



Potato Monthly: August 2021



Food and Nutrition Policy

Food Labeling Modernization Act of 2021

'The Food Labeling Modernization Act' (FLMA) was introduced in both houses of Congress by Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), along with Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senators Ed Markey (D-MA) and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The bill is largely intended to send a message to FDA about actions the public health community wants to see move forward. Some of the key initiatives in the FLMA, include:

- Directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a single, standard, front-of-package nutrition labeling system for all packaged food products
- Labeling laws to require Nutrition Facts, ingredient, and allergen information to be displayed for online grocery items
- Reviewing "standards of identity" prescribed by regulation which requires foods to contain minimum levels of nutrients that the Secretary of HHS determines are strongly associated with public health concerns or minimum levels of ingredients containing high levels of such nutrients
- Requiring food products with claims about certain ingredients (e.g. 'vegetables') declare the percent of that specific ingredient in their product

USDA MyPlate Alexa Skill

The USDA announced the launch of the MyPlate Alexa skill, a digital tool for parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers. The tool includes nutrition information on what and how to feed a child based on their age. The Agency plans to expand the tool to include additional life stages, including children and older adults.

USDA Involvement at UNFSS Pre-Summit

USDA Deputy Secretary Jewel Bronaugh represented the US at the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Pre-Summit meeting in Rome in late July. Deputy Secretary Bronaugh highlighted US and United Arab Emirates plans to launch the Agriculture Innovation Mission (AIM) for Climate at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November. In the closing ceremony of the Pre-Summit, Deputy Secretary Bronaugh also formally announced that the US will be part of the School Meals and the Food is Never Waste Coalitions as part of the Summit, which will be held in New York in September.

CSPI Ingredient Guide for Schools

Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) recently published a guide, "Ingredient Guide for Better School Food Purchasing." The guide is a resource for school food leaders and manufacturers to improve the overall quality, nutritional value, and safety of food served in schools. Recommendations are organized by an "unwanted" ingredient list and a "watch" list of ingredients that have the potential to be overused. Of note, added sodium and sugars are indicated as the biggest concern for ingredients which have the potential to be overused. A few ingredients used in potato products are noted on the unwanted list, including butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) and propyl gallate. Sulfites are included on the watch list as ingredients in processed potato products.

SNA 2021 School Meals Report

The School Nutrition Association (SNA) released a report which surveyed nutrition directors to understand the readiness to meet meal pattern mandates and associated challenges. A total of 1,368 school districts responded to the survey. Highlights from the survey include:

- Only 26.2% of responding directors report they are prepared to meet Target 2 sodium limits for SY 2021/22
- Only 10.9% said they anticipate they will be able to meet Target 3/Final Target sodium limits for SY 2022/23

Healthy Eating Research Report

Healthy Eating Research, a program by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), published a report, "Strengthening the Public Health Impacts of SNAP: Key Opportunities for the Next Farm Bill." The report is a result of a high-level conference hosted by Harvard University and includes recommendations for the next Farm Bill related to SNAP. Recommendations in the report include imposing stricter requirements on SNAP-authorized retailers to stock more healthy foods and reduce marketing of unhealthy foods, allowing states to test incentives to encourage healthy food purchases, and supporting research on combining incentives for healthy foods with disincentives/restrictions for less healthy options. The report does not call any direct attention to potatoes, starchy vegetables, potato chips, or processed/packaged foods, nor does it make any direct recommendations related to sodium. There is general support for increasing purchases of fruits and vegetables.



Food Safety + Ag

Senate Agriculture Appropriations Bill

The Senate Committee on Appropriations held its first markup of the 'Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.' The bill provides discretionary funding of \$25.855 billion, which is a \$2.5 billion increase from fiscal year 2021. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) highlighted the bill as including important provisions that support farmers, invest in research and innovation, promote market transparency, provide disaster assistance, and support the health and nutrition of the most vulnerable Americans. Senator Baldwin also noted that WIC is funded at \$6.278 billion and will support 6.4 million participants per month. Both the House and Senate appropriations bills include provisions that would support serving potatoes at breakfast.

FDA Meeting on Food Safety of Foods Ordered Online

FDA will host a virtual summit, "New Era of Smarter Food Safety Summit on E-Commerce: Ensuring the Safety of Foods Ordered Online and Delivered Directly to Consumers," October 19-21 to discuss the safety of human and animal foods produced, manufactured, sold and delivered directly to consumers through e-commerce.

USDA Awards \$12 Million in Farm to School Grants

USDA recently announced a \$12 million investment in Farm to School Grants, which will be distributed to 176 grantees. New data released by the Department shows the growth of farm to school programs across the country, with almost two-thirds of school districts participating during the 2018-2019 school year. This year's Farm to School Grants have expanded to include institutions participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program. During the 2018-2019 school year, approximately 20% of all school food purchases were locally sourced.

Nutrition Science

Study on Potato Intake Among Adolescents

A study published in the journal, *Nutrients*, evaluated the cross-sectional association between potato consumption and diet quality, nutrient intake and adequacy for adolescents ages 9-18. The study utilized 24-hour diet recall data to assess intake, and usual intakes of nutrients were determined using the National Cancer Institute method and diet quality was calculated using the Healthy Eating Index-2015. Those who consumed potatoes (baked/boiled, mashed, potato mixtures, fried potatoes and potato chips) had higher HEI-2015 total scores and subcomponent scores for total vegetables, total protein foods, and refined grain than non-consumers. Consumers also had a higher intake of protein, dietary fiber, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, among others, than that of non-consumers. The study concluded that adolescent potato consumption was associated with higher diet quality, nutrient intake, and adequacy and therefore encouraging potato consumption may be an effective strategy for improving nutritional status.

Glycemic Index and Glycemic Load Values

A new systematic review, published in *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, investigated the reliability of the latest data for Glycemic Index (GI) and Glycemic Load (GL) values of commonly consumed carbohydrate-containing foods. Results showed that GI values for many foods, including potatoes, were highly variable. The authors noted that although potatoes as a group typically have high GI values, there was a wide distribution within the food category. GI values for potatoes and potato products ranged from 35-103, which spans low-, medium- and high-GI definitions. Further, authors remarked that potato variety and cooking and processing methods appear to be important and may contribute to these differences. Given the wide range and discrepancy of GI values among various foods, this information further calls into question the utility of GI as a marker for carbohydrate quality.