



**University of California**

**Agriculture and Natural Resources** ■ **Nutrition Policy Institute**

2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Listening Session – November 28, 2017 – 2:00pm

Christina Hecht, representing University of California Nutrition Policy Institute  
and National Drinking Water Alliance

#### TOPIC

On behalf of the University of California's Nutrition Policy Institute, I would like to offer feedback on the NASEM reports reviewing the process to update the Dietary Guidelines, and make two recommendations.

#### CREDENTIALS

I am Christina Hecht, Senior Policy Advisor at Nutrition Policy Institute. I have a doctorate in demography. NPI is known for conducting rigorous research to inform and strengthen nutrition policy, with an emphasis on the federal nutrition assistance programs, young children, and families. We also coordinate the National Drinking Water Alliance, a network dedicated to enabling children to drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.

#### FEEDBACK

We agree with the reports' recommendation to increase transparency. While continuing to utilize the strong evidence-based approach of past DGA Committees, we urge increased transparency in the translation process from the DGA Committee recommendations to the final Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The translation process should be just as transparent as the DGAC process, to help ensure trust in the final DGAs.

We urge consideration of emerging issues, asking,

- (1) Should there be a mechanism for input from the public or scientists not on the DGA Committee?
- (2) Can the DGAC be tasked with making recommendations to fill gaps in the evidence?

#### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the B-24 project examine existing and soon-to-be-released findings from USDA's WIC Infant-Toddler Feeding Practices Study-2, as well as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, Feeding Guidelines for Infants and Young Toddlers: A Responsive Parenting Approach, developed recently by a group of national child

nutrition experts. Evidence-based recommendations on not only the “what,” but also the “how” to feed young children should be incorporated into the DGAs.

We recommend that the 2020 process include a focus on beverages, and specifically, on drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages or SSBs.

- SSBs are the largest single source of added sugars and among the largest single sources of calories in the American diet. Further, these calories don’t fully trigger satiety mechanisms
- We’re pleased with the inclusion of birth to 24 months, in part because it provides an opportunity to prevent the introduction of sugar-sweetened beverages, and to help form healthful beverage preferences and habits
- Recent research finds that while Americans are starting to substitute water for SSBs, there remain strong disparities in SSB consumption by race and ethnicity
- National Drinking Water Alliance researchers, advocates, health professionals, educators, and industry members urge addition of a symbol for water on the MyPlate graphic, the primary translation of the DGAs out to the public

#### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

In focusing more attention on beverages in general and water in particular, the 2015 DGA Committee set the stage for the addition of water to MyPlate. The reasons for this addition are compelling. Sugary drinks are the largest single source of added sugar in the American diet. Research is increasingly finding adverse health outcomes related to excess sugar consumption, particularly when consumed in liquid form. And Americans do not drink enough plain water. How can we as a nation better promote plain water consumption? MyPlate is the most widely used tool to educate the public on the Dietary Guidelines and make sense of the science. Including a graphic for water, the most essential yet often overlooked nutrient of all, recognizes the importance of plain water to health. Numerous other countries have featured water prominently in their dietary guidance. It is time that we emphasize the importance of making water “first for thirst” and explicitly include water on MyPlate.

Respectfully submitted on November 28, 2017 by  Christina Hecht, PhD, Senior Policy Advisor, Nutrition Policy Institute, UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources • Phone: 510-798-7931 • Email: ceahecht@ucanr.edu • Main office: 1111 Franklin Street, #10123, Oakland, CA 94607; Research office: 2115 Milvia Street, Berkeley, CA 94704 •  Website: [npi.ucanr.edu](http://npi.ucanr.edu) •