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Oral Testimony on the Process for the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Good morning. I am Farida Mohamedshah, Director of Food, Health & Nutrition at the Institute of Food Technologists, also known as IFT. Founded in 1939, IFT is a global organization of more than 17,000 individual members from over 100 countries committed to advancing the science of food to ensure a safe, sustainable, and nutritious food supply that is accessible to all.

IFT appreciates the opportunity to comment on the reports by the National Academies on the Dietary Guidelines process and the 2020 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.

We believe it is important to consider the advances in our food system made using the science of food and technology. The science of food and technology has and will continue to play an integral role in delivering safe, nutritious, accessible, affordable, and palatable foods.

To enhance the integrity of the selection process, the National Academies identified a set of values, including “Promote diversity of expertise and experience”, and recommended that a broad range of expertise and experience must be considered to create a balanced committee. Food science and technology experts can provide valuable insights into existing technological capabilities and limitations germane to the food supply and its impact on food manufacturing and food safety; nutrition, sensory attributes; cost and time constraints; consumer acceptance, and whether the transfer of science-based recommendations into actionable guidance is supported by the food system. Food science and technology experts provide support to a dynamic and rapidly changing food environment, through product reformulation, fortification, and enrichment, for example, to help consumers implement the dietary guidance. It is through the science of food and technology, we can 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 previous guidelines. Therefore, we think that at least one food scientist and technologist should be included in the 2020 DGAC.

The USDA may also consider including food scientists and technologists in the Technical Expert Panel(s) (TEP), depending on the topic(s) for which the TEP(s) is being convened and if expertise in the science of food is deemed as critical for the panel(s).

An integrated approach to improving the nation's health is critical. IFT and our members are committed to assisting with the Dietary Guidelines process. IFT strongly urges the USDA that consideration be given to include broad range of expertise and experience, including food scientists and technologists in the DGAC. We hope the USDA will recognize that the expertise of food scientists and technologists is critical in the development of practical and actionable Dietary Guidelines and will ensure that at least one food scientist and technologist is included in the 2020 DGAC.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact Farida Mohamedshah, Director, Food, Health & Nutrition, (fmohamedshah@ift.org; 202-330-4986) if IFT may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,



Farida Mohamedshah, MS, CNS
Director, Food, Health & Nutrition