



DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES



May 28, 2010

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Whitten Bldg, Room 200A  
Washington DC, 20250

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington DC, 20201

Dear Secretaries Vilsack and Sebelius,

It is my privilege to present to you on behalf of the entire 2010 US Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee the full Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. In the initial charge to this panel, we were asked to “provide science-based advice for Americans, in order to promote health and to reduce the risk for major chronic diseases through diet and physical activity.” More specifically, this involved, among other tasks, that we base our Report upon “the preponderance of the most current scientific and medical knowledge, and determine what issues for change need to be addressed,” with a “primary focus on the review of scientific evidence published since the last DGAC deliberations” and place “primary emphasis on the development of food-based recommendations.” We attended to each of these objectives and much more during the past 20 months and we are in consensus and committed to the content and recommendations delineated in the enclosed Report.

It has been a remarkable journey, filled with extensive investigation and critical evidence-based review, covering relevant aspects of diet and health. Just under 200 specific questions related to dietary guidance were initially identified and most were addressed. With assistance from the USDA Nutrition Evidence Library (NEL), and additional hand searches involving other extensive databases, the Committee formulated answers to the questions that it believes reflect the most current scientific evidence. In addition to the expertise represented by our members, we had the outstanding and able assistance of Dietary Guidelines Management Team staff members from both USDA and HHS, without whom this task would have been impossible. We also appreciate crucial input from the Federal staff from both USDA and HHS who each deserve recognition for their invaluable contributions.

The single most sobering aspect of this Report is the recognition that we are addressing an overweight and obese American population. Across all age, gender and ethnic groups, it is clear that urgent and systems-wide efforts are needed to address America’s obesity epidemic as

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top priority. Everything within this Report is presented through the filter of an obesogenic environment in critical need of change. This is especially true in regard to American children whose incidence of obesity has tripled in the past five years. This desperately requires an all out effort to improve diet and physical activity behaviors across the country. The Committee is united in its resolve to provide recommendations that halt and reverse this rampant epidemic. This will require extensive collaboration and implementation of a unified effort to help reduce calorie intake, increase physical activity output and enhance the overall nutrient density of dietary intake. While the research evidence is now substantial and detailed in most cases, there remain gaps in the science that required us to use clinical judgment to help reconcile some of these missing pieces in order to provide reasonable recommendations on the basis of combined knowledge and data. In these cases, the assistance of food pattern modeling, contributed specifically by the highly capable team at the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, provided those necessary translational linkages when epidemiologic data were unavailable.

In this regard, we encourage you to do everything possible to increase funding for greatly needed research studies on numerous, important and highly strategic nutrition issues raised throughout this Report. Specifically, in ultimately drafting our conclusion statements, the DGAC was struck by the number of questions that simply could not be addressed due to the absence of data or limitations due to inconclusive findings. Likewise, we urge you to further emphasize the importance of keeping current with the ongoing National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) data. The 2015 DGAC should be provided with the opportunity to study the impact of the 2010 Report by having access to the most current, accurate and detailed NHANES nutrient data available at that time. Steps should be taken to update these data as quickly as possible in order to maintain an accurate and ongoing view of America's dietary intake. In addition, the time has come to consider including all Americans, from birth on, as part of these results since research increasingly points to the importance of diet, even in utero, in shaping future health. Subsequent reports should include a focus on pregnancy, breastfeeding behavior and early diet from birth on.

In summary, every member of this Committee has worked diligently, collaboratively and tirelessly to produce this landmark Report. When differences of interpretation were debated from time to time, the mutual respect and admiration expressed for each and every member of this group has been nothing short of inspirational. The Committee looks forward to seeing the final Report become available online, as well as the subsequent documents, discussion and translational tools that will surely be generated. Thank you for your steadfast support, enthusiasm and recognition. We remain encouraged and hopeful that the American public will take these recommendations to heart and benefit extensively from their implementation.

Sincerely,



Linda V. Van Horn, PhD, RD  
Chair, 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee  
Professor, Department of Preventive Medicine  
Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine

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