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FROM: Marianne Smith Edge, MS, RD, LD, FADA
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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.

FOOD GROUPS

RESEARCH NEED ADDRESSED:

The 2010 DGAC identified the following research need related to food groups.

1. Quantitative and qualitative investigations into how the food environment facilitates or hinders achievement of food groups and dietary components recommendations.

FOR NUTRITION EVIDENCE LIBRARY (NEL) CONSIDERATION:

Reinhardt Kapsak W, Rahavi E, White C, Childs N. [Functional Foods: Consumer Attitudes, Perceptions, and Behavior in a Growing Market](#). *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2011;110:804-810.

Description: This IFIC research article evaluates consumer understanding and attitudes related to foods that can promote health.

RELEVANCE:

Understanding consumer attitudes towards foods that can promote health will influence dietetics practitioners and other health professionals to assist patients and consumers as they include these foods in their diets to meet nutrient recommendations and avoid deficiencies.

KEY POINTS:

- Consumer attitudes are very positive regarding foods and beverages with added health and wellness benefits. When asked whether they agree or disagree that foods and beverages can provide a wide array of specific health benefits (e.g., improve heart health, improve immune system function, etc.), between 68% and 85% of Americans either "somewhat" or "strongly believe" in the stated benefit.
- More than 85% of all Americans say they are currently consuming or would be interested in consuming foods or beverages for these specific benefits. Very few Americans indicate that they are not interested in consuming foods or beverages for the stated benefits.
- Americans remain highly interested in learning more about functional foods, which represents a good opportunity for education. Increased exposure to specific foods and beverages with beneficial components can serve to increase awareness and may result in higher consumption over time.
- Consumers were asked, on an aided basis, whether they are aware of certain food components, their corresponding food sources, and their associated health benefits. The most recognizable food/health associations continue to be those related to bone health, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and benefits associated with fiber.
- Consumption of functional foods or food components parallels awareness of food/health associations. As such, a commitment to researching the health benefits of functional foods, as well as strategies to communicate the findings to consumers and health professionals alike, is warranted.

FOR NUTRITION EVIDENCE LIBRARY (NEL) CONSIDERATION:

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.

Description: This joint publication of the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, American Society for Nutrition, Institute of Food Technologists, and IFIC provides unique insights on the role of processed food on micronutrient intakes.

RELEVANCE:

Understanding the broad spectrum of food processing and technology challenges related to developing healthful foods that align with dietary guidelines is critical. Additionally, innovative product development influences consumer intakes, allowing more convenient incorporation of a variety of food groups into consumer diets.

KEY POINTS:

- Consumers reported that they planned to eat more fresh food, whole grains, poultry, natural foods, fruits, vegetables, and 100% juice. Although no specific category of processed foods was projected to be deselected at the same pace as processed foods overall, virtually all items listed fell more or less heavily on the de-selection side, with fast food, junk food, processed food, desserts, red meat and regular soda the most de-selected.

KEY POINT FROM IFIC FOUNDATION 2013 *FOOD AND HEALTH SURVEY*:

- Americans increasingly believe that processed foods can provide various benefits. And, roughly six in ten Americans make an effort to consume fiber, whole grains and protein. Eating a more balanced diet - and more fruits and vegetables and fewer sweets in particular - are the most common ways Americans would improve their diets.