

## Potato Industry | November 2021

### Food & Nutrition Policy

#### **FDA Commissioner Nominee Update**

According to recent news articles, President Joe Biden will nominate former FDA Commissioner Robert Califf to return to the top role at the regulatory Agency. Califf previously served as commissioner for nearly a year in Obama's second administration after an overwhelming vote in his favor.

#### **State of Nutrition in America Hearing**

On November 2nd, the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Food and Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Organics, and Research hosted a hearing on the "State of Nutrition in America 2021." During the event, Chairman Booker and Ranking Member Braun recommended moving forward with a bipartisan, bicameral bill that would convene a second national White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, Hunger, and Health. Multiple witnesses testified, including distinguished professors from Tufts University, Cornell University, University of North Dakota, and Texas A&M University, as well as a representative from the American Enterprise Institute. In addition to supporting a second White House Conference, witnesses outlined possible solutions to improve nutrition in America, such as developing a national strategy and coordinating federal food policies, leveraging food is medicine initiatives, decreasing marketing of processed foods, subsidizing healthy foods, and strengthening federal nutrition programs.

#### **Think Tank Calls on HHS to Review Sodium Reduction Targets**

The Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) is formally calling on HHS to peer review the voluntary sodium reduction targets finalized by FDA last month. CEI is claiming these sodium targets do not meet the requirements of the Information Quality Act. They cite concerns that FDA has failed to conduct a peer review of its scientific evaluation of sodium, contrary to guidelines set by the White House Office of Management and Budget. As a reminder, the FDA sodium reduction guidance included specific targets for multiple 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).

#### **FDA Releases Food Safety and Nutrition Survey Explorer Tool**

The FDA has released FSANS Explorer, a web-based tool that allows users to interact with FDA Food Safety and Nutrition Survey (FSANS) data. The FSANS data looks at consumer knowledge and behavior relating to various food safety and nutrition topics. FSANS Explorer users can explore the relationship between responses to survey questions and respondent demographic characteristics, visualize responses to survey questions through tables and charts, and perform statistical tests that measure the strength of response /respondent relationship.

As a reminder, some key findings of the 2019 survey included:

- 87% of respondents are familiar with the Nutrition Facts label, with the top four items they look for on the label being Calories, Total Sugar, Sodium, and Serving Size.
- Over 80% of respondents are familiar with front-of-package claims.

#### **FDA Seeking Information on Online Labeling of Foods Sold Through E-Commerce**

On October 19-21, the FDA held a Summit on E-Commerce, which is part of the Agency's "New Era of Smarter Food Safety Blueprint" (Blueprint) initiative. The goal of the Summit was to promote consumer safety across the US and globally by ensuring that FDA understands the best way human and animal foods are bought and sold through Business to Consumer (B2C) e-commerce models. The Summit included participation by FDA, other Federal, state, and local regulators, and industry, consumer, and academia stakeholders. There were multiple discussions around food labeling focused on online grocery

sales/delivery. FDA is seeking stakeholder feedback on online labeling of foods sold through e-commerce. Comments are due to the Agency by November 20th.

### **FDA Final Guidance on TMPs for Foods Deviating from Standards of Identity**

FDA published final guidance for industry titled "Temporary Permits for Interstate Shipment of Experimental Packs of Food Varying from the Requirements of Definitions and Standards of Identity." The purpose of this guidance is to clarify aspects of the application process for temporary marketing permits (TMPs) in an effort to help the industry better understand and utilize the TMP application process. FDA is working to support innovation in the food marketplace by updating standards of identity (SOIs) and identifying new ways to streamline SOI-related processes, such as the TMP application process, to provide additional clarity and flexibility to encourage industry to innovate and produce healthier foods. This would apply to any product with a standards of identity, including canned potatoes.

Food Safety & Agriculture

### **State AGs Petition FDA to Develop Action Levels for Heavy Metals in Baby Food**

A group of twelve state attorneys general have signed a new petition asking that FDA take action to regulate heavy metals in baby food as "expeditiously as possible" and no later than April 18th. They are requesting that FDA issue interim proposed action levels for inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury in all relevant categories of infant and toddler (baby) foods. They also want the FDA to come up with an action level for inorganic arsenic in infant rice cereal that is lower than the Agency's current level of 100 parts per billion. Lastly, they are asking FDA to issue guidance stating that the testing of finished baby food products for inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium and mercury is a preventive control that should be performed by baby food manufacturers.

### **2022 Agricultural Outlook Forum**

Registration is now open for the 98th annual Agricultural Outlook Forum (AOF), the largest annual meeting of the USDA. The two-day event will be held virtually on February 24-25, 2022. The Forum will feature a keynote address by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, a presentation on the 2022 agricultural economy by USDA's Chief Economist Seth Meyer, a panel of distinguished guest speakers, and 30 breakout sessions organized by agencies across USDA and covering a range of issues impacting the sector. More than one hundred government, industry, and academic leaders will share their perspectives and insights on a wide array of topics including commodity and food price outlooks, US and global agricultural trade developments, climate change, and innovations in agricultural production and sustainability.

### **SPG Coalition Update**

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that more than 50 organizations and countries have officially declared their support for the Coalition on Sustainable Productivity Growth for Food Security and Resource Conservation (SPG) Coalition, which the United States launched at the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September. The goal of the SPG Coalition is to accelerate the transition to more sustainable food systems through productivity growth that optimizes agricultural sustainability across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Organizations and countries are invited to join the SPG Coalition by completing the Declaration of Support.

### **Statement on US and Mexico Agricultural Trade**

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and his Mexican counterpart, Víctor Manuel Villalobos Arámbula issued a joint statement after meeting in mid-October. The statement was sparse on details but did include one line that noted a shared commitment to keeping the markets open and transparent so that trade can continue to grow. This statement comes after concerns around potential threats to US agricultural exports into Mexico.

Nutrition Science, Research, & Reports

### **State of Childhood Obesity Report**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation released their annual State of Childhood Obesity Report. The report highlights the latest childhood obesity rates and trends and provides research and policy recommendations for the future. The report notes that the national obesity rate for youth ages 2-19 nationwide rose from 19.3% to 22.4% from August 2019 to August 2020. The

report makes multiple recommendations for changes to federal food assistance programs, including providing incentives for healthier SNAP purchases.

### **Study Positions Potato Biofortification as Solution to Fight Global Hunger**

A recent review published in the *Journal of Physiology and Molecular Biology of Plants* identified potato biofortification as one of several strategies to reduce global micronutrient deficiencies by increasing the dietary uptake of essential micronutrients. Potatoes were identified as an ideal candidate for biofortification because they are grown extensively in different climatic conditions and are nutritious. This review presents the genetic variations in potato germplasm and suggests practical ways to incorporate these variations into modern high-yielding potato varieties.