

Potato Industry | April 2022

Food & Nutrition Policy

Politico Publishes Investigative Report on FDA

Politico published an investigative report based on more than 50 interviews with claims that the FDA has been slow to act on food safety and nutrition issues over the past 10 years. The report called out four issues specifically, including the agency's structural divisions, lack of action to prevent major produce outbreaks, slowness on regulating toxic elements in the food supply, and delays in reducing sodium consumption. In response, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) who leads the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee sent a letter to FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf to seek "immediate action to ensure FDA is doing all it can to fulfill all aspects of its mission to protect the health and safety of the American people."

FDA Concludes Review on Draft Guidance to Evaluate Major Food Allergens

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has concluded their review of FDA's draft guidance on "Evaluating the public health importance of food allergens other than the major food allergens listed in the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act." This guidance would allow the FDA to evaluate additional foods to add to the current list of major food allergens which currently includes milk, eggs, fish, Crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, and starting Jan. 1, 2023, sesame.

FDA Responds to Public Comments on New "Healthy" Symbol Research

The FDA responded to public comments submitted in response to their May 2021 announcement that they are conducting consumer research on a voluntary symbol to convey the nutrient content claim "healthy" on food packages. In response to public comments, FDA reiterated that the agency is only studying consumer's reaction to the "healthy" symbol and is not testing consumer's reaction to the "healthy" claim definition. FDA also shared that they will be moving forward with the research but that they will not take any regulatory action on the symbol until the research is completed. This notice has a 30-day public comment period open until April 27, 2022.

USDA Announces Actions on Nutrition Security

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a report detailing USDA's Actions on Nutrition Security during a visit to Columbia University and in celebration of National Nutrition Month. This report highlights USDA's commitment to advancing nutrition security and the consistent access to nutritious food that supports optimal health and well-being for all Americans. Secretary Vilsack noted that it's the USDA's responsibility to ensure the U.S. is not only food secure, but also nutrition secure with consistent access to healthy, safe, and affordable food. The USDA will use a four-pillar strategic approach focused on nutrition security to guide the development of nutrition programs. Click here to read the USDA press release.

Study Analyzes Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Conflicts of Interest

A recent study accepted to be published in the journal of *Public Health Nutrition* looked at conflicts of interest for the members of the U.S. 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee and noted that 95% of the committee members had a conflict of interest (COI) with the food and/or pharmaceutical industries. The researchers suggest that the significant and widespread COI on the committee prevent the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee from achieving the recommended standard for transparency without mechanisms in place to make this information publicly available.

CSPI Letter Recommends FDA Priority Areas

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) sent a [letter](#) to FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf, which outlined the organization's recommended priority areas for the FDA. These priorities include investing in promoting healthy eating patterns, creating healthier food environments, and ensuring a safer food supply. To improve healthier eating environments, CSPI recommends monitoring industry progress on sodium reduction targets, establishing voluntary added sugar reduction targets for packaged and restaurant foods, and improving labeling on menus and packaged foods, including in the online environment.

NYC Releases Updated Nutrition Standards for City Agencies

New York City [released](#) the city's updated food standards, which will require foods served at city agencies, like the Department of Education, to have less added sugar, lower sodium, and provide more plant-based protein options. The new standards were released on April 1, 2022, and will go into effect on July 1, 2023. Specifically, the standards would require all purchased food to contain no more than 480 milligrams of sodium per serving and saturated fats and added sugars not to exceed 10% of total calories. They also would require starchy vegetables to be limited to no more than one serving per day.

Food Safety & Agriculture

EU Consumer Association Advocates for Decrease in Acrylamide Levels

The European consumer association, SAFE Food Advocacy Europe, is [advocating](#) for a decrease in the allowed acrylamide content levels in food. In 2017, the European Commission set benchmark levels for the presence of acrylamide in food and is currently reviewing them. SAFE is advocating for these levels to be lowered and for maximum levels to be enforced.

USDA Extends Deadline for Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities

The USDA has [extended](#) the deadlines to apply for the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities to May 6, 2022 for the First Funding Pool and to June 10, 2022 for the Second Funding Pool. The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart production practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits.

NIFA Invests in Chronic Disease Prevention Projects

The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) [announced](#) an investment of over \$5 million to support projects that impact diet, nutrition, and chronic disease prevention. The investment will go towards research, education, and extension programs that seek to improve diet and nutrition, while working to prevent chronic disease. Click [here](#) for examples of funded projects.

Nutrition Science and Communication Reports

Experts Propose Scoring System to Assess Healthfulness of Carb-Containing Foods

While so-called good-carb/bad-carb designations are hotly contested, standardized methods for assessing carbohydrate food (CF) health quality currently do not exist. In a paper recently published in [Nutrients](#), the Quality Carbohydrate Coalition-Scientific Advisory Council (QCC-SAC) proposes a new and innovative approach to quantifying CF quality: the Carbohydrate Food Quality Score (CFQS). Representing a significant step forward in the evolution of CF analysis, the new CFQS system incorporates a food's fiber-to-carbohydrate and free sugar-to-carbohydrate ratios, as previous metrics have done, in addition to evaluating its sodium, potassium, and (as applicable) whole grain content, making the index better reflect the nutritional contribution of the entire CF and align with today's dietary guidelines.

Research Looks at Processed Food Consumption During Pandemic

A recent [research study](#) looked at processed food consumption trends during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that there was an overall increase in their consumption during the pandemic. Researchers noted there was an increase in the consumption of sweets (chocolate, candy, cookies, pastries, cakes, desserts, and confectionery), packaged snacks with high fat and sodium content, and baked goods (bread products, pizza,

and sandwiches) in particular, with a decrease in ready-to-eat dishes and ready-made meals, such as instant soups, canned foods, fast food, and chips, as well as sugary drinks in general.

DIY Chips for National Potato Chip Day

Potatoes USA promoted National Potato Chip Day on March 14, 2022, with tips to help consumers enjoy DIY chips. Using just a few common kitchen staples, including nutrient-dense potatoes, homemade potato chips can bring even more fun to snack time or take any meal from good to great! To learn more, check out the story from [Yahoo](#).

Positive Carbohydrate Coverage in the Media

While potatoes have at times been unfairly portrayed as a “bad carb,” we’re seeing some good examples of positive messaging coming through. For example, the EatingWell article “[7 Carbs You Should Be Buying to Lower Cholesterol, According to a Dietitian](#)” states, “The humble potato is a starchy veggie that is equally delicious as it is good for you. Along with the boost of carbohydrates that potatoes provide, each serving fuels your body with soluble fiber, a nutrient that can reduce the absorption of cholesterol into your bloodstream.” Likewise, Florida Today ran an article “[Nutrition for Today: Are Carbs public enemy No. 1? Absolutely not. They're really important.](#)” It touted, “Myth No. 2: Avoid anything white. True, white bread, white pasta and white rice are not-so-good choices. But don’t shun cauliflower, garlic, onions, mushrooms, potatoes, apples, bananas, milk and yogurt — these are all rich in carbohydrates, but also contain lots of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.”

Center for Food is Medicine and NYC Food Policy Center Publish Food as Medicine Report

The Center for Food is Medicine and NYC Food Policy Center [published](#) a comprehensive report on food as medicine that looked at the history, current challenges, and program interventions for food as medicine programs. The report blames Americans’ unhealthy diet on a lack of understanding of what “healthy” means, scarce nutrition counseling from clinicians, and food industry involvement in the creation of the Dietary Guidelines, alongside a confusing food labeling landscape. The recommendations presented at the end of the report include increased funding for food as medicine programs that include medically tailored meals, produce prescriptions, and nutrition incentives with culturally appropriate, unprocessed, fresh, and whole foods.

NYC Releases Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Food Systems

Researchers from Hunter College, CUNY SPH, and the Columbia University Teachers College in New York City [released seven policy briefs](#), with specific policy measures and strategy recommendations that the mayor and City Council should consider to build a healthier and sustainable food system. The briefs present 28 concrete recommendations to: reduce food insecurity; improve healthy food access; reduce promotion and availability of unhealthy food; support a robust, sustainable, and equitable food infrastructure; protect and empower food workers; advance food planning; and increase citizen control and ownership of the food system.