

Oral Comments to the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee
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Good Morning. My name is Sue Borra, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on behalf of the Food Marketing Institute, (FMI) the trade association representing the entire food retail industry – from single owner grocery stores and large multi-store supermarket chains, to online retail. In total, FMI member companies represent a combined annual sales volume of almost \$800 billion and operate roughly 33,000 grocery stores.

As a registered dietitian, I am FMI's Chief Health and Wellness Officer, and I also serve as Executive Director of the FMI Foundation, which is dedicated to education and research in the areas of nutrition, health and food safety.

For the 2020 *Guidelines*, FMI supports both the focus on a life stages approach as well as the continued focus on what we eat and drink over time. Dietary guidance must be science-based **and practical** for the consumer to apply to their lifestyle in order to achieve the recommendations.

As this process moves forward an important question must be asked:

How will the Dietary Guidelines encourage and support adherence to the dietary patterns that are identified as being most healthful to Americans?

This is a topic near and dear to FMI, as the supermarket industry has long been committed to helping consumers achieve and maintain a healthy, balanced diet. Retailers have created a marketplace for nutrition and health information, and they continually strive for innovative, new ways to facilitate healthy choices and eating behaviors among shoppers.

In fact, 95% of the supermarket industry employs dietitians, who assist in identifying healthful choices at point-of-purchase, support the preparation of nutritious meals through demonstrations and meal kits and much more. All this positions food retailers in a unique situation to help customers achieve their health goals.

However, **adherence** to the recommended patterns is as important as the patterns themselves, which makes it necessary to explore **how** and **where** the foods and meals that comprise dietary patterns are consumed.

With that in mind, to improve the health of Americans, policy must include guidance related to building healthy habits – which starts at breakfast, lunch and dinner tables.

Existing research (including FMI research) indicates that those who eat and cook at home eat more fruits and vegetable and consume fewer calories, fat, and sugar. Furthermore, current and emerging research indicates children and adolescents who share family meals at home are more likely to be in a normal weight range and have healthier dietary and eating patterns as well as emotional health benefits.

The two previous editions of the *Dietary Guidelines* provide suggestions to eat at home as a means to reduce sodium and as a way to lower calories, and FMI strongly encourages this Committee to also consider the importance of consuming family meals at home, based on existing and emerging research.

In conclusion, the next frontier to benefit public health is truly identifying science-based approaches to increasing adherence to dietary guidance. Encouraging family meals, consumed at home, through the guidelines is a logical approach to consider when developing guidance that facilitates increased diet

Thank you.