



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

SNAP Eligibility Changes for Retailers

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

September 23, 2026

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BACKGROUND

SNAP Stocking Standards Final Rule

The rule requires SNAP retailers to carry a wider variety of foods that support participants' health. It also simplifies how foods are categorized, which the USDA frames as strengthening program integrity.

Who's affected:

- All SNAP-authorized retailers except specialty food stores (e.g., butchers, fish markets, produce stands).
- If a store does not meet the new requirements, it will no longer be able to accept SNAP.
- USDA notified retailers impacted by the change in May and September.
- This rule does not change which foods households can buy with SNAP.

TIMELINE

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- A vertical timeline with three red circular markers. The first marker is at the top, followed by a short vertical line, then the second marker, followed by another short vertical line, and finally the third marker at the bottom.
- **May 8, 2026**
USDA published the final rule
 - **Nov 4, 2026**
Compliance deadline for SNAP retailers
 - **+6 months**
Wait period to reapply if a retailer is withdrawn or denied for SNAP

New Stocking Requirements

4

staple food categories

Dairy, grains, protein, vegetables
or fruits

7

**varieties required per
category**

Distinct foods within each staple
category

3 of 4

**categories need a
perishable item**

Retailer chooses which three

84

**minimum stocking units,
storewide**

At least 3 units per variety

- A “variety” is a food distinct from others in its category (e.g., apples vs. oranges or fresh chicken vs. dry beans).
- A “stocking unit” is the usual selling format – a bag, box, bunch, can, or package.

Four Staple Food Categories



Dairy

14 possible varieties

Milk, cream, yogurt, cheese, plant-based alternatives, infant formula



Grains

9+ possible varieties

Breads, pastas, cereals, raw grains, flours – split by whole grain vs. non-whole grain



Protein

13+ possible varieties

Meat by animal type, eggs, dry beans/peas/lentils, tofu, nuts and seeds



Vegetables or Fruits

Each vegetable or fruit is a distinct variety

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or juiced all count as the same variety

WHAT'S CHANGING

Accessory Foods Reclassified

These six items no longer count toward a store's staple-food stocking requirement, but SNAP households can still buy them.

Snack bars

Jerky

**Shake powders &
mixes**

**Cheese or fruit dips
& spreads**

Butter

Why it matters for shelf planning

Stores that previously counted snack bars, jerky, shake powders and mixes, cheese dip, fruit spreads, and butter as staple foods must now replace them with qualifying dairy, grain, protein, or produce items.

Potential Benefits of the Final Rule

Healthier food access

More required varieties across dairy, protein, grains, and produce means SNAP households see a wider mix of nutritious options on store shelves.

Increased consumer choice

Expanding the variety of staple foods available in stores gives SNAP households more options and greater flexibility when purchasing food.

Clearer categories

USDA's category definitions give retailers more ways to qualify (e.g., nuts, beans, and lentils each count as protein varieties).

Simpler oversight

USDA states the simplified categorization is easier for the Food and Nutrition Administration to monitor, which can support stronger program integrity.

Implementation Concerns

Compressed timeline

Retailers have about six months between the final rule's publication (May 8, 2026) and the compliance deadline (Nov. 4, 2026) to plan, source, and shelf new inventory.

Cost and space burdens

Perishable items and 84-unit minimums may require new refrigeration, storage space, or supplier relationships, which may be difficult for smaller stores.

Risk of retailer loss

A store that fails to meet the new rule is withdrawn from SNAP and must wait six months to reapply, disrupting the local food supply and economy.

Reduced food access

Losing participating retailers could reduce or eliminate local SNAP access in some communities, especially in rural areas and urban food deserts.

Key Takeaways

- The rule aims to broaden healthy food access and simplify oversight.
- Compliance is mandatory by November 4, 2026 for nearly all SNAP retailers.
- Small and independent retailers are hit hardest by the compressed timeline and rising costs of compliance.
- Monitoring and outreach can help prevent gaps in SNAP access across communities.

Resource:

USDA Food and Nutrition Administration – SNAP Stocking Standards Final Rule
<https://www.fna.usda.gov/snap/retailer/stocking-standards-rule>

Questions & Discussion