

Potato Industry | October 2021

Food & Nutrition Policy

FDA Voluntary Sodium Reduction Goals and Guidance

FDA voluntary sodium reduction goals and guidance for industry were recently under review by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB finished their review on October 7 and the document was sent back to FDA. FDA will review any comments made by OMB and update accordingly. If the edits are minor, FDA will update and post the guidance in the Federal Register. If the updates are substantial, the guidance would eventually return to OMB for another review. The reduction goals are expected to include short-term, target levels for sodium reduction in commercially processed, packaged, and prepared foods. FDA previously released draft guidance for industry in June 2016, which included targets for potato products, such as canned vegetables (including potatoes), fried potatoes with and without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).

Upcoming Announcement on FDA's Nutrition Initiatives

During a public event this week, FDA leadership announced that the Agency will soon release updates regarding their nutrition initiatives. This announcement was shared by Dr. Susan Mayne, FDA's Director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. Specific details were not provided, however, Dr. Mayne noted that there would be an emphasis on labeling as well as new elements added to the FDA's Nutrition Innovation Strategy.

GAO Report on a Federal Strategy to Coordinate Diet-Related Disease Efforts

A new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report recommends that Congress identify and direct a federal entity to lead a cohesive strategy to reduce the prevalence of diet-related disease among Americans. The report examined:

- Federal data on prevalence, mortality, and costs of certain diet-related diseases
- Federal efforts to reduce the risk of diet-related diseases
- The extent to which federal Agencies coordinated their efforts

2018 data shows that 42% of adults had obesity, 50% of annual deaths in the US were attributed to diet-related diseases, and 54% of federal healthcare spending was allocated towards treating these conditions. The report says a lack of coordination has impeded each Agency's ability to reduce the impact of diet-related diseases.

HHS ODPHP Updated DGAs Toolkit

The HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) released an updated toolkit for health professionals on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. The toolkit includes consumer-friendly fact sheets for professionals to use when talking to patients and clients about healthy eating routines and reducing added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat.

Food Safety & Agriculture

FDA Public Meeting on Toxic Metals in Baby Food

The FDA will host a virtual public meeting on November 18 entitled "Closer to Zero Action Plan: Impacts of Toxic Element Exposure and Nutrition at Different Crucial Developmental Stages." The purpose of the public meeting is to discuss the scope of the Closer to Zero action plan as it relates to the impacts of toxic element exposure and nutrition at different crucial developmental stages, including discussion of the key nutrients in food for growth and development, foods commonly consumed by babies and young children, and exposure risks of toxic elements. Stakeholders can request to provide oral comments at the meeting. FDA is also establishing a docket for written public comment on this topic, which will remain open until December 20.

House Oversight Subcommittee Report on Toxic Metal Screening Practices for Baby Foods

The FDA's announcement about the Closer to Zero public meeting comes after a new House Oversight subcommittee report released in late September called into question the testing practices used by several baby food makers to screen for heavy

metals like arsenic, lead, and cadmium in their products. The subcommittee is urging the FDA to speed up its work to set its first-ever standards for heavy metals across most baby food products over the next three years. This report follows up on the investigation from the same panel earlier this year, which found concerning levels of heavy metal contamination across many popular baby and children's food products on the market, from rice puffs to infant cereals and purees.

USDA Commitments at UNFSS

At the United Nations Food Systems Summit (FSS) on September 23-24, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a \$5 billion investment towards ending hunger and building more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive food systems. The US, partnered with the United Arab Emirates, also promoted the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM4C), a global initiative to increase investment in climate-smart agriculture and food systems innovation. The United States, led by USDA, will be supporting several global, multi-sector coalitions that came out of the FSS process.

- To help to accelerate the transition to more sustainable food systems through agricultural productivity growth, the US is leading a Coalition on Sustainable Productivity Growth for Food Security and Resource Conservation
- To help ensure that every child has access to nutritious school meals by 2030, the US is supporting a coalition on School Meals: Nutrition, Health and Education for Every Child
- To reaffirm its commitment to reducing food loss and waste domestically, the US is supporting the global Food is Never Waste Coalition
- Finally, USDA highlighted its domestic efforts to improve food security, nutrition, and sustainability through the US Pathways Forward initiative, the modernization of SNAP benefits, and the Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Strategy

US Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee Meeting

The USDA Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee has scheduled a virtual public meeting for November 3 and 4 to examine the full spectrum of fruit and vegetable industry issues and provide recommendations and ideas to the Secretary of Agriculture on how the USDA can tailor programs and services to better meet the needs of the US produce industry. Agenda items may include, but are not limited to, consideration of recommendations pertaining to labor and production, food safety, climate and infrastructure, and conservation; and presentations by subject matter experts as requested by the Committee.

Fresh Produce Procurement Reform Act Introduced

House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) recently introduced the 'Federal Produce Procurement Reform Act.' This bill would create a new produce procurement program at USDA that prioritizes socially disadvantaged farmers and would require USDA to partner with growers, distributors, and food hubs to increase the availability of produce in schools, local food pantries, and youth organizations. The program also serves to support the growth of local and regional food systems.

Nutrition Science, Research, & Reports

Potatoes' Impact on Cardiometabolic Health in Adolescent Girls

Recently published research in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found that 9-17 year-old girls who consumed up to one cup of potatoes daily had no increased risk of becoming overweight or developing high blood pressure, dyslipidemia, or impaired fasting glucose in late adolescence (age 20). Moreover, during their tween years, specifically (9-11), higher intakes of all forms of potatoes (including fried) were associated with higher intakes of potassium and dietary fiber, two nutrients of public health concern, as well as vitamin C, vitamin B6 and magnesium. Black girls in this study with the highest intakes of potatoes also consumed more fruit and non-starchy vegetables and had higher diet-quality scores. Investigators concluded that this study adds to the evidence that potato consumption among healthy girls during the critical period of adolescence is not associated with cardiometabolic risk.

Study on Product Placement in Supermarkets

A study was recently published in *PLOS MEDICINE*, which assessed the effects on store-level sales, household-level purchasing, and dietary behaviors of a "healthier" supermarket layout. This prospective matched controlled cluster trial included 2 interventions: 1) new fresh fruit and vegetable sections near store entrances (replacing smaller displays at the back) and frozen vegetables repositioned to the entrance aisle, and 2) the removal of confectionery from checkouts and aisle ends opposite. Female customers aged 18 to 45 years were assigned to the intervention or control group. Changes in dietary variables were predominantly in the expected direction for health benefit, but the study design was not powered to detect an effect.

Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Food and Nutrition Security

The Bipartisan Policy Center Task Force on Food and Nutrition Security released a brief providing recommendations for improving food and nutrition security in the wake of COVID-19. The Task Force called for an increase in fruit and vegetable benefits in nutrition assistance programs, as well as an extension of COVID-19-related flexibilities in nutrition assistance programs. The Task Force also

expressed support for a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger and Health. The brief is the first in a series of three to be released.

WHO Publishes Reviews of Food Environment Policies

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published four reviews to support Member States in developing and implementing food environment policies. The four policy areas include school food and nutrition policies, policies to restrict food marketing, nutrition labeling policies and fiscal and pricing policies to promote healthy diets.