

## Potato Industry | February 2022

### Food & Nutrition Policy

#### **Senate Committee Advances Califf Nomination**

A Senate panel voted (13-8) to advance Dr. Robert Califf's nomination to become commissioner of the FDA to the full Senate. Six Republicans along with Senators Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Maggie Hassan (D-NH) voted against the nomination, citing concerns over Califf's ties to the opioid epidemic and abortion policies. There is not yet a date set for the Senate confirmation vote.

#### **FDA Releases List of Priority Guidance Topics for Foods Program**

The FDA released this updated list of draft guidances that are a priority for the agency throughout the next 12 months. The agency said that they intend to publish many of the guidance documents in this list by January 2023. While there were not many new items added since the initial list was released in June 2021, one notable addition is that FDA plans to release a draft guidance for industry on foods derived from plants produced using genome editing.

#### **USDA Announces Director of Nutrition Security and Healthy Equity**

USDA announced Dr. Sara Bleich as the new Director of Nutrition Security and Health Equity for the Food and Nutrition Service at USDA. Dr. Bleich previously served as a Professor of Public Health Policy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. From 2015-2016, Dr. Bleich served as a White House Fellow in the Obama Administration where she worked as a Senior Policy Advisor to the USDA and the First Lady's Let's Move initiative. Her previous research provides evidence to support policies to prevent obesity and diet-related diseases, particularly among high-risk populations. She is currently working on various projects relating to COVID-19 food implications and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

#### **New York State Bill Proposes Nutrition Standards for Vending Machines on State Property**

A bill proposed in New York state, Assembly Bill A5750, would require food and beverages sold in vending machines on state property to meet minimum nutrition standards. This bill would require that any packaged snack food offered in a vending machine contains 0g of trans fat per serving and no more than 200 mg of sodium per package. If passed, this law would affect packaged potato products, such as potato chips.

#### **Study Indicates Nutrition Incentive Participants Consume More Fruits and Vegetables**

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, a grant program funded through USDA, released its second year of impact findings, which show that people who participated in the nutrition incentive projects consumed more vegetables and fruits than the average adult. Moving forward, \$1 million will be allocated to build up the technology and organizational capacity for underrepresented organizations, states, and regions in the program.

#### **Bipartisan Policy Center Food and Nutrition Task Force to Discuss Child Nutrition**

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Food and Nutrition Security Task Force and members of Congress are holding a webinar on Monday, Feb. 7, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. EDT to discuss a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening the child nutrition programs. The webinar will feature an overview of policy recommendations from former USDA staff followed by a panel discussion with the Bipartisan Policy Center's Food and Nutrition Security Task Force members. Click here to register for the webinar.

## Canada Requests Comment on Size of Diced & Cubed White Potatoes

Following a request from the industry, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) [announced](#) a 30-day consultation that ends on Feb. 21, 2022, regarding the maximum size for diced or cubed white potatoes packaged in hermetically sealed packages. The proposed changes include increasing the maximum dice size from 10 mm (3/8 in) to 20 mm (3/4 in) for all three grades of potatoes. There will be a 6-month transition period upon final publication of the standards.

### Food Safety & Agriculture

## USDA Establishes Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture

USDA announced the [establishment](#) of a Federal Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture made up of agricultural producers and representatives from areas of higher education, extension programs, non-profits, business/economic development, supply chains and financing to support urban agriculture. The committee will work to improve access to healthy food in areas where grocery stores are scarce with a focus on equity, local food systems, and climate change. The first meeting of this inaugural committee, which will be open to the public, will take place in late February.

## FDA Releases Video to Clarify Food Allergen Requirements Under FASTER Act

The FDA released [this video](#) that explains the food industry's requirements under the 2021 Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act, which will add sesame as the ninth major food allergen beginning on Jan. 1, 2023. The video addresses how major food allergens are defined and outlines FDA's plan for implementation with additional frequently asked questions from the food industry. An FDA draft allergen guidance will be published in June 2022 and will look at recommendations for a regulatory process that would allow for the modification of the definition of "major food allergen", a "timely, transparent, and evidence-based" process, and scientific criteria, including "evidence of prevalence and severity."

### Nutrition Science and Communication Reports

## Consumption of Potatoes High in Resistant Starch and Glucose Control

A new [study](#), published in *Nutrients*, underscores previous research findings that a potato's impact on blood sugar is complex. Potato preparation method can change an individual's blood sugar response, demonstrated by significant reductions in blood sugar response after eating potatoes with higher resistance starch content – those that were cooked, then chilled and served cold versus cooked and consumed warm. This new study also found that several individual variables affect blood sugar levels, such as gut microbiota, body mass index, insoluble fiber intake and percent of daily calories from fat and protein. The findings reinforce the need for individually tailored nutrition guidance and, importantly, add to the body of evidence demonstrating the long list of variables that can influence an individual's blood sugar response.

## Bioengineered Potatoes

On Jan. 1, 2022, a new labeling standard went into effect for foods that have been genetically modified. They will now be called "bioengineered." This news prompted some coverage that grouped potatoes with foods that have been bioengineered. However, this is true for less than 1% of potatoes, while foods like corn, soybeans and sugar beets are bioengineered more than 90% of the time. Potatoes USA worked with reporters who covered this issue to educate them about this fact, and it resulted in corrections or clarifications of coverage. For example, potatoes were completely removed from NPR's [coverage](#).

## Potatoes and New Year's Resolutions

Potatoes USA promoted a release that demonstrated how potatoes can fit into anyone's healthy New Year's resolutions – whether it's popular diets like Whole30 or Weight Watchers or helping people fuel their muscles for exercise. So far, the story has been picked up by 985 outlets, including the [Chicago Tribune](#) and [Miami Herald](#).

## Experts Urge U.S. to Increase Funding for Sustainable Nutrition Science

During a recent Congressional briefing, experts discussed how the report, [From Silos to Systems](#), published by the Union for Concerned Scientists (UCS) on Sept. 9, 2021, indicates that more federal funding is needed for sustainable nutrition

science. In particular, the discussion focused on the lack of federal resources dedicated to exploring how current practices in food production affect nutrition, climate, and the health of communities. In addition to improving funding, the report also advised appointing a White House associate director of nutrition science, improving reporting mechanisms for federal agencies to help them better track data and progress, and incorporating interdisciplinary research in government-funded projects.

#### **Aspen Institute and Harvard Release Food is Medicine Research Action Plan**

The Food and Society Program at the Aspen Institute and Harvard’s Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation released a [Food is Medicine Research Action Plan](#) for researchers, funders, “Food is Medicine” implementers and advocates with recommendations for how to bolster nutrition interventions in health care. The report calls for increased funding for research that supports “Food is Medicine” interventions like medically tailored meals, groceries, and produce prescriptions. The report also notes that within the past five years, “Food is Medicine” interventions are increasing in popularity and suggests there is an opportunity to implement effective “Food is Medicine” interventions on a broader scale.

#### **AND Position Paper on Prevention of Pediatric Overweight and Obesity**

A [position paper](#) from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics looked at interventions registered dietitians could use to prevent the rise in overweight and pediatric obesity. This position paper highlights how registered dietitians (RD) can implement interventions to reduce obesity such as fruit and vegetable interventions and policies for reducing competitive snacks and beverages in schools. The Academy recommends that the Federal Trade Commission continue to closely monitor food marketing to children and aid in research studies investigating the influence of food marketing on pediatric obesity. Additionally, the Academy encourages RDs to help develop healthier food options in these programs through advocacy at the state or national level.