

Thank you and good afternoon. I am Mollie Van Lieu and am the Senior Director of Nutrition Policy at United Fresh Produce Association. United Fresh is the national trade association representing the entire distribution chain of fresh fruit and vegetable production including, growers, shippers, wholesaler-distributors, processors and retailers. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input as you consider the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

We valued the feedback provided by the National Academies on the DGA process through the two reports released earlier this year. As stated in the second report, the DGA is the primary federal source of consistent, evidence-based nutritional and dietary information for promoting health and preventing chronic disease. Improving transparency can only serve to strengthen the integrity of the guidelines.

Specifically, recommendations in the reports including posting potential conflicts of interests by committee members – whether they be financial or general affiliations - and disclosing any omissions or deviations from the scientific evidence in the final version of the DGA will prove important to public trust and the quality of the guidelines.

Ultimately, we believe DGA is critically important to public health, policymaking and industry innovation. As the process is reviewed and any additional steps are put in place – we encourage the consideration of the additional time that will be needed to make adjustments and recommend putting benchmarks in place to ensure the DGA is released on time. If we are aiming to increase transparency and public trust in the process – we must ensure that the DGA is consistent and reliable – and that includes timeliness.

One of the most frequently cited critiques is the lack of rapid improvement of public health outcomes related to dietary behavior that contributes to chronic disease. It is important to recognize that federal nutrition programs have really only begun to align with the dietary guidelines within the last decade. The DGA can only improve public health if they're adopted and adoption takes time and requires multiple levers: individual change; policy change; societal change and more. We encourage all federal programs to align with the dietary guidelines.

As it relates to fruits and vegetables, multiple cycles of the DGA have addressed the importance of eating more produce, linking their consumption to decreased risk of dietary-related chronic disease. While recommendations have changed little over time - what has evolved is the general messaging. For example, first it was "eat more" then it was eat 5-9 servings and now it reflects composing "half the plate" with fruits and vegetables. United Fresh views this as a positive message and one that is attainable to a broad range of Americans including those of differing generations, cultures and geography. We encourage the continued use of consumer-friendly MyPlate messaging.

Everything possible should be done in future DGA to communicate the critical importance of changing diets to meet the half a plate goal, for both personal health and controlling health care costs. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is the most scientifically valid dietary advice for both chronic disease and obesity prevention, and the most under-met of all dietary recommendations. Just this month, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released data that only one in 10 Americans are eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables.

Americans and policymakers need an evidence-based, transparent and consistent foundation of information for improving public health. We thank you for your work in ensuring the DGA process is stronger and appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback today and in the future. Thank you.