

SNAP 2026

~USDA: **November 4th**, all SNAP retailers will need to carry at least seven options in each of the “**staple food**” categories: **dairy, vegetables or fruits, grains, and protein.**

Stocking Standards - What's changed? “The staple food breadth of stock standards increased from 3 varieties to 7 varieties in each of the 4 staple food categories and raised the number of varieties that must be perishable from 1 variety in 2 different staple food categories to 1 variety in 3 different staple food categories.” **Now: 3 varieties in all categories → Nov: 7 varieties in all categories Now: 1 perishable item in 2 categories → Nov: 1 perishable item in 3 categories**

Stocking Standards - What's it mean? *This is going to make it harder for small grocery stores, convenience stores, etc., to meet SNAP retailer requirements. USDA estimates 5,000 retailers will lose authorization.* This doesn't account for the impact SNAP cuts AND restrictions waivers have on retailers. **USDA does not provide robust TA. The 6-month turnaround is not feasible.**

Secret Shoppers - *USDA field staff conduct undercover compliance visits. There are penalties if retailers are found to be in violation.* There is a range of consequences, though USDA is usually very strict. **USDA has infused more \$ into “secret shopper” program.**

Secret Shoppers – Consequences: Sale of ineligible items (paper towels, coffee filters, sponges) - **6-month disqualification then must reapply** ; They can issue warning letters; Trafficking (exchanging SNAP for cash, guns, tobacco) ; Permanent disqualification - Retailers can seek admin review (within 10 days) or judicial review (within 30 days)

Secret Shoppers - Impact in VT Stinging very rural, small, independent grocers in VT ; Stinging immigrant-owned, “ethnic” stores

Items like butter, beef jerky, cheese dip, snack bars, and fruit spreads no longer qualify as staple foods for store authorization. These items remain completely **eligible for purchase** by customers using EBT cards, but **stores cannot rely on them to qualify** for the SNAP program

~**About a fifth of SNAP transactions occur at convenience stores**

~**More items offered will have to be perishable.**

~**There might be some new administrative costs and hassle factors to participate in the program. They may decide it's not worth participating.”**

~**Adding foods like green beans, corn, peas, and diced tomatoes to meet the requirements would take valuable shelf space from better-selling items.**