



Potato Monthly: January 2021



Food and Nutrition Policy

Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The USDA and DHHS released the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans in late December. Starchy vegetables - including white potatoes - prepared in nutrient-dense forms (i.e. limited salt, butter, and creamy sauces) were identified as good choices within the vegetable food group. Potatoes were listed as good sources of potassium and fiber, which are nutrients needed by both in the general population and birth to 23-month age group. The document did not make any mentions of the relationship between fried potatoes and risk for colorectal cancer that was discussed in the DGAC Scientific Report. There is also no explicit mention or recommendations around French fries, although there were suggestions to shift away from fried vegetables with a photo of French fries as the example. Following the Dietary Guidelines release, Potatoes USA will continue to develop and monitor content highlighting the important role of white potatoes in the American diet.

USDA School Meals Flexibilities

In early 2020, NPC submitted comments on a USDA Proposed Rule titled, "Simplifying meal service and monitoring requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program." As part of this proposal, USDA was considering a flexibility that would allow school foodservice providers participating in the School Breakfast Program to serve any vegetable, including potatoes and other starchy vegetables, in place of fruit without first including vegetables from certain designated subgroups. Following a review of the public comments, USDA submitted their Final Rule to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review in mid-December. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration withdrew it from OMB consideration last week.

USDA WIC Update

In an unusually late update to the Unified Regulatory Agenda, revisions to the WIC food packages has been added to the list of USDA priorities. According to the agenda, USDA would plan to publish a Proposed Rule around August 2021 to consider amendments to the regulations governing the WIC food packages. This proposal would incorporate the recommendations of the 2017 NASEM Report "Review of WIC Food Packages: Improving Balance and Choice," align with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and make other revisions and clarifications to the food packages. We anticipate the Biden-Administration will move forward on this.

FDA Uniform Compliance Date for Food Labeling Regulations

The FDA announced that January 1, 2024, will be the uniform compliance date for final food labeling regulations that are issued in calendar years 2021 and 2022. This action does not change existing requirements for compliance dates contained in Final Rules published before January 1, 2021. This compliance date will apply to any new labeling regulations applicable to FDA-regulated potato products.

Canadian Voluntary Sodium Reduction Targets

As part of its Healthy Eating Strategy, Health Canada is committed to ongoing work with food industry stakeholders to gradually and safely reduce sodium in the food supply. In late December, Health Canada released revised voluntary sodium reduction targets for processed foods for 2020-2025. Among the list of foods with sodium reduction targets includes fries, hash browns and potato patties, dry mashed or scalloped potatoes, chips, and canned potatoes. Health Canada encourages the food processing sector to achieve the targets by 2025 and will assess progress.



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Food Safety + Ag

USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee

The USDA has announced the establishment of the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee, which will evaluate and review ongoing research and extension activities relating to urban, indoor, and other innovative agricultural practices; identify new and existing barriers to successful urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices; and provide additional assistance and provide advice to the Director of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production as appropriate. The USDA is also seeking the nominations for membership on the 12-person Urban Ag Advisory Committee, with nominations due by March 5, 2021. Urban Agriculture is expected to be an interest of the Biden Administration.

FDA Proposed Rule on Traceability Records for Certain Foods

Following numerous requests, the FDA is extending the comment period for the Proposed Rule entitled "Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods." Comments will now be accepted until February 22, 2021. As a reminder, this proposal outlines additional traceability recordkeeping requirements that would be required for certain foods deemed high risk for transmitting foodborne illnesses. While potatoes in their raw form would not be implicated by this rule because they are rarely consumed raw, multi-ingredient products containing potatoes that include other foods on the traceability list would be implicated. Additionally, when finalized, this rule is expected to have a broad impact on the food system as a whole and FDA's hope is that this will be applied to all foods in the future- not just those currently on the list.

Nutrition Science

Potato's Potential to Reduce Iron Deficiency

A recent study published in *The Journal of Nutrition* assessed iron absorption from regular and iron-biofortified orange-fleshed sweet potato in Malawi, and yellow-fleshed potato and iron-biofortified purple-fleshed potato in Peru. The study found that iron-deficient women in Peru's Huancavelica region who ate 500 grams of potatoes (~3 potatoes) per day for two weeks had a higher rate of iron absorption, compared to other crops. "Potato has great potential for reducing iron-deficiency, even though it contains much less iron than crops such as beans or spinach, because a higher proportion of the potato's iron is absorbed by the human body," said Gabriela Burgos, one of the study's leading authors. The authors concluded that both of the tested varieties of iron-biofortified sweet potato and potatoes could potentially contribute to improved iron intakes and absorption.

Potatoes and Supporting Research Featured in VeryWell Health

In November – National Diabetes Awareness month – we shared information on research from Devlin et. al and supported by APRE entitled, "Lower nocturnal blood glucose response to a potato-based mixed evening meal compared to rice in individuals with type 2 diabetes." The study suggested that potatoes can be a suitable part of the diet for people with diabetes. In an interview with *VeryWell Health*, Potatoes USA partner - Registered Dietitian and diabetes expert Constance Brown-Riggs shared her expert knowledge on the study and reinforced potatoes as a nutrient-dense vegetable to be enjoyed by all, including people managing diabetes. Among many positive highlights for potatoes, she is quoted as saying, "Potatoes should be encouraged in any diet because they are a nutrient-dense vegetable and high-quality complex carbohydrate."