we have not had access to the – to the types and quantities of the bonus foods that we have in the past, so there's a likelihood that there's no comparison needed now. But should that be the case, it certainly needs to be built into the comparison. I think that needs to be pulled out of the – of the cost comparison. So thank you for bringing that up.

Thank you.

Our next question comes from Red Gates. Sir, your line is open.

I'm a little talkative today, Cathie, so Roxanna asked the same thing I was concerned about the – if you're selected as to the pilot project, pilot program, if you would still receive any bonus items should they become available, and the other is I forgot one of my supervisors, since we've had a lot of flooding and we – we haven't really had to have any congregate feedings, if you're a pilot program and you need to feed a large group of people and you're called upon if a disaster is declared, maybe that's thinking too far down the line, I'm trying to stay positive, but those are questions that pop up because in our area we've had a number of winter and then spring and summer alike we've had a number of disasters where we did provide food for disasters. Would the vendors be expected to do the same?

That's a – that's a good question, Red. I haven't put that into the hopper to – to kick around yet, but we absolutely should do that going forward.

Okay.

Off the top of my head, I think it has to be a separate issue and we'd have to draw from some other source, but – but I – we really – that's a really good point. We'd have to think that through because if it's a flood in North Dakota and the food's sitting right in your backyard, that's what people are going to look to have. So we would just need to think that one through and figure out how to handle it.

Okay. Thank you. And I'm glad you and I agree on that. I thought it would come from another source, too. I – I wasn't sure. Okay, the next question is – I guess it's been my experience in working with this program, which has been a few years, and when I began to get involved in better foods and healthier foods for this program, I started when I went to the store I never used to look at best if used by dates, but that became a big issue with me and I found out the old trick of you take from the back instead of the front and you'll usually get the fresher milk, the fresher whatever, you know, anything that's cooled or frozen. Sir, you can't do that somebody told me one day, and I said yes I can, I'm paying for it so I'm getting the freshest from the back. But anyway, I was wondering how that would apply to the – the vendors and if that was an issue with the former pilot project or would everything remain as it is that they would be required to have six months, three months, whatever it is.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Well, I suspect that the best if used by issues would be lesser because one of the benefits of the pilot is the food's coming from closer and it should be more just in time versus coming from a faraway place to a central warehouse to be stored for a period of time and going back out, so I think it would be fresher. I would be curious to know what the Midwest folks say about that in their pilot as far as best if used by issues.

Yeah, so would I. And then the other one, my last question, is – is if were selected as a, one of the pilot projects and we could get buffalo (inaudible), all of the stores around here carry buffalo in various – various ways. It's ground, it's sold in all of the cuts that beef is sold. Is that something that we would be able to do or would that take a special approval from your department?

I think that's something we would absolutely go after. We, you know, we only have a – a set amount of money, just like we do on the national basis, but – but within that, just like we're trying to now, we want to get the bison, now since you brought that up, even here, you know, we can sometimes find buffalo at the grocery store, but we struggle so much to get it for FDPIR, you know the last go around we were not able to get more than about five or ten percent of what we wanted, but if you're finding it at the grocery store, I hope you'll go check and see where they – where they processed that so that we can talk to them on a bigger scale, and – and to actually answer your question, yes, I – I sure hope that when we have a regional pilot that if buffalo is the desire of that region, that we are able to accommodate that.

And the buffalo I see, Cathie, in order – I can answer that. There are two very local. One's located in Mobridge, South Dakota, and they fully process buffalo regularly down there and it's about fifty-five miles – it's just across the river from the reservation. In fact it's one of our near areas, approved near areas. So I guess that – that's the end of my questions but I heard you say earlier, walleye. Wow. I, too, just love walleye fish. It's better than trout. It's the best I think that – that you can get, so I'd love to see that become a part of the private vendor, too.

Thank you. I – I sure hope it is. You and I know – a number of us, I think, know that walleye's the best fish there is out there, but at least that's our opinion.

Yes. Thank you.

Thank you.

And our next question comes from Andrew Rave. Sir, your line is open.

Yes, good afternoon. My name is Andrew Rave. I'm from the Ho-Chunk Nation with the Midwest Regional Office, and I'd like to say greetings, good afternoon to Cathie and all the USDA folks. And the Ho-Chunk Nation is very interested in this pilot project and in the past I don't think we were involved with that, but if it is we would really like to be considered with the panel or whatever is going to be addressed. And then speaking on the – some of the specialty food items, I would say if some of that gets available, would some of the other ITOs be available to get that, say from region to region or would it be just within that particular group that is involved with the pilot vendor contract? That's all. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for commenting. Let me take the part about the – would the specialty foods only be available to the region that is selected and then I'm going to hand back to Barbara Lopez on the other questions – or actually to clarify and change what we were earlier saying, realizing as we're reading this letter about how to express your interest. Okay. The part about the regional preferences. So let's – let's say that the region – whatever region is selected and we have a regional distribution network set up there, and they're interested in wild rice.

Yes.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

And so we accommodated that way, but I believe you're asking can't we, if another region is also interested but not a part of that pilot, can we go ahead and work that out? I would say that we are doing that now in the bigger process of the food package review group, so I don't see why it has to be exclusive to, let's say the discussion of wild rice. If it happens to be the Midwest Region or wherever, and that region wants wild rice as a part of its food package under the regional distribution system, that doesn't mean that it can't be discussed on a national level as to whether the rest of the country could get it with USDA purchasing the same thing. Did that answer your question?

Yes.

Okay. And then –

Thank you, Cathie. In regards to what I mentioned earlier, if your tribe is interested in participating in the pilot, we did mention that we sent a letter to tribal leaders as well as a copy of the letter to FDPIR program directors. And in the letter it states that you can let us know if you are interested in participating by mail, by fax or by email, as well as you can also let us know if your tribe is interested in participating during today's consultation session, so if you press star one on your phone and your tribe is interested in participating, you can let us know over the phone. Again, today's consultation session is being recorded and transcribed, and we'll have a record of who is interested in participating. So if you're a tribal leader and your tribe is interested in participating, please let us know. And operator we'll go ahead with the next question or caller.

Our next caller is Tony Nartoli. Sir, your line is open.

Again, good afternoon – noon to everyone, especially my tribal elders here in the Midwest Region. I think Ms. Susie Royce probably got the longest of any of us. But being she's not on the phone I won't say any more, she'll get mad at me. And (inaudible) to our Tribal Chair. Susie knows me well. I think Red expressed something really interesting. When we did that demonstration program in the Midwest, one of the considerations – one of the comments that we made as a Region, and I know as a tribe, is the fact exactly what Red brought up is that when we were doing the program it was working well and if Red and any of the people were wrong, it was very much then a radical, radical change in how the program was being delivered. Any many of the questions that were answered – we convinced people how well it was working, and the big thing that Red brought up then and we wanted was the fact that on a national basis the program didn't go far enough and ended at – at the region, and trying to get the support, trying to have USDA continue it didn't occur. And this is one of the things that we wanted to bring up is the fact that getting into the larger tribes, because, you know, we – we – I was the big – the Sioux Tribe was the biggest at that time, and – I – and – and what happened was because we only went that year it didn't get into the other tribes. Because the tribes that we dealt with like – talking about our brother and sister Navajo Nation, Pine Ridge and them, how do you direct ship to them or to ride with the state warehouse, and, you know, it was working well in the Midwest in terms of shipment, in terms of quality of food, and the best if used dates, we didn't have an issue with because of the way, again, Cathie, you were right, the way – at that time was Reinhart – how they delivered and the way they ordered stuff. We had a real variety of their catalog which reflected USDA's. We could get some things that US – because of the way they billed, it was a good group as opposed to an individual item, so it opened up a lot of different things to us just to help anyone out. It worked well. And again, it was the cost allocation at that time was the biggest reason. And again, you know, from the tribes, and you can ask the other tribes on there, and I think Susie was on that. I'm not sure all the Michigan tribes that are on right now were on the program back then, but it – it – it was a very good program, so, and the problem was it didn't go long enough to answer the questions that Red and the Navajo tribe and some of these other ones brought up. And that's the end of my comments for the day, and I thank you for listening to me.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Thank you for your comments. This is Rogelio Carrasco. And I just wanted to take this opportunity to say that, I guess two things that we really want to convey is that we're committed to making sure that this is a successful program and to the – and that once it's successful that it actually goes national. We want to strongly emphasize those are our intents, that we certainly are taking note of the fact that last time around the pilot went too short in many people's opinions and that we need to evaluate it and do everything that we can to make sure it's successful this time around. So I just wanted to acknowledge your comments and the comments made by others and let you know that, again, our intent is to succeed and make this a national program, ultimately.

And I show no other questions at this time.

Just as a reminder, if you're joining us on the phone, if you press star one you'll be able to connect with us if you have any questions or comments. Once again, that's star one on your phone. And while we're waiting, I'll go ahead and just give a couple more updates to today's consultation session as well as the consultation session held on Tuesday are both being recorded and transcribed. And we'll make the transcription available. We'll be posting that on our website, so once again, our URL is www.fns.usda.gov/fns/tribal. We'll be posting those transcripts there on the website. They should be posted by early next week. Also, if you have any additional questions you can also email us and our email address is tribalaffairs@fns.usda.gov. And we'll go ahead and check with the operator to see if there's any more questions or comments. Again, star one on your phone.

Our next question comes from Connie Martinez. Your line is now open.

Good afternoon. This is Connie. The question I had was concerning the commodity hotline because we're talking a lot about the best if used by dates because personally I'm still waiting on grapefruit juice that was outdated back in June, and so are they going to be a part of this also and how quickly are we going to get answers?

Hi, Connie. Are you in South Dakota?

New Mexico. In New Mexico.

Oh, sorry, I have the wrong Connie on my list here. In New Mexico. And you have a grapefruit juice issue?

Yes.

Okay. Let me check. Patty Shock, are you still on the phone? Oh, I can check with – I will check with our staff and find a way to get back to you on that one. Thank you.

Okay. Thank you.

Connie, did you register for today's session?

Yes I did.

Okay, great. If you registered, then we have your contact information.

Okay.

And our next question comes from Denise Dodson. Ma'am, your line is open.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Thank you, again. I didn't really have a question, I just wanted to make a comment based on some of what I've been hearing, in respect to the – the pilot program and the concerns about the drop off in participation by some of our younger participants. And I thought that the pilot program, with its focus on region – regionality, really could be marketed very nicely to that younger demographic. Just some notes that I made to myself was that, you know, if you're at all familiar with the localvore movement and the push to eat within a hundred miles of where you live and that concept of sustainability, and certainly from a traditional standpoint, you know, being kinder and gentler to Mother Earth in terms of how we use the resources that we have, I – I think that a lot of those concepts are very hip and trendy, in addition to being very important, and I think we could use that as a plus for the program to appeal to those participants that maybe have been going by the wayside.

I think those are really good points. Thank you. I agree with you a hundred percent. I think this – I think the food package right now speaks for itself and it's getting a lot of good attention in terms of being healthy foods, and so imagine what we could do if we get to traditional – more traditional foods and more locally grown and regionally accessed foods. We're just adding to our capability to market this.

And the other thing that I heard too, that I – and I've heard this before and I haven't really acted on it but I have the idea in my head that I would like at our distribution center to set up a static display of some sort that contrasts what a family, say of four, could purchase with SNAP money versus what they would get in a FDPIR food package. And I think that would perhaps be a good visual. Yes, the SNAP might include potato chips or pop or things of those nature, but I think when they see the volume of food that they can get for their dollar, it might help bring it home as to why this is a good program to be involved with, especially as the cost of food continues to rise.

Wow, wouldn't that be cool. You know, I'm wondering – I think we should take a run at that collectively with – you know, I'm thinking off the top of my head, but with our nutrition education money that goes out each year, maybe one of the projects could be built around making graphics that we could share across the nation. Let's – let's keep talking about that. Thank you for bringing that up.

I know we did something similar with that with our WIC project here to try and promote breastfeeding in that we stuffed bottles with dollars and such to show how much it would cost to feed a baby on formula versus the benefits of breastfeeding and got a good response from participants.

This is – is this Denise? I'm sorry.

Yes.

Okay. Okay. Great. Thank you for that suggestion. I like the baby bottles full of dollars.

Well thank you.

And our next question comes from Patty.

It's not really a question, I just wanted to respond to Cathie. I am still here, and I did know about the grapefruit juice. I think that the program support staff is working on it. It's a – it was a best if used by issue (inaudible) dates.

Okay, and we'll be sure to get back to – to Connie in New Mexico with a final answer, right?

Absolutely.

Thank you.

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

Our next question comes from Nelson Harjo. Sir, your line is open.

Hi. How you doing? Nelson Harjo with the Muskogee Creek Nation, and I'm actually the warehouse manager. Our program manager Anna Cruz was unable to attend this meeting today, so I am here on her behalf. But one of the questions I had, or actually the only question I have right now is from what I'm understanding, when you guys do this pilot, that the only food selections that are going to be affected are from the national warehouse and none of the selections from the fresh produce are going to be affected, is that what I'm understanding?

I think – wow, I'm glad you brought that up. It hasn't even come up yet. I think it needs – we need to figure that out. I – off the top, again, I would imagine that the vendor, whomever that is, that runs the regional pilot will also provide the fresh produce, because ultimately we would want the regional vendor to do all of the work. But I don't know that for sure, and so I do think we need to put that into the list of things to figure out as we build this contract. Thank you.

Okay, that's all I had.

All right. Thank you.

At this time I show no other questions.

Okay, just as a reminder. You can press star one on your phone, you'll be ask a question or comment. That's star one on your phone. While we're waiting for the next either question or comment, I just want to add another reminder in terms of if your tribe is interested in participating, there are a couple different options you can let us know, but there is a due date, that's August fifth. We need to know by August fifth if your tribe is interested in participating, and again that letter was sent out to your tribal leader, and you can let us know via mail, email or fax. There is information on that letter. Or, if you're a tribal leader and you're on today's consultation, you can also let us know verbally. Make sure you press star one on your phone. And operator do we have any more questions or comments?

Not at this time.

Hi, this is Crystal (inaudible) from NCI. So forgive me, but I haven't really heard a lot of discussion about this until today, so I will leave all of the questions and comments as far as the program itself and how it works to – to our tribes because they really are technical experts who are on the ground providing the (inaudible) to their – to their tribal communities, but the questions or comments that have is more from a national perspective because we never look at programs in a siloed way. So the first thing that we've really been looking at is incorporating traditional local foods into farm and school programs and school breakfast and lunch programs and – and just other – other ways that local and traditional foods come into our communities in general. So my question would be how is USDA, first of all, looking at their other programs that they oversee and how that these programs can collaborate so that this is first of all cost effective and also sustainable. And, so, it just seems that if we only look at the FDPIR program by itself, it's not going to be cost effective because we won't have the local markets out there to support it. And then on top of that, as not only USDA programs but also other agencies that will receive these other programs, like the educate – like Education, Interior and IHS, who also provide food to our tribal communities through their different programs and venues. And then, also I would just want to put on your radar maybe in the future, and this is – I understand that this bill is only going to be a one-year pilot project, but in the future for the local vendors, would there be additional assistance, such as technical assistance, to help local vendors understand or know how to – you know, they could become part of this program itself and others to provide those local and traditional foods. And then in the selection of the panel or tribes that you choose to – for this pilot program, I would also urge you to look at not only location and size for diversity, but also any potential they may have to collaborate with other local

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDIPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

programs. There's a lot of our tribes that are already doing farm-to-school programs and other things like that, so I would urge you also to take that all into account.

Thank you. To address, to the extent that I can, your questions on are we collaborating across programs to make sure that we are communicating the other efforts that are going on to get – to get more local foods into schools and – and other types of programs, I think ideally, in the long run, that it absolutely needs to happen and I know that there are other efforts happening in terms of the BIA schools and other schools across the country in this regard. For now, we're taking baby steps on the FDIPIR, our program, to get this set up, but cross sections of these – of these efforts are certainly in the early stages of discussion if not further than that, and Duke may want to comment more on that.

Thank you, Cathie. This is Duke Storen. Some of our other programs already have greater flexibility for local preference and local purchase. Our school meals programs is already set up in a model where school food authorities are able to do that purchase and there is a local preference policy, and so, you know, they have reimbursement for the meals that they provide, and they have the flexibility to use those reimbursed funds in a way that they see fit. And so, what we see here, you know, we are taking baby steps for the FDIPIR program but it does open up more possibilities for coordination at the local level which is probably the point of coordination that makes the most sense. So this is one of the programs where we don't currently have that local flexibility, and that's what we're building into the pilot. So I do think it opens up opportunities, but being thoughtful about that and having that being part of our conversation and awareness I think really helps, so thank you.

And there was another question about technical assistance to the local vendors to enable, to know, to make sure that people are situated to be able to do this. That point is well taken. I'll tell you, our primary concern is making sure that – that we – that we find a contractor that is capable now of carrying out this business because the customers, you know, on the receiving end of this – the deal are – are our primary concern at this point. But that said, just to use another example of our struggle to get – to get bison to the programs, we are trying to figure out ways through other programs, it has to be outside – unfortunately our scope is limited in FDIPIR, but we are looking for sister agencies or other outfits where we can find ways to provide funding for technical assistance on the producer – on the provider end of the equation, because I think you're right, there – there are some gaps there that if filled we could do a better job of reaching local. So, thank you. Thank you for your questions and comments.

And operator, do we have anyone on the phone?

We do. We do have one question from Georgia Barrows. Ma'am, your line is open.

All right. Hello. I had a few questions and one is like with the, you know, the cultural or traditional foods, you know, with the – by having been divided into different regions, you know, that would, you know, like with the Northwest, you know, you have the salmon, and then the Southwest, you know, they have their traditional foods with the corn – blue corn meal, etc. But, you know, also, if they're able to conduct like a farmer's market, you know, and things, but in – to do a community garden, if there was some type of way where like either with the voucher program or something where, you know, a few bucks could go out to the recipients where they can go and purchase their own, you know, I don't know if that would be a possibility that one, you know, that may be an idea. And the second one, I was – we were having problems with the senior – elderly feeding program, you know, to be able to receive some of the benefits from, you know, like the TPAP or the other – there's Second Harvest and all that where it would be feasible for them to help put food on their table. And also by having a, you know, if we promote community gardens within the ITOs or, or just the regions where that way it could go out to the senior programs or to the school systems or – or to the WIC programs that would help benefit with, you know, for nutritional value. And also, you know, with the technical assistance or – or even as a – doing PSAs and posters, you know, to help promote the FDP program. I think since the SNAP program was able to do that, now I think it would be good if there was money available for the FDP programs to have the same,

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

you know, same way to, you know, help promote FDP. And we were just talking about that. We just had a regional board meet in the past few days, so I think that was something that we would like to see happen, and I think it would be great, you know, with the – something, you know, where we could use farmer's markets, you know, that's traditionally locally-grown food, so if that's a possibility. And thank you.

Thank you, Georgia.

Thank you. This is Duke Storen again, from FNS. These are great ideas and one of the things that we're doing with BIA and other parts of the federal government is an initiative called Let's Move In Indian Country, and a lot of that effort is about doing a better job making all these existing programs and opportunities both accessible and taken advantage of in Indian country, as well as perhaps better coordinated, and I think a lot of your really great ideas and comments sort of fit into both of those categories. And so, you know, we're going to take good notes of those ideas and we may come back to you and ask for some further conversation and just to explore those further as we start trying to do a better job of this coordination and our work with Let's Move In Indian Country. A lot of that falls outside, I think, of the scope of the pilot *per se*, but certainly within our shared vision and goal of bringing healthy access foods to all those who need it. So thank you so much.

All right. Thank you.

And I show no other questions at this time.

Okay, this is Cathie. I can't tell you what a great conversation I think we've had, both Tuesday and today, and for those of you who joined us on both days, this is really, really good stuff. I have a number of notes to add to my stack of things for the group to consider as the – as the – as the team moves forward to pick the region and set this pilot up. But that reminds me. Before we close today, Roxanna and the NAFFDPIR board, I'm wondering, you know, should we – should we establish today before we hang up next steps. I – I can tell you that I will go back and figure out our USDA team members, but if I could ask that the NAFFDPIR board have your discussion about how to select – I know we've made a number of comments about it today, but while we have these couple of weeks waiting to find out who's interested, we could come up with a structure. Does that sound reasonable?

So again, you'll have to press star one on your phone.

Oh star one.

Just one moment. I've got one question. Let me just grab the name.

Thank you.

And our question comes from Roxanna.

Hey Cathie. I missed part of what you said when I was getting in on the call. Yes, I would like to – to proceed with this and there is a – I just scheduled a NAFFDPIR board conference call for next Tuesday, July 26, which would give us the opportunity to discuss this and to come up with a plan on our side as to how to proceed and how to select the NAFFDPIR members that would be on the – on the panel. And I guess if you can just let us know what – what you would want of us from our side, and we could start working on that.

Okay. I – actually next Tuesday is perfect for the call because you can all go home and think about, you know, what's important here. Originally what I had thrown out was should we, you know, should we have three USDA folks and three tribal members. I believe Tony got on and said something

USDA Consultation

Tribal Transcript for FDPIR Regional Vendor Distribution Pilot

7/21/11

about each region being represented, and I don't know if that means four. It's not set in stone in my mind by any means, but maybe that's something that the – the board could decide next Tuesday, what is an appropriate number, and then the possibly more difficult question of if someone is interested in the pilot, can, you know, can they be a team member.

Okay.

Sorry to stick you with that one.

No you're not.

Okay, you're right.

So, so maybe we could talk again after – after your board meeting and if we, wow, if we came up with the structure of the team before we closed out the requests for interest, that would be the ideal.

Okay. So what we will – what we will commit to do is we'll come up with our recommendation on the structure from our side and hopefully have a recommendation of who those members will be, and then we will propose what our feelings are on whether a – a panel member can also be a – an applicant for the pilot program.

Right. Great.

Okay.

Thank you.

And operator, do we have any more folks in the phone queue, please.

Just one moment. I believe one is coming up at this time. And no, there are no other questions at this time.

Okay, great. Before I hand it over to Cathie for some closing remarks, I just want to mention two items. One, today's consultation session and Tuesday's consultation session were both recorded and will be transcribed and so those transcriptions will be available on our website, so please check back early next week on our website and you could reference not only today's session, but also Tuesday's session as well. And as a final reminder, if your tribe is interested in participating in the pilot, you do need to let us know by August fifth. And just a reminder again the tribal letter did go out to your tribal leader and there is information on the letter about how to let us know by August fifth. And I'll go ahead and hand it over to Cathie for closing remarks.

I'm looking at Barbara and I'm dying to ask, how many of you have – but we don't, you know, I don't want you to have to press star one again, but do you have her website bookmarked? Cause that's a great idea. So, okay. I can't thank all of you enough. I think it's been several days of very productive conversation and I am even more excited today than I was on Tuesday, so thank you, thank you, and let's hope we come up with a wonderful model here that we will execute and have a favorable outcome. Thanks again.

That concludes today's conference. Thank you for your participation. You may disconnect at this time.