STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
CHARLESTON 25305

Walt Helmick
Commissioner

May 7, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia M. Burwell, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Re: Docket ID No: HHS-OS-2015-0003-0441 (*2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report*)

Dear Secretary Burwell and Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your attention to the comments of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture concerning the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Scientific Report.

To be direct, sustainability considerations of any type of agricultural product do not belong in this report. This advisory group was formed to provide advice on nutrition and health. Offering personal opinions on sustainability is beyond the mandate of the committee, and frankly, quite outside the group's collective area of expertise.

Even within the broad field of sustainability experts, there is a great deal of debate about the true overall environmental impact of animal agriculture.

For example, West Virginia produces a great deal of its beef on land that is not suitable for any other agricultural use. Plus, much of that meat is finished on grass, producing the lean meat that nutritionists recommend as the most healthful. So in this case, we're to believe that producing nothing is more "sustainable" than producing something? And that lean beef is not a nutritious choice because of its carbon footprint?

I believe that if the sustainability recommendations made by the committee are approved as is they will negatively impact West Virginia producers and will be used at a later date to make far-reaching and potentially poor decisions on public health.

Sincerely,

Walt Helmick

Walt Helmick
Commissioner

West Virginia Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity employer.