

TO: Richard D. Olson, MD, MPH
Kellie (O'Connell) Casavale, PhD, RD
Colette I. Rihane, MS, RD
Shanthy A. Bowman, PhD

FROM: Marianne Smith Edge, MS, RD, LD, FADA
Senior Vice President, Nutrition & Food Safety
International Food Information Council (IFIC) and IFIC Foundation

RE: 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Public Comments

The [International Food Information Council \(IFIC\)](#) and [IFIC Foundation](#) appreciate the opportunity to submit comments to the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC). Our ensuing comments are constructed with the 2010 DGAC "Needs for Future Research" in mind. We believe our years of consumer research and related peer-reviewed articles will be of great value to the DGAC in supporting innovative ways to motivate the American public toward more healthful lifestyles and behaviors.

IFIC and IFIC Foundation are nonprofit organizations based in Washington, DC. The mission of IFIC is to effectively communicate science-based information about food safety and nutrition to health professionals, government officials, educators, journalists, and consumers. The mission of the IFIC Foundation is to effectively communicate science-based information about health, nutrition and food safety for the public good. Both IFIC and the IFIC Foundation receive primary funding from food, beverage and agricultural companies that support our missions. We also receive government grants and contributions from other individuals, foundations and associations.

IFIC and IFIC Foundation consumer research has been exploring Americans' attitudes toward nutrition and health for more than two decades with our signature research project being the annual IFIC Foundation *Food & Health Survey*. We are dedicated to providing consumers with clear, accurate advice and actionable tips on how science-based information related to nutrition, health, and food safety can be applied to their daily lives.

BEHAVIOR/FOOD ENVIRONMENT

RESEARCH NEED ADDRESSED:

The 2010 DGAC identified the following research needs related to behavior/food environment:

1. Conduct considerable new research on other behaviors that might influence eating practices.
2. Conduct research to clarify both the positive and negative environmental influences that affect body weight.

RELEVANCE:

Qualitative research identifying consumers' behavioral practices and beliefs around eating is needed to more effectively motivate consumers in practicing healthful behaviors. Dietary Guidelines Alliance research provides qualitative insights into consumers' specific diet and physical activity behaviors, as well as related messages for the next phase of quantitative testing and survey evaluation. These findings help inform effective consumer messaging related to motivation for behavior change.

FOR NUTRITION EVIDENCE LIBRARY (NEL) CONSIDERATION:

Reinhardt Kapsak W, Smith Edge M, White C, Childs NM, Geiger CJ. [Putting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into Action: Behavior-Based Messages to Motivate Parents - Phases I and II Observational and Focus Group Findings](#). *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 2013; 113(2):196-204.

Description: This Dietary Guidelines Alliance research identifies current behavioral practices and beliefs in an effort to develop and test behavior-directed messages to help families achieve healthful, active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA). Additionally, perceived barriers to and motivators for success are also identified.

KEY POINTS ADDRESSING RESEARCH NEED #1:

- Parents reported they did not, nor were they willing to, count calories for themselves and family members. Messages emphasizing "more nutrient value for your calories" were not readily understood because participants did not comprehend calories in general.
- These studies found that messages that encourage planning ahead and making a healthful active lifestyle a family matter may convince parents to take time to jointly set goals and take action.
- Parents preferred messages that indicate each family or individual is unique and let parents know they are in charge.
- Messages that drew analogies to further explain key concepts, such as budgeting for calories, were considered useful. Focus group results illustrated that customary messages that consumers often find appealing - concise, practical, prescriptive, and indicative of a benefit - also appealed to participants in this study.

FOR NUTRITION EVIDENCE LIBRARY (NEL) CONSIDERATION:

Reinhardt Kapsak W, Smith Edge M, White C, Childs NM, Geiger CJ. [Putting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans into Action: Behavior-Based Messages to Motivate Parents - Phase III Quantitative Message Testing and Survey Evaluation](#). *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 2013; 113(3):377-391.e2.

Description: This Dietary Guidelines Alliance research was conducted to develop, refine and validate dietary guidance messages and determine intent to implement DGA recommendations.

KEY POINTS ADDRESSING RESEARCH NEED #1:

- Although participants could name one-example of a nutrient-rich food, usually fruits or vegetables, most reported needing more practical education on additional nutrient-rich foods and beverages and how to increasingly include them in their diets.
- When asked to rate the importance of each core concept to the overall healthfulness of their family's diet, serving food and beverages that are nutrient rich rated most important. When asked which core area was easiest to implement consistently, 62% selected "serving nutrient rich foods and beverages." Still, fewer than half reported doing this behavior consistently.
- The ranking for overall motivational effect of each nutrient-rich message was significant. "Base your plate on nutrient-rich foods" was ranked as most motivating.

KEY POINTS ADDRESSING RESEARCH NEED #2:

- When asked to choose one preferred source of information for each core concept, parents' top rated sources for messaging were grocery stores, health professionals' offices, and restaurants.
- The web based survey results indicate behavior-directed messaging may motivate parents to action. Recognizing that parents value family involvement and individualized solutions, messages that are clear, simple and action-specific, such as "Be a Role Model for Your Children and "Know Your Number," can be integrated into multiple sectors of society to motivate behavior change.

OTHER KEY POINTS¹:

- With so many conflicting messages, competing concerns, and food choices, consumers need help making healthful food choices while meeting demands for taste, convenience, and cost.
- Provision of nutrition information alone is ineffective. More influential communication strategies coupled with modifications of food and the food environments are needed.
- A relatively small proportion of respondents indicated any recent exposure to media about processed foods, which suggested that negative perceptions and concerns were deeply rooted. This may be due in part to consumers misinterpreting health professionals' advice to "eat healthy foods to improve health and weight" as "do not eat processed foods." However, the 40% of respondents who reported "neutral" views toward the term "processed foods" indicates opportunities to provide balanced communication.

¹ Dwyer JT, Fulgoni VL, Clemens RA, Schmidt DB, Freedman MR. [*Is "Processed" a Four-Letter Word? The Role of Processed Foods in Achieving Dietary Guidelines and Nutrient Recommendations.*](#) *Adv. Nutr.* 2012; 3: 1–13.