February 19, 2016

Re: Oral Comments to the USDA - Process of Developing Future Editions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Good morning. I am Farida Mohamedshah, Director of Food Health and Nutrition at the Institute of Food Technologists. Founded in 1939, the Institute of Food Technologists is committed to advancing the science of food. Our non-profit scientific society—more than 17,000 members from more than 95 countries—brings together food scientists, technologists and related professionals from academia, government, and industry.

IFT appreciates the invitation to provide comments pertinent to the process of developing future editions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Our comments relate to the selection of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee or DGAC, specifically, the inclusion of food scientists and technologists in the DGAC.

IFT believes that food science and technology play an integral role both in the development and implementation of the Guidelines. We are disappointed that the 2015 DGAC did not include food scientists and technologists. However, IFT appreciated the opportunity to present to the 2015 DGAC on the implications related to past, current, and anticipated changes to food formulations in particular for sodium, added sugars, and fatty acids. Moving forward, we urge the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to ensure that at least one food scientist or technologist is included in the development of future editions of the Dietary Guidelines. I will briefly explain why we think this is needed.

Regardless of the focus of the Guidelines – whether it be eating patterns, food groups, individual components or nutrients in foods, we believe that it is important to consider the advances in our food system made through food science and technology.

Food science and technology have and will continue to play an integral role in delivering safe, nutritious, accessible, affordable, and palatable foods. Food science enhances our ability to deliver nutrients via foods. Integration of food science and technology and nutrition along with collaboration amongst these two disciplines is important to improve the availability, and nutritive quality of foods. Importantly, through food science and technology, we have been able to decrease sodium, saturated fat, trans fat and sugars, and address many of the “shortfall” nutrients, such as calcium, dietary fiber, and magnesium in the food supply as noted in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Food scientists and technologists provide support to a dynamic and rapidly changing food environment, through product reformulation, fortification,
and enrichment, for example. It is crucial that the dietary recommendations are not only evidence-based but practical, realistic and achievable by all consumers including the vulnerable groups.

During the development of future Dietary Guidelines, discussions related to changes in the food supply can only be addressed by food scientists and technologists. Critical insights of these professionals can make significant contributions towards the development of dietary recommendations, consumer behavior, and the health of Americans. More specifically, food science and technology professionals can provide valuable insights into existing technological capabilities and limitations germane to the food supply and its impact on food manufacturing and food safety; sensory appeal of the food; cost and time constraints; and consumer acceptance. Their efforts continue to address innovations related to nutritional challenges, food safety, sensory appeal, and other aspects of the food supply chain.

An integrated approach to health is critical. IFT strongly urges the agencies that as they plan the process for selecting the DGAC for future editions of the Dietary Guidelines, consideration be given to mandating representation from various disciplines including food science and technology. Expertise from food scientists and technologists, nutritionists, medical professionals, and many other professionals will lead to evidence-based Dietary Guidelines that are implementable, along with the development and availability of more nutrient dense and affordable food choices. The Dietary Guidelines is the foundation for many federal, state and local food and nutrition programs, public health interventions, and new product formulations and reformulations. Therefore, IFT also recommends that the USDA continue to ensure that the future DGACs recommendations are supported by the best scientific evidence available at the time.

IFT and our members are committed to assisting with the future Dietary Guidelines process. We believe our technological and scientific capabilities will continue to be of value in the development of the Dietary Guidelines, and for improved food choices for all Americans. Once again, IFT strongly urges the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to ensure that food scientist(s) and technologist(s) are part of the DGAC in the future. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.