

### **Introduction – About Menominee & Oneida:**

(Introduce Yourself)

Beginning in 2021, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Oneida Nation partnered together to participate in the FDPIR Self-Determination Demonstration Project. Through this project, we are replacing USDA buffalo, ground beef, beef roast, and apples with Oneida Nation buffalo, ground beef, beef roast, and apples. We are also replacing USDA wild rice with wild rice from Spirit Lake and replacing USDA fish with fish from Red Cliff.

By participating in this demonstration project, we are:

- Expanding tribal sovereignty
- Providing better, more nutritious foods to our community
- Expanding cultural and historical knowledge through the use of traditional foods
- Building capacity amongst our tribal staff, farmers, indigenous vendors, food producers, and our government as well as educate the USDA on our food systems and the challenges our communities face with access to nutritious, locally-grown, and traditional foods.
- Providing a source of economic benefits to the tribes and tribal vendors
- Expanding Self Determination and hopefully Self Governance into the USDA.

### **How we want to see this Demonstration Project evolve:**

While we are happy to participate in this Demonstration Project, we believe more can be done to enhance tribal flexibility in FDPIR and USDA:

- We would like to see this Demonstration Project become permanent and expanded to include Self Governance authority. Although we appreciate the opportunity to determine what foods to buy and incorporate into the FDPIR food packages, we think tribal authority should go beyond this by providing tribes with recurring, base funding and the authority to redesign the program in a way that meets each tribe's unique needs and tribal priorities.
- This flexibility is especially important for FDPIR, because our local food products are so impacted by seasonality and weather. This demonstration project required us to predict specific food quantities months or years ahead of the actual growing season, which is challenging. For example, In May 2021, Wisconsin suffered unusual weather and experienced three hard frosts. This ended up damaging much of the apples in our region and the Orchard lost over half of their apple production in 2021. If we had Self-Governance authority, we would be able to handle unforeseen issues without having to obtain federal approval and all the administrative work that goes along with it to substitute products or make budget modifications.
- Increased flexibility would also allow us to respond to the unique needs and demands of our community. So far, we have received a lot of positive feedback from our clientele. Many of our customers have said how they are enjoying the quality of the foods being provided, especially the black angus beef that comes from the Oneida Nation Farm. One Elder customer said that she does not have to use much seasoning when preparing the meat because the quality is so much better. The beef and buffalo are in high demand and efforts

Gary Besaw Talking Points

6/14/22 House Agriculture Committee Hearing on FDPIR and FDPIR 638 Self-Determination Demonstration Project

are being made to provide more beef roasts for next year. Under Self-Governance, we would have been able to reallocate funds from other products, such as fish products, to the beef and buffalo products without further approval from the USDA. Under the current demonstration project, we had to make a modification of our food list in order to reallocate funds to meet the needs of our communities.

**Closing:**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspective on the FDPIR Demonstration Project. We are eager to work with you to make this demonstration project permanent and expand Self-Governance in FDPIR and the USDA.