



Potato Monthly: November 2020



Food Labeling

FDA Voluntary Labeling of Sesame as an Allergen

Back in late 2018, the FDA requested information from the public on the prevalence and severity of sesame allergies in the United States to inform possible regulatory action that would require sesame to be labeled as an allergen on packaged foods. Currently, sesame is not required to be disclosed as an allergen. While no regulatory action has been taken to date, the FDA recently sent a guidance document titled, "Voluntary Disclosure of Sesame as an Allergen: Guidance for Industry" to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review. The review by OMB was completed in late October and the guidance document could now be published at any time, possibly giving industry an option to voluntarily label sesame as an allergen on packaged foods, including potato products.

Surgeon General's Call to Action on Hypertension

An October 2020 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Control Hypertension report has been published. The report summarizes recent data on hypertension, identifies the 10 most effective strategies for achieving control, and provides recommendations to individuals and organizations. Among the strategies identified includes promoting opportunities to access healthy foods and good nutrition. The report notes this can be done through healthy procurement policies and nutrition standards for packaged and prepared foods as well as meal preparation practices that reduce the amount of sodium and increase the offerings of healthy foods in the institutional food settings.

Brazil Front-of-Pack Warning Labels

Brazil's National Agency of Sanitary Surveillance (ANVISA) recently published new regulations on nutrition labeling of packaged food products. Among these new regulations is a provision similar to the warning labels that are now required in Mexico, whereby products that exceed certain thresholds of sugar, saturated fat, and sodium must include black warning labels on the front of the package. This new regulation applies to all packaged foods, including potato products like potato chips, French fries, and hash browns. Given the newfound emphasis on nutrition in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that more countries will adopt these types of front-of-pack warning label systems in the future.

Food Policy

USDA School Meals Flexibilities

In spring of this year, a Federal court decision vacated a 2018 USDA Final Rule that provided school meal flexibilities for strict requirements around flavored milk, whole grains, and sodium limits. According to the courts, this rule was repealed due to violations of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). In response, USDA has drafted a new Proposed Rule titled "Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements." The Proposed Rule is currently under review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Reviews by OMB typically take between 60-90 days and rules are often published publicly soon after completion.

Court Decision on SNAP Work Requirements

In late October, District Judge Beryl Howell struck down a Trump administration Final Rule that would have mandated stricter work requirements on millions of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The rule was originally supposed to take effect in April before a preliminary injunction was issued in March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The USDA has an opportunity to appeal the ruling.

Proposed Children's Meal Requirements in Prince George's County Maryland

A proposed ordinance that would set requirements for children's meals served at restaurants is currently under review by the local legislature in Prince George's County, Maryland. This bill defines 'Healthy Meals' as those that meet certain nutrient thresholds and include at least ½ cup of non-fried fruits/vegetables (specifically excluding white potatoes) among other requirements. If passed, within 2-3 years restaurants would be required to make the default side served with children's meals the healthiest option available, and within 3-4 years restaurants would be required to offer at least one "Healthy Meal." A hearing is currently scheduled for this bill in mid-November. Similar state and local bills are expected to emerge around the country in 2021 and this bill could set precedence for the requirements and definitions used.



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Food Safety + Ag

FDA Evaluation of Third-Party Food Safety Audits

The FDA is launching a voluntary pilot program to evaluate alignment of private third-party food safety audit standards with the food safety requirements in two regulations under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) - the Preventive Controls for Human Food (PC Human Food) and the Produce Safety rules. FDA plans to select and assess up to five third-party food safety standards for alignment with the requirements in the PC Human Food and/or Produce Safety rules. The pilot will be conducted over the course of one year. The Agency is asking members of the public, including owners of third-party food safety standards, to submit requests to participate by November 25th.

US Agricultural Trade Policy Advisory Committee Nominations

The USDA and the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) are accepting applications for new members to serve on seven agricultural trade advisory committees. Members of the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee (APAC) advise USDA and USTR on operating existing trade agreements, on negotiating new agreements, and on other trade policy matters. Members of six Agricultural Technical Advisory Committees (ATACs) provide technical advice and guidance on international trade issues that affect both domestic and foreign production in specific commodity sectors. The ATACs each have a particular topic area including one with a specific focus on fruits/vegetables and one with a specific focus on processed foods. Nomination applications must be received by November 13th.

Nutrition Science

Potato Resistant Starch Effect on Insulin Sensitivity

An APRE-funded study, recently published in the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, evaluated the effect of consuming cooked, then chilled potatoes (a source of resistant starch, or RS) on insulin sensitivity among overweight and obese adults. The study found that fullness ratings were significantly lower after the potato RS condition. The difference in other variables (insulin, glucose, free fatty acids), though not statistically significant, did trend towards significance in some instances. The results of this pilot study suggest RS-enriched potatoes may have a favorable impact on carbohydrate metabolism, but larger, longer-term studies are needed.

People with Diabetes Need Not Avoid Eating Potatoes Based on Glycemic Index

An APRE-funded study, recently published in *Clinical Nutrition*, demonstrates that glycemic index (GI) is not an accurate surrogate for an individual's glycemic response (GR) to a food, when consumed as part of an evening meal. The rigorously controlled clinical trial, which included 24 adults with type 2 diabetes, found that participants had a better 'nocturnal' GR when they ate a mixed meal with high GI white potatoes compared to an isoenergetic, macronutrient-matched mixed meal that included a low GI carbohydrate food – basmati rice.

Gearing Up for National Diabetes Month

November is National Diabetes Month (NDM), a time to bring attention to diabetes and prediabetes. This includes addressing confusion around dietary management and the Glycemic Index (GI). People with diabetes are often told to avoid potatoes in all forms, including at evening meals, because of their high-GI value. The truth is that potatoes are nutrient-dense vegetables that should be part of any healthy, balanced eating plan – including those aimed at controlling blood sugar. To help dietitians gear up for NDM, Potatoes USA partner Constance Brown-Riggs, MEd, RD, CDE, CDN will reach out to media dietitians to share recent results of the sponsored *Today's Dietitian* nutrition professionals' survey, which shows dietitians don't use the GI when providing recommendations to patients.