



INTERNATIONAL
FOOD INFORMATION
COUNCIL FOUNDATION

November 28, 2017

To: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Re: 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Listening Session

From: Joseph Clayton, CEO, International Food Information Council/International Food Information Council Foundation

The International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation appreciates the opportunity to participate in this 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans listening session.

The IFIC Foundation (www.foodinsight.org) is a §501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization with a mission to effectively communicate science-based information about health, nutrition, and food safety for the public good. In order to serve as effective communicators, it is essential to understand what drives Americans' food purchases and dietary habits. The IFIC Foundation undertakes a number of consumer research topics that explore Americans' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs toward food safety and nutrition. The annual *Food and Health Survey*, now in its twelfth year, is an online survey of over 1000 Americans ages 18 to 80. The data is collected by a third-party research firm and is weighted to ensure the results are nationally representative.

Consumer research efforts, such as the IFIC *Foundation Food and Health Survey*, are key to understanding current nutrition knowledge, behaviors and trends among Americans. The IFIC Foundation appreciates the opportunity to share relevant consumer insights that may be useful in the development of the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Data from the 2017 *Food and Health Survey* shows that the majority of Americans view expert nutrition guidance, such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, to be important for all life stages. More Americans say that expert guidance is important during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood than other stages of life. Women are more likely than men to believe that expert guidance is important at all stages.

The *Food and Health Survey* also shows that the majority of Americans recognize educational materials based on the dietary guidelines. Over two-thirds of Americans report familiarity with the USDA MyPlate graphic. Still, differences in familiarity with the MyPlate graphic persist, as women are more likely than men to have seen the graphic and know a lot about it.

Americans also report familiarity with some aspects of current nutrition guidance. For example, 80 percent of Americans are making an effort to eat more fruits and vegetables, while nearly as many report making small changes to achieve an overall healthier diet. Similarly, many Americans show some understanding of basic nutrition guidance. This is evidenced by the large number of Americans (over 80 percent) who report that whole grains, fiber and vitamin D are healthy components.

Despite familiarity with dietary guidance and acknowledgement of its importance, many Americans still struggle to make healthy food choices. The 2017 *Food and Health Survey* shows that nearly 80 percent of Americans report that they notice a lot of conflicting information on what to eat or avoid. Of those who notice a lot of conflicting information, over half say they doubt their choices as a result.

This doubt is also echoed by consumers' lack of ability to connect specific foods to their desired health benefits. Nearly every respondent on the 2017 *Food and Health Survey* reported interest in attaining certain health benefits - like weight loss or management and cardiovascular health - from food. Still, many consumers were unsure of what foods to eat to achieve their health goals. Over half were unable to name a food or nutrient associated with their most desired health benefits.

The consumer insights presented today highlight the importance of continuing national efforts to create clear and actionable nutrition guidance. The 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans represents an important opportunity to help increase consumers' nutrition knowledge and confidence in their ability to tailor their dietary patterns to their health goals.

The IFIC Foundation believes that, when interpreted in the context of the scientific evidence base and other stakeholder insights, these consumer insights can help USDA and HHS develop effective dietary guidance. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

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