

## Summary of Peer Review Comments on the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Seven nutrition experts were invited to conduct a confidential peer review of an early draft of the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. They did not meet as a group or know who the other reviewers were. Their charge was to review the draft *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* for clarity and to ensure that the evidence from the Advisory Committee's report was accurately translated into the final document. Each provided detailed edits and comments independently. There were multiple stages of review and revision during development of the policy including 3 major revisions after the version that the peer reviewers reviewed. Overall the reviewers' feedback, which is summarized here, was generally positive, with a majority of the comments being very specific in nature.

Many of the comments were editorial, with suggestions to simplify, clarify, edit, or provide additional contextual information to improve understanding of key concepts and terminology. Recommendations were made to be consistent throughout the document (throughout the text, tables, figures, and appendices) in the order of items discussed (e.g. the food groups and subgroups for vegetables), voice tense, numbering, bullet formatting, etc. and to be consistent in defining and abbreviating terms up front and using less jargon when explaining concepts. Some examples of areas to define and clarify were solid fats versus saturated fats, nutrient density, refined grains, meat versus lean meat, and ounce equivalent versus cup equivalent. Recommendations were made to ensure the glossary contains all key terms found in the text. In several areas, suggestions were made to strengthen the language to be more direct and clear for the reader. Several comments were made that the remaining calories concept in the version they reviewed was unclear and needed work to expand and clarify. Specifically, in chapter 3, suggestions were made for the language to be more action-orientated.

### *Overarching key recommendations*

For the overarching key recommendations, some reviewers were unclear if these were the main "dietary guidelines," and suggestions were made to clarify the levels of recommendation and to strengthen the tone of the recommendations. The terminology for key recommendations should be consistent throughout the text. Several comments were made around the "everything matters" and "make shifts" concepts with suggestions to make the recommendations clearer and more precise.

### *Calories and obesity*

It was suggested more emphasis should be placed on calorie intake and obesity, and on foods for which intake should be decreased. It was suggested that "consume more" should not be used in the key recommendations and instead using "shift" or "substitute" so as to not encourage potential overconsumption of calories. It was suggested that the discussion of oil intake being low should be put in the context of overall fat intake; there was concern that the way it was currently written might lead to consuming additional oil (and calories) rather than substituting for saturated fats.

### *Foods versus Nutrients*

In general, there was some confusion over "food-based guidance" when several sections focus on nutrients. Many comments were made recommending a focus on foods rather than referring to the nutrients themselves. For example, recommendations were made to modify the terminology to say "*foods that contain*" added sugars, saturated fats, etc. Several noted they preferred the term "saturated

fat” over “solid fat” and recommended that both terms be defined earlier in the text. It was suggested to focus more on nutrients of public health concern rather than on under-consumed nutrients. Also, it would be beneficial to clarify that shortfall does not necessarily mean deficiency, so that this information is not misinterpreted. There were comments raised to clearly define the Acceptable Macronutrient Distribution Ranges (AMDR).

#### *Food groups*

There were questions raised as to why vegetables were separated into subgroups and why the same treatment was not applied to fruits. It was also suggested that clarification was needed for “whole fruit,” which could imply that cut up fruit does not have the same benefits as eating a whole piece of fruit. It was suggested that differences between fruit juice and whole fruit be noted since it could be interpreted that fruit juice is the same as whole fruit. Concerns were raised that the text suggests replacing sugar-sweetened beverages with 100% juice, rather than with water or no calorie beverages.

The explanation that beans and peas fit into multiple food groups was helpful. Questions were raised about why dairy and grains were not considered part of the protein food group. The term “dairy products” was suggested instead of “dairy foods” to better encompass what is included in that food group; it should also include low lactose/lactose free and dairy alternatives. When referring to whole grains, it was suggested to edit the text to recommend that “at least half are 100% whole grain” to clarify the recommendation. Clarification was also recommended on seafood sources being recommended for women who are pregnant; it was noted that alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) was not discussed in relationship to eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) in the text or appendix.

#### *Other comments*

A few comments were raised about topics that reviewers felt could use additional focus. Physical activity was noted throughout the text, but a reference to physical activity could be added in some instances where healthy eating [and physical activity] patterns were referenced. Comments were made that sustainability was included in the *Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee* but was not in the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* or the glossary. Suggestions were made to emphasize the role of comprehensive lifestyle interventions delivered by multidisciplinary teams to address weight loss in a variety of settings. Questions were also raised whether the differences between the 2010 and 2015 editions of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* were clearly outlined in the text.