



Potato Monthly: July 2021



Food and Nutrition Policy

FDA List of Guidance Topics for Foods Program

FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) and Office of Food Policy and Response released a list of draft and final guidance topics that are a priority for the FDA to complete during the next 12 months. The Agency anticipates many of these documents will be published by June 2022. Some key food and nutrition guidance topics include:

- Voluntary Sodium Reduction Goals: Target Mean and Upper Bound Concentrations for Sodium in Commercially Processed, Packaged, and Prepared Foods; Guidance for Industry
- Questions and Answers Regarding Food Allergens, Including the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (Edition 5); Draft Guidance for Industry
- Questions and Answers About Dietary Guidance Statements in Food Labeling; Draft Guidance for Industry

Spring 2021 Regulatory Agenda

The Biden Administration updated its Federal Regulatory Agenda for Spring 2021. The agendas are nonbinding goals for regulatory actions and provide insight into priorities for the year. Some of the major food and nutrition items in the agenda include but are not limited to:

- Nutrient Content Claims, Definition of Term: Healthy-Proposed Rule 09/2021
- Child Nutrition Programs: Temporary Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and sodium-Interim Final Rule 11/2021
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): WIC Online Ordering and Transactions-Proposed Rule 11/2021
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): revision the WIC Food Packages-Proposed Rule 12/2021

USDA FY 2022 Budget Request Hearing

The Senate Appropriations Committee held a hearing to discuss USDA's FY 2022 budget request. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack was a witness for the hearing and emphasized that food/nutrition security is a priority. Additionally, Secretary Vilsack noted that the Thrifty Food Plan is being reviewed and it is expected that USDA will have some available information this summer so states can be updated well before October 1st.

Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021 Introduced

'Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2021' was introduced by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), Alma Adams (D-NC) and US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). The bill would raise the baseline benefit for all SNAP households by approximately 30% and would require benefits to be calculated using the value of the low-cost food plan. Benefit levels for SNAP are currently based on the Thrifty Food Plan, which is being reviewed now by USDA.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Updates

Earlier this month, the Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee hosted a hearing, "Ending Child Hunger: Priorities for Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)." Hearing discussions related to a number of different school nutrition topics, including the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), the Pandemic EBT program, Healthy Hunger-Free Kids, and free school meals for all.

Conversations throughout the hearing highlighted:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the child hunger crisis
- USDA guidelines for school meals and how the strict standards may lead to more food waste

Additionally, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) hosted an off the record meeting, which included discussion around CNR from Ali Hard- House Education and Labor staff for Chairman Robert. C. Scott (D-VA) and Mandy Schaumburg- Deputy Director of Education/Chief Counsel for Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R-NC). Hard noted that there is uncertainty surrounding the timing of CNR because there have been many recent bill proposals that include child nutrition provisions. Speakers also shared that the WIC task force, which was created to help modernize WIC especially in regards to online food access, has started meeting. Hard and Schaumburg also noted that healthy school meals for all at the Federal level would be difficult even through a budget reconciliation process, but focusing on helping kids who are in need and making the current programs work better for them is a priority for Congress.

USDA Study on Hurdles to Healthy Eating on SNAP

USDA released a study that identified barriers SNAP participants face when trying to achieve a healthy diet. Results from 4,522 completed surveys were collected from SNAP participants in 26 states. The report also includes findings from in-depth interviews with 121 SNAP participants in 12 states. Key findings included:

- 88% of SNAP participants reported facing some type of barrier to achieving a healthy diet
- The most common barrier reported by 61% of participants was the affordability of healthy foods
- Affordability and lack of cooking equipment/storage were associated with food insecurity

US to Join Global School Meals Coalition

USDA announced it will lead the United States in joining the global coalition, "School Meals: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child" focused on improving the nutrition, health, and education of vulnerable children worldwide. The coalition will launch at the United Nations' Food Systems Summit in September. The coalition's goal is to promote, strengthen, and expand school feeding programs across the globe to make nutritious meals available for all children by 2030, advocating for multisector coordination, stable funding sources and ongoing research to improve program quality and efficiency.



Food Safety + Ag

Nutrition Science

FDA Update on Recent Activities Pertaining to PFAS in Food

FDA has released an update regarding per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the food supply after testing certain PFAS in foods. 94 food samples were tested and only one sample of cod had detectable levels of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA). FDA has no indication that the PFAS levels in the cod sample present a human health concern. Potato food samples in the most recent testing and analysis included fast-food French fries, peeled, boiled potatoes, baked potatoes (with peel), and peeled, baked, sweet potatoes.

Senators Address FDA on Heavy Metals in Baby Food

A group of five Democratic senators led by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) are calling on FDA to step up efforts to eliminate toxic heavy metals that have been reported in some baby foods. In a letter to acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock, the group urged the Agency to take more action to remove toxic heavy metals in some baby foods, citing the detrimental effects on neurodevelopment. The lawmakers also asked for an update on the agency's "Closer to Zero" initiative, which was announced in April and includes steps to reduce exposure to toxic elements from foods eaten by babies and young children to as low as possible.

Senate Passes Growing Climate Solutions Act of 2021

S.1251, 'The Growing Climate Solutions Act of 2021', was passed by the US Senate on June 24th. This bill authorizes USDA to establish a voluntary Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Certification Program. These measures will reduce barriers to entry in the voluntary environmental credit market, where farmers, ranchers, and foresters can buy or sell carbon credits. This legislation aims to help the environment and support farm income. The bill now goes to the House for consideration.

Potato Protein Isolate and Glycemic Regulation

A new study, published in *Nutrients*, investigated the acute effects on glycemic indicators, gut hormones, and subjective appetite ratings of plant-derived protein isolates (potato and rice), in comparison to a whey protein isolate, in a single-blind, triple-crossover design study with nine male participants. Following a 12 hour overnight fast, participants consumed an equal volume of the three isocaloric protein shakes on different days, with at least a one-week washout period. Glycemic indicators and gut hormones were measured at baseline, then at 30, 60, 120, 180 minutes at each visit. The data showed significant differences in insulin secretion with an increase in whey and rice at 30 minutes compared to potato protein. There was no significant difference observed in average appetite perception between the different proteins. Findings from the study suggest that both plant-derived proteins had a lower insulinemic response and improved glucose maintenance compared to that of whey protein.

Plant-based and Pescatarian Diets and COVID-19 Severity

A recent study published in *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health* evaluated the association between self-reported diets and COVID-19 infection, severity, and duration. Over 3,000 healthcare workers from six countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, UK, USA) with substantial exposure to COVID-19 completed a web-based survey. After adjusting for important confounders, participants who reported following 'plant-based diets' and 'plant-based diets or pescatarian diets' had 73% and 59% lower odds of moderate-to-severe COVID-19 severity, respectively, compared with participants who did not follow these diets. Compared with participants who reported following 'plant-based diets', those who reported following 'low carbohydrate, high protein diets' had greater odds of moderate-to-severe COVID-19.

IFIC Survey on Consumer Perspectives on Food Ingredients

The International Food Information Council (IFIC) has published a survey on consumer perspectives on food ingredients. The survey results were derived from online interviews of over 1,000 adults conducted in May 2021. Some of the findings include the following:

- Nearly 2 in 3 say that ingredients have at least a moderate influence on their food/drink purchases
- When shopping, on-package ingredient information sources are far more popular than online sources
- Most people say they're paying more attention to ingredient lists, choosing clean ingredients and avoiding chemical-sounding ingredients
- Nearly half of "clean eaters" define the term as eating foods that are not highly processed; fresh produce, organic and simple ingredient lists also ranked high
- Seeking out health benefits is the top motivator for choosing foods and beverages with clean ingredients