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**Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Oral Testimony
Jill Nicholls, PhD, National Dairy Council, January 14, 2014**

I'm Jill Nicholls, Vice President of Nutrition Affairs at the National Dairy Council. Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments.

During the committee's public meetings, many topics relevant to dairy foods have been raised. Today, I'd like to share three points for the committee's consideration.

First, Americans who consume the recommended amounts of dairy foods are better able to meet key nutrient recommendations, including calcium, vitamin D and potassium (1-5). In fact, it is difficult for most Americans to meet these nutrient recommendations without consuming at least three servings of dairy foods daily (4).

Currently, all age groups in the U.S., except the very youngest, consume less than the recommended amounts of dairy foods (6). Intakes of milk, cheese and yogurt are just under two servings per day, on average, for those two years and older (6). That's about one cup of milk, about one ounce of cheese and 1/10th of a cup of yogurt per person, per day.

Even at current intakes, milk, cheese and yogurt provide excellent nutritional value in the food supply. Dairy foods provide 58% of the vitamin D, 51% of the calcium, 18% of the protein, and 16% of the potassium in the U.S. diet – and only 10% of daily calories (7). Adding just one more serving per day can help Americans get closer to meeting dairy group and key nutrient recommendations (4).

Second, there is a large - and growing - body of research on the positive health outcomes associated with dairy food consumption.

This research is looking beyond individual nutrients like calcium to examine dairy foods and health. Since 2009, more than 50 studies have examined the health benefits of dairy foods identified in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines: better bone health (8-17), reduced risk for cardiovascular disease (18-36) and type 2 diabetes (37-47), and lower blood pressure (43, 48-61). Results from the majority of this new research are consistent with the 2010 findings.

Milk, cheese and yogurt contain a unique mixture of nutrients and bioactive compounds that may play a role in these health benefits. And while dairy foods are a source of saturated fat, new studies on cardiovascular disease outcomes have found that higher consumption of dairy foods, often regardless of milkfat content, may help reduce risk (26, 27, 29, 33, 34).

Third, milk, cheese and yogurt are affordable, appealing and easily accessible.

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The dairy industry is actively innovating and collaborating with partners to make products available that meet taste, health and nutrition needs of Americans. Dairy food choices, including products containing less fat and sodium, and fewer added sugars, are widely available - in the dairy case, in restaurants, in schools and increasingly in food banks.

In closing, milk, cheese and yogurt are a core part of nutrient-dense diets that can help Americans meet key nutrient needs and reduce the risk for chronic diseases of major public health concern.

Thank you.

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