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# FOOD AID QUALITY REVIEW

Tufts University

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**DATE:** MAY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2017

**WORKSTREAM:** LIGHT BLUE: 1.2.1.1 USAID FFP COMMODITIES RESOURCES PORTAL

**TITLE:**

## USAID FOOD FOR PEACE COMMODITIES RESOURCE PORTAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

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This report was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA), under the terms of Contract AID-OAA-C-16-00020, managed by Tufts University.

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The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

May 2017

**Recommended Citation**

Schlossman, Nina; Koeppel, Leah; Fisk, Rebecca and Johnson, Quentin. 2017. *Food for Peace Commodities Resource Portal: A Landscape Analysis. A report from the Food Aid Quality Review*, managed by Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. Boston, MA.

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## Acronyms

<b>BUBD</b>	Best Use by Date
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>CID</b>	Commercial Item Description
<b>CRD</b>	Commodity Requirements Document
<b>CRG</b>	Commodity Reference Guide
<b>FAQR</b>	Food Aid Quality Review
<b>FBF</b>	Fortified Blended Food
<b>FFP</b>	Office of Food for Peace (USAID)
<b>GF&amp;N</b>	Global Food & Nutrition Inc
<b>LRP</b>	Local and Regional Procurement
<b>PVO</b>	Private Voluntary Organization
<b>REFINE</b>	Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness
<b>RFP</b>	Request for Proposals
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>U.S.G.</b>	United States Government
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>WBSCM</b>	Web-Based Supply Chain Management
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

## I. Executive Summary

As part of United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) ongoing improvement process and to highlight the latest advancements in its food aid programs and products, USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) is reviewing and revitalizing its online presence. In support of this process, Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) Phase III conducted a landscape analysis<sup>1</sup> of current USAID FFP web-based resources available on its Commodities Resource Portal ("Portal"), to assess structure and content of materials available online and determine preliminary redesign recommendations for discussion with Portal users.

The Portal encompasses the section of the [USAID FFP website](#) related to food aid products programmed in FFP programs. Per USAID, the Portal aims to 1) educate the general public about USAID FFP food assistance programs, 2) provide background and context on USAID's ongoing efforts to improve the nutrition and overall quality of the food aid commodity basket, and 3) provide guidance for Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) and other stakeholders to inform their FFP proposal development process.

This report provides our analysis and assessment of the current Portal design, information and resources and includes preliminary recommendations for an updated portal that would provide succinct, usable information within the current USAID website design and structure.

This report is the first step in a broader effort to update and revamp the Portal to better reflect the U.S. food aid basket, food aid context and to improve online food aid product information, especially as new products are introduced.

The report includes an 1) Overview of the Food for Peace Commodities Resource Portal, 2) Analysis by Portal Section, review and analysis of 3) World Food Programme Product Information and 4) Suppliers & Commercial Industry Product Information and 5) Preliminary Recommendations.

Portal updates are recommended to improve Portal navigation, succinctly present relevant information, eliminate out of date or repetitive information, and to bring the Portal in line with the latest product, programming and procurement information from USAID. The recommended new Portal design includes a streamlined structure to easily navigate to and access information. It will incorporate new or updated tools and resources related to food aid products, programming and research. It will have a design that reflects the modernized food aid basket and be nimble enough to adapt to the continuing evolution of food aid products and program needs.

Following stakeholder consultations with USAID/FFP to review recommendations for the new Portal, recommendations will be shared with the broader audience of potential users of the Portal to gain feedback and finalize design and content recommendations.

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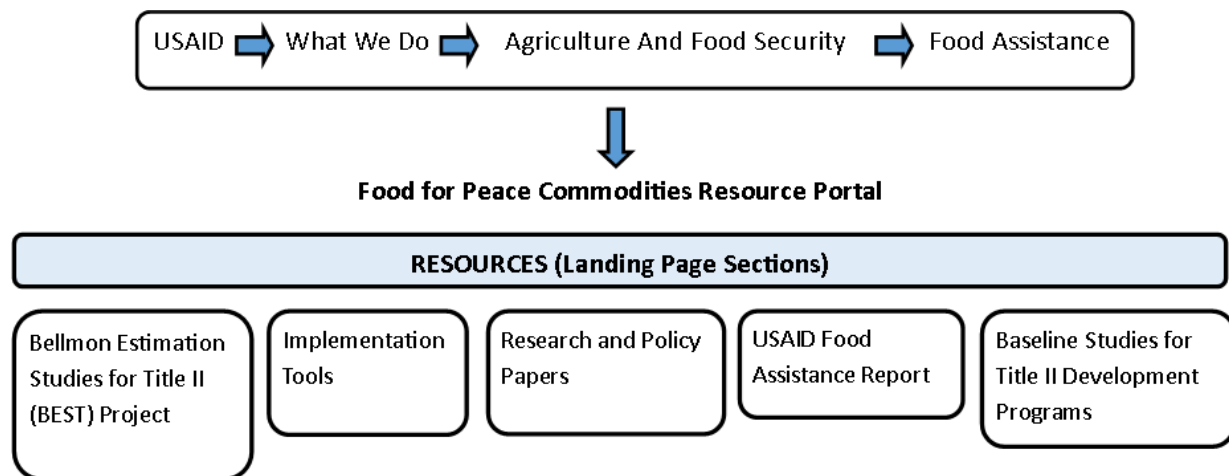
<sup>1</sup> Report under activity C.3.2.1: Commodity Reference Guide of the FAQR Phase III project as part of Global Food & Nutrition Inc's (GF&N) subcontract with Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.

## II. Background

United States (U.S.) food aid represents a yearly investment of over \$2 billion in the lives of millions of vulnerable people in conflict, natural disaster and development settings in countries around the world. In Fiscal Year 2015, U.S. food aid reached almost 50 million people in over 60 countries. Throughout its 60 year history, U.S. food aid has contributed to the food security of three billion people in over 150 countries.<sup>2</sup> As part of its efforts to maximize impact and cost effectiveness in food aid efforts, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) commissioned Phase I of the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR), 2009-2011, to review the quality of U.S. food aid products, including product formulations and specifications, along with product programming and the process of food aid product production and distribution, from procurement through delivery. The report, “Delivering Improved Nutrition”,<sup>3</sup> reviewed all products in the USAID food aid basket: fortified blended foods (FBFs- such as Corn Soy Blend), bulk products such as grains and oils, and specialized nutritious products under consideration for inclusion to meet specific nutritional needs of target populations. As a result, USAID updated or introduced 25 products to the food aid basket from 2011-2015 (Phase II)<sup>4</sup>. Updated and new product information was posted on the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) Commodities Resource Portal<sup>5</sup> website (“Portal”), a section of the USAID website found under the Food Assistance subsection.

The landing page for the current Portal and subsections are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: FFP Commodities Resource Portal- Landing Page Sections



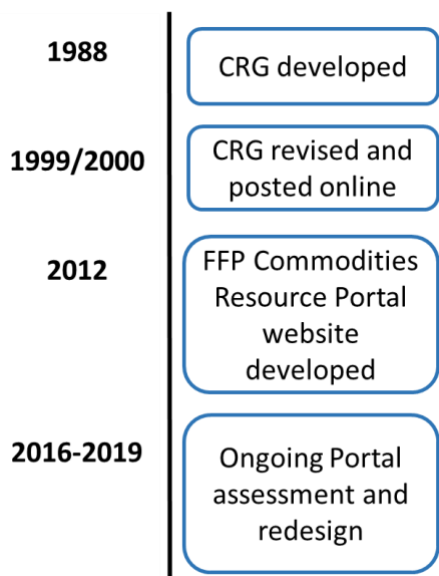
<sup>2</sup> “Quick Facts”, 2017 <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/quick-facts>

<sup>3</sup> “Delivering Improved Nutrition”, 2011: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pnadz842.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadz842.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> “Introduction of New and Improved Food Aid Products, 2011-2015 Lessons Learned and Recommendations”, 2016: <http://www.foodaidquality.org/introduction-new-and-improved-food-aid-products-2011-2015-lessons-learned-and-recommendations>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/resources/implementation-tools/commodity>

Figure 2: FFP Commodity Reference Guide Timeline

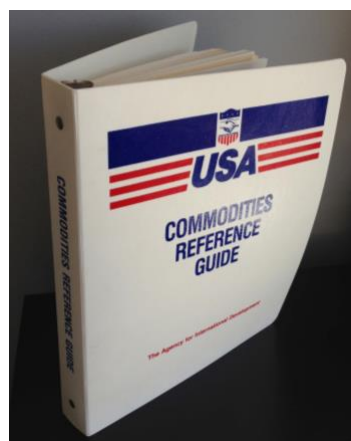


The current Portal is a website-housed digital version of the Commodity Reference Guide (CRG)<sup>6</sup>, a report that provides information on food commodities distributed under Title II of Public Law 480 (P.L. 480).

The CRG was first developed in 1988 as a printed document to supply implementing partners and others with the information they needed to develop or modify proposals and ongoing activities, including 1) descriptions of available foods, 2) nutritional values and physical properties, 3) storage and handling information and 4) general information on their use as rations in Title II programs. It was designed as a reference tool to be used by program implementers, such as Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), the World Food Programme (WFP), food aid suppliers, USAID mission representatives who oversee the in-country implementation of the FFP programs, and other stakeholders. The 1988 CRG, contained in a binder, is shown below.

The CRG was significantly [revised and reissued by USAID in 1999/2000](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Commodity%20Reference%20Guide%20Compiled.pdf)<sup>7</sup> to contain additional information on micronutrients, including bioavailability and delivery, and to respond to changes in fortification requirements for the U.S. food supply and the updated nutritional needs of food assistance beneficiaries. The 1999/2000 version of CRG was the first to be posted on the USAID website, as the U.S. adopted new communication methods. The website theoretically allowed for information to be disseminated, updated and revised more quickly and effectively. As part of these modernization efforts, the 1999/2000 CRG online version included links to USAID policies and guidance on program design, management, performance monitoring and evaluation, and other relevant complementary policy and program documents, such as country specific information for program designers.

Image 1: 1988 Commodity Reference Guide



While first developed as a report to be printed, the CRG and related policies and program documents have shifted to be featured on USAID’s website. Although the USAID website was redesigned over the last five years, this did not include a major update of the Portal contents (the CRG and related resources and tools). As food aid products have improved and the offerings expanded to meet the nutritional needs of beneficiaries, there is greater need for a Portal that is accessible with well-presented information and resources to assist decision makers in effective programming of U.S. food aid products.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/resources/implementation-tools/commodity>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Commodity%20Reference%20Guide%20Compiled.pdf>

### III. Methodology

This Portal Landscape Analysis includes a review of sections of the Portal, including: 1) “Commodity Reference Guide (CRG) Fact Sheets,” 2) information on “Products, Programming and Procurement” and 3) “Commodity Selection Resources” and 4) “Implementation Tools.” Our methodology also comprised of interviews and communications with FFP and other stakeholders to identify users of the Portal, how the Portal meets the needs of stakeholders and to gain a better understanding of the design and upkeep of the Portal website. The team reviewed the websites of World Food Programme (WFP) and food aid product suppliers to learn how the largest purveyor and suppliers of food aid products present their product and programming information.



## IV. Overview of the Food for Peace Commodities Resource Portal

Figure 3: FFP Website Navigation Sidebar Links to Commodities Resource Portal



The FFP Commodities Resource Portal (“Portal”) encompasses the section (web pages) of the USAID FFP website related to food aid products programmed in FFP programs. The Portal describes the purpose and content of the “Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets” section, contains a table with links to all current fact sheets and provides links to [“Products, Programming and Procurement,”](#) [“Contents of Commodity Fact Sheets”](#) and [“Commodity Selection Resources.”](#)

The Portal is **difficult to locate** due to being embedded in the USAID website. Finding the information on the food aid products and associated resources is not straightforward and requires going through a **minimum of five steps in the USAID website sidebar** menu to arrive to the Portal. Additionally, the USAID **website search feature does not easily yield resources or information** on the Portal. Often, it is faster to search for Portal resources or information using key words on a separate Internet search engine and then sort through search results than find a resource directly on the Portal.

The Portal is found under the “Resources” tab for “Food Assistance” on the “Agriculture and Food Security” link from the “USAID- What We Do” main page. The path to the Portal is shown in the navigation sidebar to the left, Figure 3, and can be summarized as follows: [USAID](#) → [USAID- What We Do](#) → [Agriculture and Food Security](#) → [Food Assistance](#) → [Resources](#) → [Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets.](#)

## V. Analysis by Portal Section

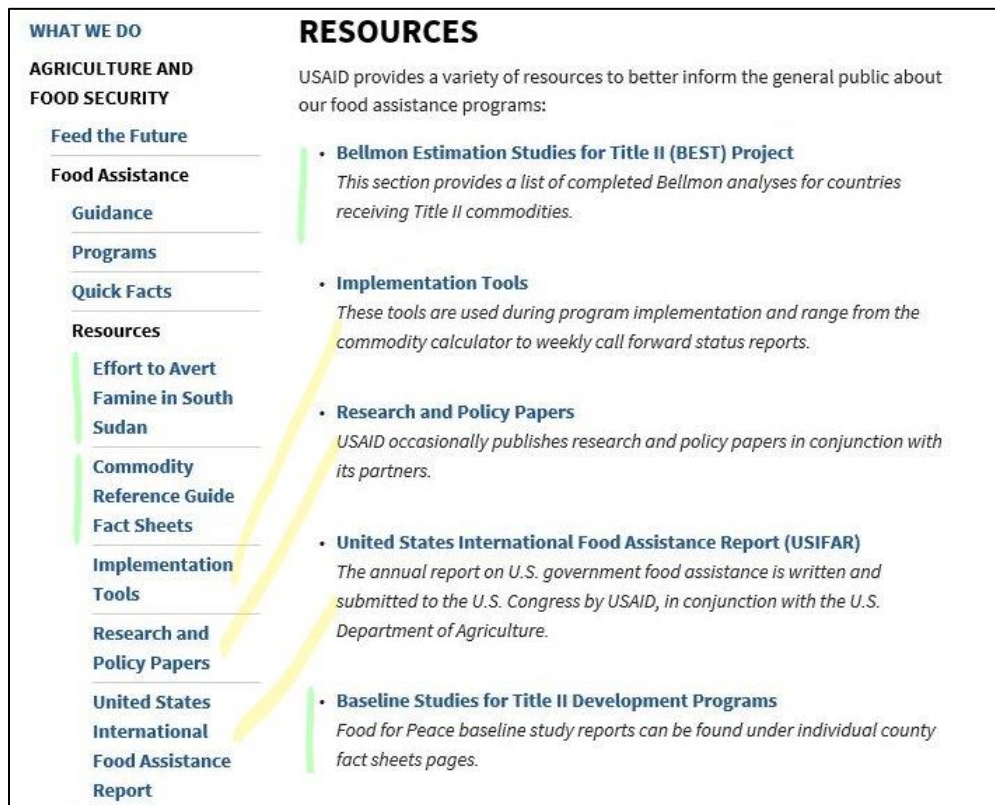
This section reviews and analyzes the resources in the Portal and the purpose for potential users. The Portal Resources section layout is found in Figure 4 below.

### A. Resources

USAID describes the “Resources” section of the Portal as a collection of information to educate the general public about USAID FFP food assistance programs. The Resources section provides guidance for PVOs and others to inform their proposal development process.

The Resources page is shown below:

Figure 4: FFP Commodities Resource Portal- RESOURCES



The resources featured on the Resources page are:

- [Bellmon Estimation Studies for Title II \(BEST\) Project](#)  
This section provides a list of completed Bellmon analyses for countries receiving Title II commodities. Bellmon Analyses are conducted to “determine if there are adequate storage facilities available in the recipient country to prevent the spoilage or waste of food aid commodities, that the importation of the commodity will not result in substantial disincentive to or interference with domestic production or

marketing in that country, and that food aid commodity importation and use of local currencies for development purposes will not have a disruptive impact on farmers or local economies.”<sup>8</sup>

- [Implementation Tools](#)  
These tools are used during program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and include tools such as the commodity calculator, the sampling guide for beneficiaries and the monetization field guide.
- [Research and Policy Papers](#)  
USAID publishes research and policy papers in conjunction with its partners, including reports from FAQR, the Sustainability and Exit Strategies project and Food Aid and Food Security Assessments.
- [United States International Food Assistance Report \(USIFAR\)](#)  
The annual report on U.S. government food assistance is written and submitted to the U.S. Congress by USAID, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and is a requirement of the Farm Bill. This report provides an overview of U.S. food aid programs (tonnage, cost), highlights the latest developments in food aid policy and products and includes country program updates.
- [Baseline Studies for Title II Development Programs](#)  
Food for Peace baseline study reports can be found under individual county fact sheets pages. Each country fact sheet contains a country food security assessment and summary of U.S. food assistance programs and FFP contributions.

### Key Findings

This categorized breakdown of types of resources is necessary due to the volume of reports, tools and papers that relate to commodity products, programs and management, but should be reorganized and better described to make it more functional, including more prominently featuring the “Implementation Tools” section instead of burying the link in a list of other resources.

The Resources page list of resources featured in the Portal does not match the subsections shown in the Resources sidebar dropdown menu and links are not included for some key information. Most importantly, the “Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets” subsection listed in the dropdown menu does not have a link on the Resources main page. “Baseline Studies for Title II Development Programs” is not included in the Resources dropdown menu, nor is “Bellmon Estimation Studies for Title II (BEST) Project”. Additionally, the “Effort to Avert Famine in South Sudan” subsection does not have a link on the Resources main page. This subsection would be better suited elsewhere on the USAID website, and not listed under Resources, since it is not a resource but rather a June, 2015 post by Dina Esposito, former Director of USAID’s Office of Food for Peace, on ongoing work in South Sudan. These discrepancies between the list of resources and resources in the sidebar dropdown menu are highlighted in green in Figure 3, above.

**Summary:** The disjointed organization of the various pages makes navigation through the Portal difficult and the lack of a user-friendly structure limits the use of important resources within the Portal.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/quick-facts>

## B. Products, Programming and Procurement

The [Products, Programming and Procurement](#) section of the Portal is housed under “Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets,” and provides the background and context of USAID’s ongoing efforts to improve the nutrition and overall quality of the food aid commodity basket, including upgrading products, improving programming and streamlining procurement processes. This section includes new tools from the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR), such as the programming guidance decision tree used in the programming section of each Commodity Fact Sheet<sup>9</sup>. Product updates are reflected in the CRG fact sheets, reviewed and updated quarterly by FAQR and created for new products on a rolling basis. The additional content not part of the fact sheets has not been updated since 2012. (A full analysis of the fact sheets is included in a following section.)

### Key Findings

The Programming and Procurement portions of this section of the portal are clear and succinct. However, the Products section requires significant updates regarding available products to reflect progress made to the food aid basket since 2012 and inclusion of the redesigned commodity fact sheets planned to be rolled out in 2017.

**Summary:** Updates are needed to bring this section in line with the latest product, programming and procurement information from USAID.

## C. Commodity Selection Resources

The [Commodity Selection Resources](#) section of the Portal is also under the “Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets,” and includes links to tools and resources to guide PVOs during food assistance proposal preparation in the selection and ordering of commodities for emergency and food assisted development programs. This information is intended to guide PVOs based on product characteristics and product/product shipping cost estimates.

Featured links to resources are:

### 1. Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM)

This links to the login page for WBSCM- login is required to access WBSCM. WBSCM is an integrated Internet-based food aid commodity acquisition, distribution, and tracking system used since 2011 by USAID and USDA agencies, including the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) to harmonize the USDA procurement process for food product purchases for international (FSA) and domestic (AMS) food assistance programs. USG purchases approximately \$2 billion worth of food aid products through WBSCM yearly.

### 2. Current FFP Commodity and Ocean Freight Price Estimates

These price estimates are updated on a quarterly basis and are factored into WBSCM and the FFP Commodity Calculator described below.

### 3. FFP Commodity Calculator

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<sup>9</sup> From the 2011 FAQR Report, *Delivering Improved Nutrition: Recommendations for Changes to U.S. Food Aid Products and Programs*: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNADZ842.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADZ842.pdf)

The FFP Commodity Calculator, updated on a yearly basis, estimates total commodity and freight costs based on commodity, tonnage, and inland and ocean transportation cost estimates.

**4. Storage and Handling**

This section is described as being updated to replace the information currently available in Section III (Storage/Shelf Life Specifications) of the 1999/2000 CRG, available at [http://transition.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/ffp/crg/sec3.htm](http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/ffp/crg/sec3.htm); this link is broken.

**5. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Commodity Requirements Documents (CRD) Home Page**

USDA maintains a list of all current CRDs for commodities used in food aid programs. CRDs are product specifications for food aid products for international programs and contain details that can factor into PVO commodity selection (e.g. micronutrient profile, packaging, microbiological testing requirements, etc.).

**6. USDA Nutrient Data Laboratory Home Page**

The USDA Nutrient Data Laboratory is a searchable database that contains macro and micronutrient information for catalogued foods. It does not include fortified blended foods or other products developed specifically for international food assistance and humanitarian purposes.

**7. USDA Commercial Item Descriptions (CID) Home Page**

USDA formerly maintained a list of CIDs for commercially available products, including Emergency Food Products, Dehydrated Potato Products and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods. USAID includes links to USDA information because USDA is the purchaser and solicitations come from USAID and refer to USDA CRDs and CIDs. The link is broken.

**Key Findings**

This page of the portal links to tools and resources that might have been useful for PVOs to make commodity selections during proposal preparation, but it requires some updates and reorganization to be useful in present day. The 1999/2000 CRG link in “Storage and Handling” should be replaced with the correct link<sup>10</sup> since the currently posted link is no longer active. The “[USDA Commodity Requirements Documents \(CRD\) Home Page](#)” link should be replaced with the USDA list of international food aid product specifications ([direct link to CRDs](#)) that does not require searching through the USDA website<sup>11</sup>; and “USDA Commercial Item Descriptions (CID) Home Page” should be eliminated since CIDs have been phased out of use and CRDs are now used exclusively for international food aid product specifications. Some CRDs reference CIDs, but if so, the CRDs provide links to those CIDs so links to CIDs are not needed independently. It is unclear why some of the listed tools and resources are featured in this section and if and how they would be used by PVOs.

**Summary:** The outdated information and disjointed presentation of these tools greatly limit their utility and effectiveness. Some tools may no longer be relevant and should be reviewed and updated.

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<sup>10</sup> 1999/2000 CRG link:

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Commodity%20Reference%20Guide%20Compiled.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Direct link to list of CRDs: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/commodity-operations/procurement-and-sales/export/commodity-requirements/index>

## D. Contents of Commodity Fact Sheets

The "[Contents of Commodity Fact Sheets](#)" section of the Portal is the third page under the "Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets," (as described in the Portal Overview) and it describes each section of the Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets. The commodity fact sheets all follow the same outline:

1. Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) Material Description and Number
2. General Information
  - a. Description of commodity and its component ingredients, information about production in the U.S., product packaging and storage considerations
3. Programming Guidance
  - a. Based on FAQR decision trees- how the commodity may be used in Emergency settings or Development Programs
4. Nutrition/Preparation
5. Nutritional Content
6. USDA Commodity Requirements Document Link
7. Shelf Life/Best if Used By Date (BUBD)

### Key Findings

Users of the Portal are unlikely to read this entire page if they are looking for a specific fact sheet, but the information should still be available as an explanation of the structure of the Sheets. Fact sheets will be updated on a rolling basis starting in 2017 using a new template, as part of FAQR Phase III. The new template is a one page summary of key information that is in line with commercial standards. The template 1) streamlines product information, including product description, programming guidance and nutrient information, 2) includes photos to ensure wider product familiarity and clarity about which product is being described, and 3) removes lengthy background information on ingredients and other less crucial information that can be obtained from product specifications and from product ingredient trade groups.

This page should be revised to include a brief, streamlined description of the contents of the new fact sheets. A summarized version of this page should be featured as part of the content on the main page/home page of the Portal.

**Summary:** This page needs to be reworked to provide more succinct and relevant information to stakeholders.

## E. Implementation Tools

The "[Implementation Tools](#)" section of the Portal aims to assist PVOs in the design and implementation of their food assistance programs, and is designed to be used during the creation of implementation reports for USAID. While this information is designed to help PVOs in proposal development and implementation, it is not associated with the actual Request for Proposals (RFP) required for a PVO to develop a program. Featured implementation tools are:

1. Commodity Calculator- described in the "Commodity Selection Resources" section above

2. Commodity and Ocean Freight Price Estimates- described in the “Commodity Selection Resources” section above
3. Food for Peace Call Forward Schedule- a schedule estimate used by partners to approximate commodity shipment and delivery when entering their requests (call forwards) into the WBSCM as a sales order
4. Commodity Management Toolkit 2017
  - a. The Commodity Management Toolkit is a one-stop operational reference guide for commodity management practitioners that replaced the 2014 Commodity Management Handbook.
5. Commodities Reference Guide (CRG)
  - a. The 1999/2000 CRG version of the FFP Commodities Resource Portal. The included language is below:
    - i. “The Office of Food for Peace is currently in the process of updating the CRG. This hyperlink connects to the current version of the guide. However, for the CRG Fact Sheets, please refer to the link below, which has new versions of all the commodity fact sheets. The commodity fact sheets included here are now out of date.”
6. Commodity Specification Fact Sheets
  - a. This section does not link to fact sheets but instead links to CRDs, product specifications, for some but not all products.
7. Commodities Reference Guide Fact Sheets- described in the “Contents of Commodity Fact Sheets” above
8. Market Assistance Program - Field Manual
  - a. The Market Assistance Program Field Manual outlines policies, operational procedures, and a conceptual framework to guide the effective design, implementation, management and evaluation of Title II-supported Market Assistance Programs.
9. Monetization Field Manual
  - a. The Monetization Field Manual describes how donated commodities can be sold in a commercial fashion in local markets to generate cash resources for program implementation without harming local markets.
10. Sampling Guide for Beneficiary-Based Surveys- described in the “Commodity Selection Resources” section above
11. Monitoring & Evaluation Policy & Guidance for Food for Peace Programs
  - a. This guide describes key monitoring, evaluation, and reporting responsibilities of FFP development (non-emergency) food security activity awardees and potential awardees, as part of USAID’s efforts to document program effectiveness and improve program design and implementation.
12. Template for Indicator Performance Tracking Table
  - a. An Indicator Performance Tracking Table is used as part of a program’s monitoring and evaluation plan.

### **Key Findings**

This section of the Portal contains important tools for PVOs and other stakeholders, but is in need of updates due to old or irrelevant featured information and repeated resources also found in the



“Commodity Selection Resources” section. It is dissociated from RFPs that contain links to tools and resources.

The 1999/2000 “[Commodities Reference Guide](#)” featured on the Portal includes outdated information. This old resource includes outdated commodity descriptions, fact sheets, storage and shelf life information and guidelines for commodity selection. The FFP Commodities Resource Portal replaces this guide, so its prominent presence is misleading as an implementation tool. While it could be featured on the Portal, it should be very clearly described as an archived, old resource.

Additionally, the “Commodity Specification Fact Sheets” section links not to fact sheets but to Commodity Reference Documents (CRDs), or product specifications, which is confusing terminology. Additionally, these particular product specifications do not need to be featured separately in this section of the Portal. This section should be removed.

**Summary:** This page requires major updates to bring the information in line with current USAID practices and policy and to remove repetitive information and inconsistencies in navigation.


## VI. World Food Programme Product Information

As part of the landscape analysis, the FAQR Team reviewed product information and resources available through the World Food Programme. WFP and USAID program the same food aid products, and reviewing WFP’s resources feeds into the ongoing FFP effort to harmonize food aid products, programming and resources across organizations. An example of how WFP displays food aid product information can be found in Figure 5.

*Figure 5: World Food Program Fortified Blended Foods Product Description*

### Fortified Blended Foods (FBFs)

- **What are they?**  
 FBFs are blends of partially precooked and milled cereals, soya, beans, pulses fortified with micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). Special formulations may contain vegetable oil or milk powder. Corn Soya Blend (CSB) is the main blended food distributed by WFP but Wheat Soya Blend (WSB) is also sometimes used.
- **When and where used?**  
 FBFs are designed to provide protein supplements. In food assistance programs to prevent and address nutritional deficiencies. They are generally used in WFP Supplementary Feeding and Mother and Child Health programs. Also, to provide extra micronutrients to complement the general ration.
- **How are they used?**  
 Usually mixed with water and cooked as a porridge
- **Nutritional value per 100g:**  
 Energy min 380Kcal  
 Protein min 18%  
 Fat min 6%  
 Micronutrients added: Vitamins A, C, B12, D, E, K, B6, Thiamine, Riboflavin, Niacin, Pantothenic acid, Folic acid plus Zinc, Iron, Calcium, Potassium.





All WFP product specifications are found on the WFP Food Quality and Safety website.<sup>12</sup> However, WFP does not present information in the same way as the FFP Commodity Reference Guide Portal; WFP groups commodity information by product type. The Nutrition subpage relates only to the specialized nutrition foods<sup>13</sup>, with a link to a specialized foods fact sheet which is a table comparing these products in terms of nutrients and programming information<sup>14</sup>. Fortified Blended Foods, Ready-to-Use Foods, High Energy Biscuits, Micronutrient Powder and Compressed Food Bars are also highlighted on the Nutrition subpage with brief descriptions for each type of product (e.g. Figure 4, above). Product descriptions include: a general product description, when it is programmed, how it is eaten or prepared, ingredients, featured macro and/or micro nutritional value and price per unit. Additionally, the WFP food aid basket purpose and composition are described in general terms on the In-Kind Food Assistance subpage<sup>15</sup>.

**Summary:** While it is difficult to navigate through the website to certain elements, in general, information is more succinct and user-friendly than that found on the USAID Portal.

## VII. Suppliers & Commercial Industry Product Information

Over the last few years, USAID has emphasized making food aid products, specifications and production more in line with the private sector, and this includes how product information is presented by the private sector to PVOs and other stakeholders. The team therefore also reviewed product information and resources available through food aid supplier websites and commercial industry websites for products similar to food aid products.

Suppliers of specialized food aid commodities and commercial food industry companies present a more streamlined and minimalistic set of information on their products online, in contrast to what is presented by USAID. Food aid suppliers, for products such as Ready-to-Use Foods, highlight key product information on their websites. This information includes: photos or drawings of commodity packaging and preparation pictograms, product descriptions and purpose, programming guidance and references for more information. Commercial industry presents less product information. Their product fact sheets or webpages contain product photos, product descriptions, macro and micro nutrient summaries and ingredients.

**Summary:** This information is clear and suitable for laypeople and stakeholders, with links to more detailed information as needed. While this approach works for the supplier target audience, the information on FFP products needs to be more related to USAID's wider audience and programming goals.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://foodqualityandsafety.wfp.org/specifications>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/nutrition/special-nutritional-products>

<sup>14</sup> [http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp255508.pdf?\\_ga=1.197789807.1327836556.1482868194](http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp255508.pdf?_ga=1.197789807.1327836556.1482868194)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.wfp.org/food-assistance/kind-food-assistance/wfp-food-basket>

## VIII. Preliminary Recommendations

The FFP Commodities Resource Portal features a large amount of high quality information regarding food aid commodities and associated tools and resources. As USAID's dissemination of commodity information switched from a printable or downloadable Commodity Reference Guide to the webpages that encompass the Commodities Resource Portal, the product and programming information changed and the layout of the website eroded information usability. An updated portal can fill the current information gap for a one-stop-shop that contains streamlined product and programming information reflecting the modern USAID FFP food aid basket.

To fulfill USAID's expressed Portal priorities, FAQR recommends a redesigned website structure and layout with correct, useful content for the Portal's intended users. The Portal should prominently display crucial information in a more attractive and usable way, with figures, tables and photos. This will require updating content and eliminating old, duplicated or irrelevant information.

In addition to general outline, structure and content redesigns to the current primary sections of the Portal as described in the above sections and shown in Figure 6, below, FAQR recommends that the Portal incorporate the following information not currently featured to increase understanding of product characteristics, properties and considerations that are relevant in product selection:

- An updated overview of the USAID food aid basket to highlight the radically improved food aid products, including product updates over the past five years
- A comparison of USAID specialized nutrition products with key information such as macro and micronutrients, in table form, to enable understanding of how products differ and can be used and programmed (for example, similar to the Specialized Foods Table currently not on the Portal<sup>16</sup>)
- Information that highlights how the products in the USAID food aid basket fit into the broader diet, tastes and preferences of beneficiary groups
- FAQR Decision Support Tool- an interactive web-based interface that visualizes how selection of specialized nutritious food aid products for nutrition programming affects cost and cost-effectiveness. This step-by-step data-driven decision-making framework incorporates product and supply chain costs as well as program effectiveness, and generates estimates of final cost and cost-effectiveness indicators for selected specialized nutritious food aid products under selected nutrition programming purposes.
- Links to:
  - Product specifications from USDA<sup>17</sup> (CRDs)

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<sup>16</sup> Specialized Foods Table:

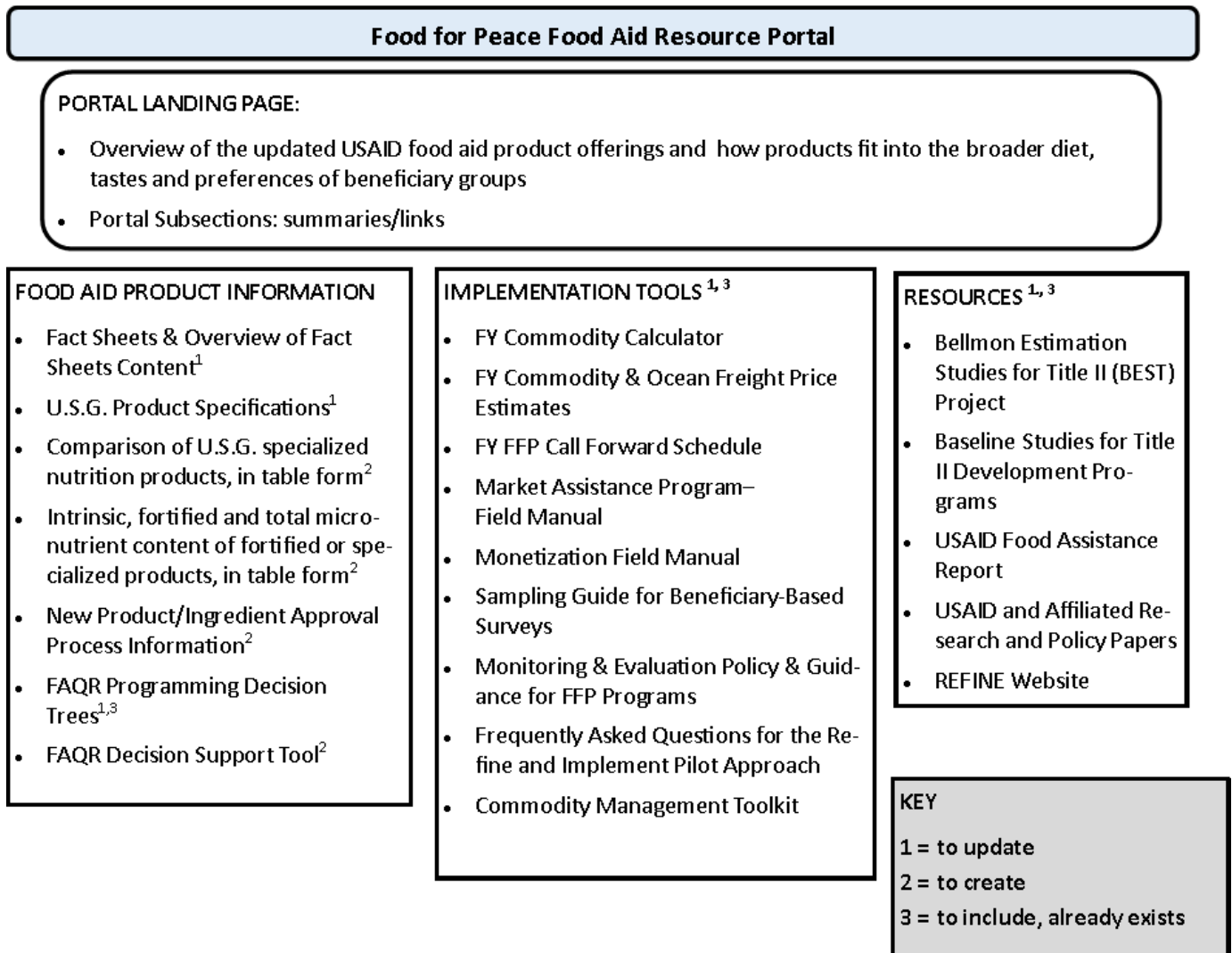
[https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/FFP\\_Specialized\\_food\\_table\\_81816\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/FFP_Specialized_food_table_81816_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> USDA Commodity Requirements: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/commodity-operations/procurement-and-sales/export/commodity-requirements/index>

- A table presenting and comparing intrinsic, fortified and total micronutrient content of fortified or specialized products
- REFINE - Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness - a knowledge-sharing mechanism that aims to improve food aid interventions

A draft site map of the recommended new Portal structure and content is provided in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Site Map: Recommended New Portal Structure/Content



While the broad overhaul of the Portal will be a longer term process, due to creating new content and restructuring and redesigning the website, the current Portal could be improved by performing a few updates in the form of “quick fixes”. These quick fixes, gathered from the Key Findings section of each Portal section discussion, are compiled in Table 1:

Table 1: Recommended Quick Fixes to the Current Commodity Resource Guide Portal

Portal Section	Quick Fix
<b>Resources Sidebar Menu (navigation bar on the left of screen)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Move “Effort to Avert Famine in South Sudan” to alternative location on USAID website</li> <li>2. Add “Baseline Studies for Title II Development Programs”</li> <li>3. Add “Bellmon Estimation Studies for Title II (BEST) Project”</li> </ol>
<b>Resources Main Page</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add “Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets” subsection (listed in the dropdown menu)</li> </ol>
<b>Commodity Selection Resources</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace “<a href="#">USDA Commodity Requirements Documents (CRD) Home Page</a>” link with the USDA list of international food aid product specifications (<a href="#">direct link to CRDs</a>)</li> <li>2. Eliminate “USDA Commercial Item Descriptions (CID) Home Page” section</li> <li>3. Under “Storage and Handling,” replace broken link with link to 1999/2000 CRG: <a href="https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Commodity%20Reference%20Guide%20Compiled.pdf">https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Commodity%20Reference%20Guide%20Compiled.pdf</a></li> </ol>
<b>Implementation Tools</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove the 1999/2000 “<a href="#">Commodities Reference Guide</a>” or very clearly describe it as an archived, outdated resource</li> <li>2. Remove “Commodity Specification Fact Sheets” section and the listed links to product specifications for Fortified Rice, High Energy Biscuits, Ready to Use Nutritional Food and Super Cereal Plus</li> </ol>

## IX. Conclusion & Next Steps

USAID FFP requires a streamlined, updated Portal useful for key food aid stakeholders and which reflects the modern USAID food aid basket and tools and resources utilized in commodity production, programming and procurement. An updated Portal can recast the USAID FFP food aid basket as products have become fit for purpose to meet beneficiary needs and designed for targeted food assistance programs. This Portal landscape analysis is an initial step in the redesign process.

The next steps in May-July, 2017 will be to 1) consult with USAID/FFP stakeholders to develop joint preliminary Portal recommendations, through meetings and teleconferences, 2) gather Portal user feedback on product and programming information needs to inform recommendations on the content and organizational structure of the redesigned portal, through online surveys, consultations and teleconferences, and 3) finalize Portal design, content, and featured resources/tool recommendations based on stakeholder feedback.