



Potato Monthly: September 2021

FOOD
DIRECTIONS

Food and Nutrition Policy

FDA Voluntary Sodium Reduction Goals and Guidance

FDA voluntary sodium reduction goals and guidance for industry are currently under review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The reduction goals include target mean and upper bound concentrations for sodium in commercially processed, packaged, and prepared foods. The review process typically takes between 30 to 60 days but may sometimes take longer. FDA previously released draft guidance for industry in June 2016, which included targets for categories relevant to various potato products, including canned vegetables (including potatoes), fried potatoes with and without toppings, potato side dishes, mashed potatoes (prepared and dry mix), white bread (e.g., potato bread), potato and vegetable chips (flavored and unflavored), and grain/vegetable-based salads (e.g., potato salad).

USDA Thrifty Food Plan 2021

USDA released a reevaluation of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), which is used to calculate SNAP benefit allotments. This is the first update to the TFP since its introduction in 1975 that was not based on cost neutrality, which allowed for an increase of purchasing power. Current dietary guidance, consumption patterns, food composition data, and current food prices formed the parameters for reevaluation. As a result, the average monthly SNAP benefits for a reference family will be \$835.38 per month, an increase of \$145.19 or 21.03% per month. The increase in benefits will take effect beginning October 1. The TFP report specifically noted that the starchy vegetable category, including potatoes, is provided in a higher amount relative to other vegetable subgroups to reflect their relatively low price and efficiency in meeting the TFP's nutrient and cost framework. This update comes in response to the 2018 Farm Bill and President Biden's January 22 Executive Order directing USDA to reevaluate and modernize the TFP to better reflect the cost of a basic healthy diet today.

USDA Roundtable on Food Waste Solutions

USDA will host a virtual roundtable on September 15 entitled "Exploring Food Waste Solutions: Success Stories from the US and Beyond," with attendance from EPA and FDA. The roundtable will highlight innovative policies being used across the US, Europe, and United Kingdom to reduce food waste. Speakers include public and private leaders in the food waste prevention sector, including Jean Buzby, USDA Food Loss and Waste Liaison. This event comes alongside USDA, EPA, and FDA's collective goal to reduce food loss and waste by 50% by 2030.

USDA Investment for Food and Nutrition Security

USDA announced a \$69 million investment in support of critical food and nutrition security. The investment aims to help low-income communities impacted heavily by COVID-19 and improve the resiliency of food and healthcare systems. \$61.5 million will be allocated for Nutrition Incentive Grants, and \$7.5 million will go towards Produce Prescription Grants. Both grants are part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program COVID Relief and Response (GusCRR) grants program. This investment aligns with USDA's priority commitment to improving nutrition security.

ODPHP DGA Toolkit Updates

The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) has launched an updated toolkit for health professionals, with consumer-friendly fact sheets based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) 2020-2025. Updated fact sheets from the toolkit highlight resources for teaching patients about healthy eating routines, as well as ways to cut down on added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat. Recommendations support getting a mix of veggies, including starchy vegetables such as potatoes.

Ultra-Processed Food Consumption in Children

A study was recently published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, which examined ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption trends among US youth using data from 1999-2018 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES). Key findings from the study include:

- The estimated percentage of total energy consumed from UPFs increased from 61.4% to 67.0%, while estimated percentage of total energy consumed from unprocessed or minimally processed foods decreased from 28.8% to 23.5%;
- The percentage of energy from other subgroups of UPFs increased from 2.2% to 11.2% (especially for ready-to-heat and eat meals).

As a result of the study findings, researchers suggested specific intervention strategies to reduce UPF such as front-of-package labelling, taxes, and school nutrition standards focused specifically on UPFs.

UNFSS Update

The UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) will take place on Thursday, September 23. The stated goal of the Food Systems Summit is to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about foods within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to meet the challenges of poverty, food security, malnutrition, population growth, climate change, and natural resource degradation. The Summit will be a completely virtual event during the UN General Assembly high-level week.



Food Safety + Ag

FDA New Era of Smarter Food Safety Summit

FDA formally announced a three-day public meeting, "The FDA New Era of Smarter Food Safety Summit on E-Commerce: Ensuring the Safety of Foods Ordered Online and Delivered directly to Consumers," which will take place virtually October 19-21. The summit is designed to help the Agency improve its understanding of how human and animal foods are sold through Business to Consumer (or B2C for short) e-commerce models across the US and globally. During the three-day event, there will be opportunities for public comment, and participants who wish to speak during the public comment sessions must register as indicated in the Federal Register Notice by October 8. FDA has also opened a public docket to receive additional comments about the topics which will be discussed throughout the summit.

FDA PFAS Testing Results

FDA released per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) testing results from its first survey of nationally distributed processed foods, including several baby foods, collected for the Total Diet Study (TDS). Results of this survey showed that 164 of the 167 foods tested had no detectable levels of the PFAS measured. Three food samples had detectable levels of PFAS: fish sticks (PFOS and PFNA), canned tuna (PFOS and PFDA), and protein powder (PFOS). Food samples which contained white potato products, and were tested for PFAS included: potato chips and canned cream of potato soup. Based on the best available current science, the FDA has no scientific evidence that the levels of PFAS found in the TDS samples tested since 2019 indicate a need to avoid any particular foods in the general food supply.

Nutrition Science

Glycemic Index and Weight Loss and Obesity Prevention

A recent study published in *Advances in Nutrition* examined whether dietary glycemic index (GI) impacts body weight through a comprehensive analysis of data on 43 cohorts from 34 publications. Overall, there was no consistent differences in BMI when comparing the highest with the lowest dietary GI groups. In the studies that reported results of statistical comparison, 70% showed that BMI was either not different between the highest and lowest dietary GI groups or that BMI was lower in the highest dietary GI group. Results of 30 meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials demonstrated that low-GI diets were generally no better than high-GI diets for reducing body weight or body fat. The researchers conclude that while carbohydrate quality, including GI, impacts many health outcomes, GI as a measure of carbohydrate quality appears to be relatively unimportant as a determinant of BMI or diet-induced weight loss, and that based on the thorough review, there is limited evidence that low-GI diets are superior to high-GI diets for weight loss and obesity prevention.

Perspective on High-Quality Carbohydrate Foods

In a published perspective in *Nutrients*, a group of nutrition researchers, who collectively make up the Quality Carbohydrate Coalition-Scientific Advisory Council (QCC-SAC), outline the opportunity for a stronger, more evidence-based approach to defining high quality carbohydrate foods to support overall health and provide clearer dietary guidance. The QCC-SAC is a team of six world-renowned experts in carbohydrate research, nutrient profiling, cultural competency, and epidemiology. As a first step, they conducted a review of the scientific literature to examine the evidence behind existing measures of carbohydrate foods' quality and ways in which to build upon this work. The group's consensus: glycemic index (GI) is a flawed and misused metric to identify carbohydrate quality, and a more holistic and nuanced approach is needed to replace the overreliance on GI. The QCC-SAC will develop a series of papers for peer-reviewed publication that will introduce a new, validated approach for measuring carbohydrate food quality, and will demonstrate how the approach can be integrated into dietary guidance tools to help people of all ages, ethnicities, and cultural preferences improve their food choices.