

## Potato Industry | August 2022

Food & Nutrition Policy

### **WIC Food Package Proposed Rule at OMB for Review**

The Office of Management and Budget is reviewing the proposed rule entitled, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Revisions in the WIC Food Packages. The proposed rule is expected in September 2022, according to the regulatory agenda. The last review of the WIC food packages was in 2009. The proposed rule is an opportunity for the National Potato Council to advocate for increasing vegetables in all forms for WIC participants, including dehydrated potatoes.

### **FDA Announces External Review of Foods Unit**

The FDA has commissioned an external agency to review the FDA's Human Foods Program with a focus on the Office of Food Policy and Response, the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, and relevant parts of the Office of Regulatory Affairs (ORA). The review will address fundamental questions about the structure, function, funding, and leadership needs at FDA, as well as inspectional activities related to the program. The Reagan-Udall Foundation will conduct the review and will work with an external group of experts on the evaluation, which is expected to take two months.

### **FDA to Host Consumer Focus Groups on Front-of-Pack Labels this Summer**

This summer, the FDA is planning to host consumer focus groups to gather more information on how consumers perceive front-of-pack (FOP) labels. With the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health expected this fall, the FDA itself said they would expect FOP to be mentioned at the event, and numerous groups have advocated for the inclusion of FOP labeling in their written comments and in other communications. For example, the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) filed a regulatory petition calling on FDA to develop a mandatory FOP nutrition label for all packaged foods in the U.S. The petition requests the FDA to develop an interpretive and nutrient-specific label that shows levels of saturated fats, sodium, and added sugar with an emphasis on nutrient warnings. In their petition, CSPI noted that under the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 (NLEA), the FDA has the legal authority to require interpretive, nutrient-specific FOP nutrition labeling.

### **FDA Releases New Total Diet Study Report on Nutrients and Toxic Elements**

The FDA shared results from the agency's Total Diet Study (TDS) Report for Fiscal Years 2018-2020. This is the first report in a series that uses FY2018-FY2020 TDS data and summarizes FDA's most recent data on nutrients and toxic elements from the U.S. food supply. For the FY2018-FY2020 reporting cycle, 307 foods (including foods, beverages, and water) were analyzed for 25 elements (both nutrients and toxic elements). The TDS tests for select toxic elements, such as arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury and have been prioritized by the FDA as part of their Closer to Zero Action Plan. The foods with the highest mean lead concentrations were baby food sweet potatoes, baby food teething biscuits, and sandwich cookies. Potatoes also had higher levels of cadmium compared to other foods tested. This aligns with previous data that has consistently found that after leafy greens (e.g., spinach), potatoes, and other root vegetables typically have higher levels of cadmium than other foods. Overall, toxic elements were not detected in most (68%) tested foods, and for TDS foods with FDA Action Levels (AL) or Standards, all results fell below the established levels/standards set by FDA.

### **USDA Invests Nearly \$8M to Improve Dietary Health and Nutrition Security**

The USDA announced \$8 million to support the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) Produce

Prescription Program. The funding is part of USDA's American Rescue Plan efforts and will be administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Click [here](#) to see the seventeen projects that are being funded. These include nutrition education programs, produce prescription programs, and programs that increase access to fresh produce.

### **Senate Appropriations Releases Report Language**

The Senate Committee on Appropriations released the accompanying [report](#) for the FY2023 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration appropriations bill that includes language instructing FDA to work with industry stakeholders to implement the short-term sodium reduction targets. It also asks FDA to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of the long-term targets before moving ahead. The Committee also provides funding for the development of new management strategies for potato storage that will maintain potato quality, reduce grower and processor losses, and increase profits. The Senate Appropriations Act has been referred to the Appropriations Committee. The House Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023 was placed on the calendar.

### **Government Accountability Office Announces Thrifty Food Plan Must go to Congress**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) [announced](#) that the USDA needs to submit the 2021 revision of the Thrifty Food Plan to Congress before it can take effect. According to the GAO, this is required under the Congressional Review Act to authorize the proposed price increase allocated in the updated plan. The USDA claims it was not required to abide by the Congressional Review Act because the decision was not a rule but rather was related to agency management. This GAO decision comes after Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) sent a letter to GAO last year urging the plan be ruled under the Congressional Review Act.

### **House Introduces Bill to Reauthorize Child Nutrition Programs**

The House introduced legislation entitled the [Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act](#) to reauthorize federal child nutrition programs. Investments included in this legislation would impact the school meals program by increasing options to provide meals to children outside of school, adjust nutrition standards in school meals to include more plant-based options, and more. This bill has passed the House Education and Labor Committee. Click [here](#) to read the entire bill by section.

### **Democrats Send Letter to White House to Make Vegetarian Entrees More Available**

In a [letter](#) sent to the White House, [32 Democrats urged](#) President Biden, "to encourage all federal agencies to make a vegetarian entree available everywhere that federal government cafeterias are serving meals" as the White House prepares its national strategy for the upcoming Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. This would be across federal agencies, including museums, national parks, prisons, and military bases. The letter explained that adding more vegetarian options will help reduce the government's climate footprint and help lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer across the U.S. The White House has yet to announce a date for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health but is currently reviewing submitted comments to help inform their national strategy that will be unveiled at the conference.

Nutrition Science, Research, & Reports

### **CSPI Recommendations on White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health**

In a letter sent to the White House on the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, CSPI laid out numerous policy recommendations for the Conference. One recommendation is to require that restaurants include a kids' meal healthy default side of one-quarter cup of an unfried fruit or vegetable, excluding white potatoes. They also recommend increasing the fruit and vegetable benefits in the WIC food package so that they align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

### **New Processing Technique Could Help Bodies Digest Potato Starch More Slowly**

Researchers at [The American Society for Nutrition](#) (ASN) have started testing a new potato processing technique designed to make human bodies more easily digest potato starch. This technique blocks certain digestive enzymes from reaching the potato starch as quickly, creating a controlled release of dietary glucose. Researchers have found that the two digestion enzymes-  $\alpha$ -amylase and mucosal  $\alpha$ -glycosidase - in the small intestine are important for helping potatoes slowly and continually release dietary glucose, and they will be using these two enzymes as they develop their technique. As a next step, the researchers are preparing to further test impacts on digestibility in a

clinical trial. They also plan to study whether a similar approach could be used to improve other foods. This research was funded by an A\*STAR Biomedical Research Council grant.

### **Resistant Starch from Foods Like Potatoes May Protect Against Certain Cancers**

A new study published in *Cancer Prevention Research* found that consuming 30 grams (g) of resistant starch per day appears to be protective against non-colorectal cancers for patients with Lynch Syndrome, a genetic condition that increases the risk of developing certain types of cancer. Resistant starch, a type of carbohydrate similar to fiber, is found in foods like potatoes, bananas, and grains. In this double-blind, randomized trial, 463 participants in England, Wales, and Finland received 30g of resistant starch daily, and 455 participants received a placebo for up to four years. After 20 years of follow-up, those in the resistant starch group had less non-colorectal cancer than the placebo group, which was especially true for cancers of the upper-GI tract (five diagnoses in those in the resistant starch group, compared to 21 diagnoses in the placebo group). The authors hypothesized that these results were due to a reduction in potentially carcinogenic secondary bile acids by resistant starch, either indirectly via modulation of the gut microbiome or by indirect pathways.