

Potato Industry | July 2022

Food & Nutrition Policy

Spring 2022 Unified Agenda

The Federal Government published the [Spring 2022 Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions](#). This is a semiannual compilation of information about regulations under development by federal agencies, with estimated timelines of when they hope to achieve each action. According to the agenda, the USDA is aiming to publish the Proposed Rule updating the WIC food packages by this fall and the Proposed Rule to update the school meals regulations by January 2023.

Congressional Push for Restructuring at FDA

Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) unveiled updated [legislation](#) entitled, The Food Safety Administration Act of 2022, that would move FDA's current food programs to an independent food safety agency under the Department of Health and Human Services. This agency would be led by a food safety expert confirmed by the Senate. Rep. DeLauro and Rep. Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA) also [sent a letter](#) to FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf, calling for him to appoint a Deputy Commissioner for Foods with authority over all units of the food programs at FDA. This Congressional activity comes after the FDA has received significant criticism over their management of food safety issues like recent recalls and the reports of toxic metals found in baby foods.

FNS Releases Research on National School Lunch Program and WIC

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released two studies that looked at the nutritional intake of participants enrolled in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and WIC. The first study that involved [participants](#) in the NSLP found that children who participated in this program scored higher on diet quality and had higher intakes of potassium and sodium than non-participants. Among school children who reported consuming any amount of vegetables at lunch and over 24 hours, fried potatoes were the most commonly consumed vegetable on a given day. The second study that looked at WIC [participants](#) found that families who remained in WIC during the children's fifth year of life reported continued participation because of the food and education they received. Further, the study indicated that on average, children who participated in WIC through their fifth year of life had better overall diet quality than younger children. And finally, compared to children not receiving WIC or SNAP, children who participated in WIC but not SNAP at 54 months were more likely to meet recommendations for limiting added sugar intake.

House Agriculture/FDA FY 2023 Appropriations Report

The House Appropriations Committee released its [report](#) to accompany the Fiscal Year 2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which proposes an increase of about \$2 billion from the previous Fiscal Year. While this report is not binding, it details how funding should be used for front-of-pack labeling and sodium. For sodium, the Committee encouraged FDA to develop an overall sodium monitoring and evaluation plan detailing how industry compliance with the short-term voluntary targets will be monitored as well as set a timeline for interim and long-term sodium voluntary targets. The Committee also urged the FDA to explore issuing regulations requiring mandatory labeling to appear on the front of packages for food products. The House Appropriations Committee met on June 23, 2022, for a full committee markup of the report.

The Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022

President Biden signed [The Keep Kids Fed Act of 2022](#), a bipartisan bill to support school meal programs after federal pandemic waivers expired on June 30. This will extend USDA school meal flexibilities for Summer 2022 to allow meal delivery and grab-and-go and non-congregate options to continue. The bill will also continue to waive area eligibility requirements for the summer so providers can serve all children for free, and it will also help schools transition back to normal meal operations under the National School Lunch Program for the 2022-2023 school year by extending certain administrative and paperwork flexibilities. Additionally, the legislation provides a temporary increase in reimbursement rates for the 2022-23 school year.

Additional School Funding to Purchase American-Grown Foods

The Biden Administration [announced](#) that the USDA will provide nearly \$1 billion in additional funding to schools to support the purchase of American-grown foods for their meal programs. The \$943 million boost from the Department is provided through USDA's [Commodity Credit Corporation](#). Funds will be distributed by state agencies to schools across the country, so they can purchase domestically-grown foods for their meal programs.

Canada Finalizes New Front-of-Pack Labeling Regulations

Health Canada [unveiled](#) its long-awaited front-of-pack (FOP) labeling symbol for packaged foods that are high in saturated fat, sugars and/or sodium. The new FOP symbol includes a magnifying glass with the words "high in X" where X is the nutrient in excess. Prepackaged foods, including certain potato products like chips or frozen French fries, will be required to bear the FOP symbol if they meet or exceed certain thresholds for saturated fat, sugar, and sodium. The food industry has been given until January 1, 2026 to comply with the new regulations.

Nutrition Science, Research, & Reports
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Potatoes USA Corrects Article Claiming Potatoes Among Five Worst Plant-Based Foods

Potatoes USA corrected the title of an article published in the UK news outlet [Express](#) that dealt with a [study](#) that looked at the relationship between plant-based diets and cancer risk. The original headline of the article said, "Potatoes may be among five worst 'plant-based foods' for cancer warns study." The headline now says, "Cancer warning: Not all plant-based diets protect against cancer warns study." While the article still lists potatoes as one of the categories featured in the study (which is true for the study itself), the article now states, "however, it should be pointed out that potatoes, as a natural ingredient, are not a processed product of plant origin." John Toaspern, Former Chief Marketing Officer at Potatoes USA was quoted in the article saying, "they [potatoes] are a whole food and vegetable - unlike any other item on that list. There's no scientific evidence for why potatoes as a whole food and nutrient-dense vegetable are lumped in this category." A disclaimer was also added to the bottom of this article noting that the research cited in the article is based on epidemiological data, not clinical data, and that potatoes should not be categorized with other foods, such as sweets and desserts.

Opinion Piece Reviews Global Progress to Reduce Acrylamide in Food

An opinion piece [published](#) in the scientific journal *Food Science* reviewed the current global landscape on acrylamide as it relates to food. Acrylamide is associated with fried, baked, roasted, and toasted foods derived from plant grains, beans, tubers, and storage roots, including potato chips and similar products produced from sweet potatoes or vegetables, French fries, and roast potatoes. Specifically, the opinion piece looked at efforts that have been made thus far to reduce acrylamide in foods, reviewed the current EU regulatory landscape, and addressed low acrylamide crop varieties and their plant breeding potential. The authors concluded that the presence of acrylamide in popular foods is an increasingly difficult regulatory compliance issue for the European food industry even though the EU was able to reduce acrylamide through changes to manufacturing processes and crop management. Low acrylamide genetically modified potato varieties are already on the market in the U.S., but authors noted that these are not being developed for cultivation in the EU because the approval process for genetically modified varieties is difficult to negotiate.