

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
Administrative Review Branch**

**Nitin Bakery,**

**Appellant,**

**v.**

**Retailer Operations Division,**

**Respondent.**

**Case Number: C0247678**

**FINAL AGENCY DECISION**

It is the decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), that there is sufficient evidence to support the determination by the Retailer Operations Division to withdraw the authorization of Nitin Bakery (Appellant) to participate as an authorized retailer in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

**ISSUE**

The issue accepted for review is whether the Retailer Operations Division took appropriate action, consistent with Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 278, in its administration of the SNAP when it withdrew the authorization of the Appellant to participate in the SNAP as an authorized retailer.

**AUTHORITY**

7 USC § 2023 and the implementing regulations at 7 CFR § 279.1 provide that a food retailer aggrieved by administrative action under § 278.1, § 278.6 or § 278.7 may file a written request for review of the administrative action with FNS.

**CASE CHRONOLOGY**

The Appellant submitted a reauthorization form FNS-252-R, entitled *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Reauthorization Application for Stores*, which was signed on November 9, 2020. The information provided to the Retailer Operations Division reports that 0 percent of the firm's gross retail sales were in staple foods, 30 percent were in accessory foods, 0 percent were in nonfoods, 0 percent were in hot foods, and 70 percent were in cold foods prepared on site. On May 1, 2021, an on-site store visit was conducted by an FNS contractor to evaluate the firm's conditions and inventory. The store visit observations indicate that the Appellant firm is primarily a restaurant because more than 50 percent of its total gross retail sales are from "heated

foods” and/or “prepared foods.” “Heated foods” are foods cooked or heated by the retailer before or after purchase. “Prepared foods” are hot or cold foods not intended for home preparation and/or home consumption, including prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout.

In a letter dated June 7, 2021, the Retailer Operations Division informed the Appellant that its SNAP authorization was being withdrawn because it did not meet the definition and requirements of a retail food store as set forth in Sections 271.2 and 278.1(b)(1) of the SNAP regulations and is therefore, ineligible to participate in the SNAP as an authorized retailer. Specifically, the letter stated that the Appellant firm was a restaurant because more than 50 percent of its total sales were in the sale of hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation and consumption.

In a letter postmarked June 10, 2021, the Appellant appealed the Retailer Operations Division’s decision and requested an administrative review of this action. The request for review was granted by letter dated July 23, 2021, and implementation of the withdrawal has been held in abeyance pending completion of this review.

### **STANDARD OF REVIEW**

In appeals of adverse actions, the Appellant bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence, that the administrative actions should be reversed. That means the Appellant has the burden of providing relevant evidence which a reasonable mind, considering the record, would accept as sufficient to support a conclusion that the matter asserted is more likely to be true than not true.

### **CONTROLLING LAW AND REGULATIONS**

The controlling statute in this matter is contained in the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, 7 USC § 2018 and § 278 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). 7 CFR § 278.1(l)(1) and § 278.1(k)(2) establish the authority upon which FNS shall withdraw the SNAP authorization of any firm which fails to meet established eligibility requirements.

7 CFR § 271.2 reads, in part: Staple food means those food items intended for home preparation and consumption in each of the following four categories: Meat, poultry, or fish; bread or cereals; vegetables or fruits; and dairy products . . . Accessory food items include foods that are generally considered snack foods or desserts such as, but not limited to, chips, ice cream, crackers, cupcakes, cookies, popcorn, pastries, and candy, and other food items that complement or supplement meals, such as, but not limited to, coffee, tea, cocoa, carbonated and uncarbonated drinks, condiments, spices, salt, and sugar . . . A food product containing an accessory food item as its main ingredient shall be considered an accessory food item. Accessory food items shall not be considered staple foods for purposes of determining the eligibility of any firm.

7 CFR § 278.1(l)(1) reads, in part: FNS may withdraw the authorization of any firm authorized to participate in the program for any of the following reasons:

- (A) The firm's continued participation in the program will not further the purposes of the program.
- (B) The firm fails to meet the specification of paragraph (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), (h), or (i) of this section.
- (C) The firm fails to meet the requirements for eligibility under Criterion A or B, as specified in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section...for the period specified in paragraph (k)(2) of this section.

7 CFR § 278.1(k)(1) Denying authorization, references 7 CFR § 278.1(b)(1)(iv) ineligible firms, which reads, in part:

Firms that are restaurants, that is, firms that have more than 50 percent of their total gross retail sales in hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation and consumption, shall not qualify for participation as retail food stores under Criterion A or B. This includes firms that primarily sell prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout.

7 CFR § 278.1(k)(2) reads, in relevant part: FNS shall deny the application of any firm if it determines that:

(2) The firm has failed to meet the eligibility requirements for authorization under Criterion A or Criterion B, as specified in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section.... Any firm that has been denied authorization on these bases shall not be eligible to submit a new application for authorization in the program for a minimum period of six months from the effective date of the denial.

7 CFR § 278.1(b)(1)(i) states, in part:

An establishment...shall...effectuate the purposes of the program if it sells food for home preparation and consumption and meets one of the following criteria: Offer for sale, on a continuous basis, a variety of qualifying foods in each of the four categories of staple foods...including perishable foods in at least two of the categories (Criterion A); or have more than 50 percent of the total gross retail sales of the establishment...in staple foods (Criterion B).

7 CFR § 271.2 states, in part:

Entities that have more than 50 percent of their total gross retail sales in: Food cooked or heated on-site by the retailer before or after purchase; and hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation and consumption, including prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carry-out are not eligible for SNAP participation as retail food stores under § 278.1(b)(1) of this chapter.

7 CFR § 278.1(b)(1)(iv) states, in part:

. . . Ineligible firms under this paragraph include, but are not limited to, stores selling only accessory foods, including spices, candy, soft drinks, tea, or coffee; ice cream vendors selling solely ice cream; and specialty doughnut shops or bakeries not selling bread. In addition, firms that are considered to be restaurants, that is, firms that have more than 50 percent of their total gross sales in foods cooked or heated on-site by the retailer before or after purchase; and hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation and consumption, including prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout, shall not qualify for participation as retail food stores under Criterion A or B. [Emphasis added.]

### APPELLANT'S CONTENTIONS

The following represents a summary of the Appellant's contentions in this matter. Please be assured, however, that in reaching a decision, full attention and consideration was given to all contentions presented, including any not specifically recapitulated or specifically referenced herein.

In the request for administrative review, the Appellant made the following summarized contentions, in relevant part:

- The Appellant does not exceed more than 50% of total sales in heated/prepared foods.
- The Appellant has two separate accounts for the bakery and the cafeteria where the heated/prepared foods area sold.
- The enclosed documents show the firm's gross total sales for the month of May 2021 of which the bakery is \$68,208.32 (where EBT is accepted) and the gross total sales for the cafeteria is \$15,937.38 (where EBT is not accepted).
- The total gross sales for the business are \$84,145.70.
- The actual percentage of gross sales from heated/prepared foods is 18%, not over 50% like is noted in the withdrawal letter.
- The Appellant was not asked for any information regarding sales.
- The Appellant's Certificate of Use from the City of Miami, where the firm is located, states that the firm is a bakery and a cafeteria, not a restaurant.
- The Appellant has been participating in the SNAP for more than 10 years.
- The Appellant is in a low-income neighborhood and a SNAP withdrawal would impose a hardship on SNAP customers.
- A SNAP withdrawal would impose a financial hardship on the Appellant.

In support of these contentions, the Appellant submitted the following information for review:

- Certificate of Use Fire Safety Permit from the City of Miami, issued August 4, 2015, noting the approved use is "Cafeteria and Baked Products.
- Sundance Payment Solutions (for the month ending May 31, 2021) information for Nitin Bakery which includes volume by month and average May volume by weekday information as well as credit card sales information; and

- Sundance Payment Solutions (for the month ending May 31, 2021) information for Nitin Cafeteria which includes volume by month and average May volume by weekday information as well as credit card sales information.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this review is to validate or to invalidate the determination of the Retailer Operations Division, and as such it is limited to consideration of the relevant facts at the time of the decision. The authorization of a store to participate in the SNAP must be in accord with the Act and the regulations as amended; those requirements of law cannot be waived.

It should be noted that on December 15, 2016, FNS published a final rule entitled “Enhancing Retailer Standards in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),” at 81 Federal Register 90675, that impacted the eligibility of firms that sell heated or prepared foods. If more than 50 percent of a firm’s sales come from the sale of heated or prepared foods, the firm is considered a restaurant under SNAP regulations, and therefore is ineligible for authorization. The final rule clarified that any foods cooked or heated on-site by the retailer before or after purchase, and any hot or cold prepared food not intended for home preparation or consumption, including foods consumed on the premises or sold for carryout, count toward the 50 percent threshold. This portion of the rule was implemented by FNS on October 16, 2017.

The firm’s SNAP authorization was withdrawn because it was determined the business did not meet the definition and requirements of a retail food store as set forth in Sections 271.2 and 278.1(b)(1) of the SNAP regulations. This decision was based on information on the reauthorization application submitted by the owner, an onsite visit by FNS-contracted staff, and analysis by the Retailer Operations Division. The evidence under review supports that the firm did not meet SNAP eligibility criteria to be an authorized retail food store when it was withdrawn. In accordance with the regulations, firms that are considered to be restaurants, that is, firms that have more than 50 percent of their total gross sales in foods cooked or heated on-site by the retailer before or after purchase; and hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation or consumption, including prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout, shall not qualify for participation as retail food stores under Criterion A or B. This includes firms that primarily sell prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout.

There is no evidence in the inspection report and photographs of the May 1, 2021, store visit, nor in the information provided by the Appellant, that indicates that Nitin Bakery is not primarily a restaurant. The Appellant’s SNAP reauthorization application provided to the Retailer Operations Division states that 0 percent of the firm’s gross retail sales were in staple foods, 30 percent were in accessory foods, 0 percent were in nonfoods, 0 percent were in hot foods, and 70 percent were in cold foods prepared on site. The large menu display boards and signage show that the store sells a variety of hot foods and cold prepared foods (sandwiches, braised chicken, ribs, fried plantains, empanadas, etc.). The store also has a kitchen area with equipment (oven, fryers, food preparation area, etc.), a hot foods bar, and several tables with chairs for customers to utilize while eating in-store cooked/hot and cold prepared foods. Therefore, the Appellant is an ineligible firm.

It is also important to note that 7 CFR § 271.2 of the SNAP regulations stipulates that accessory food items include foods that are generally considered snack foods or desserts such as, but not limited to, chips, ice cream, crackers, cupcakes, cookies, popcorn, pastries, and candy, and other food items that complement or supplement meals, such as, but not limited to, coffee, tea, cocoa, carbonated and uncarbonated drinks, condiments, spices, salt, and sugar. In addition, a food product containing an accessory food item as its main ingredient shall be considered an accessory food item. Accessory food items shall not be considered staple foods for purposes of determining the eligibility of any firm. While the store visit observations indicate that the firm sells a variety of accessory foods such as drinks, cakes, pastries, and cookies, these items shall not be considered staple foods for purposes of determining the eligibility of Nitin Bakery to participate in the SNAP.

There is sufficient evidence to support the Retailer Operations Division's determination to withdraw the authorization of Nitin Bakery to participate as an authorized retailer in the SNAP because it did not meet the necessary criteria to be eligible for SNAP participation. In accordance with the regulations, firms that are considered to be restaurants, that is, firms that have more than 50 percent of their total gross sales in foods cooked or heated on-site by the retailer before or after purchase; and hot and/or cold prepared foods not intended for home preparation or consumption, including prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout, shall not qualify for participation as retail food stores under Criterion A or B. This includes firms that primarily sell prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout.

Regarding the Appellant's contentions that a SNAP authorization withdrawal would impose a hardship on SNAP customers, unfortunately these contentions do not provide a valid basis for reversal of the Retailer Operations Division's withdrawal determination. A store may only accept SNAP benefits if it currently meets the minimum eligibility criteria for authorization. As stated previously, the Appellant firm was withdrawn authorization because it was determined that the business did not meet the definition and requirements of a retail food store as set forth in Sections 271.2 and 278.1(b)(1) of the SNAP regulations.

Regarding the Appellant's contentions that a SNAP authorization withdrawal would impose a financial hardship on the firm, it is recognized that some degree of economic hardship is a likely consequence whenever a firm is not authorized. However, there is no provision in the SNAP regulations to authorize a business due to possible economic hardship to the firm. Therefore, the Appellant's contention that it will incur economic hardship based on deficiencies in meeting the eligibility requirements does not provide any valid basis for dismissing the withdrawal of the Appellant's authorization.

## **CONCLUSION**

After review of all the documentation in the record, the decision by the Retailer Operations Division to withdraw the authorization of Nitin Bakery to participate in the SNAP as a retail food store is sustained. The preponderance of the evidence supports that the Appellant is an ineligible firm as per the definition cited herein. Ineligible firms shall not qualify for participation as retail food stores under Criterion A or B. This includes firms that primarily sell

prepared foods that are consumed on the premises or sold for carryout. In accordance with the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, and the SNAP regulations, the withdrawal of Nitin Bakery shall become effective 30 days after receipt of this letter.

### **RIGHTS AND REMEDIES**

Your attention is called to Section 14 of the Food and Nutrition Act (7 U.S.C. 2023) and to Section 279.7 of the Regulations (7 CFR § 279.7) with respect to your right to a judicial review of this determination. Please note that if a judicial review is desired, the Complaint, naming the United States as the defendant, must be filed in the U.S. District Court for the district in which you reside or are engaged in business, or in any court of record of the State having competent jurisdiction. If any Complaint is filed, it must be filed within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Decision.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, FNS is releasing this information in a redacted format as appropriate. FNS will protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information that could constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

LORIE L. CONNEEN  
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OFFICER

August 26, 2021