

July 15, 2022

RE: Input for White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Dear White House Conference Organizers:

The undersigned organizations, members of the Grain Chain, a grains industry coalition from farm to table, appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the White House regarding its upcoming Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. The Grain Chain's members represent the entire supply chain – from farmers and millers, to grain processors and end users. All prioritize and are committed to improving food access and affordability, while empowering all consumers to make and have access to healthy food choices.

The Grain Chain fully endorses and supports the comments and recommendations from the Food and Beverage Industry Association (FBIA) submitted to the White House regarding the Nutrition Conference, focusing on equity and access, funding, research, public-private partnerships, and innovation.

In addition, we are providing our grain-industry specific input and recommendations to emphasize grain foods' critical role in a healthful diet, both in the United States and globally.

Pillar #1 Improve food access and affordability: End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and Tribal communities — to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available.

- Grain Chain members are constantly innovating, with a goal of providing food retailers, food service, and feeding programs a wide range of nutritious, affordable, and easy to prepare grain foods for consumers of every age and ethnicity.

Examples of recent grain food innovations include: white wheat bread – a new variety of whole grain product; whole grain rich cereals; whole grain pasta; and folic acid fortified enriched masa tortillas.

- Exploring new solutions to healthful, affordable, and sustainable foods, including grains, is imperative. Food producers can respond to this need quickly if recommended foods are available using current supply chain and packaging options.

Pillar #2 Integrate nutrition and health: Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

Enriched grain foods provide nourishment and food security for many culturally-diverse households and age groups.

- Enriched grains contain folic acid, a critical nutrient for brain and spinal cord development during pregnancy. Since folic acid fortification of enriched grain foods became mandatory in 1998, the prevalence of babies born with neural tube defects (NTDs) has decreased by 35% in the U.S. In recognition of this accomplishment, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) named folic acid fortification one of the top 10 public health achievements of the first decade of the 21st century.
- Research clearly shows that total grain consumption results in positive health outcomes.
 - Total grain consumption, both refined and whole grains, is associated with lower risk of all-cause mortality and incidence of type 2 diabetes, and not associated with higher risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, stroke, or cancer.
 - Meta-analyses on the health benefits of whole grains are numerous and consistently positive. They show inverse relationships between whole-grain consumption and risk of major chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke, and lower risk of dying prematurely from any cause
- Enriched grain foods fill critical gaps in shortfall nutrients such as iron, folate, and three B vitamins -- riboflavin, niacin, and thiamin. In

fact, riboflavin and thiamin are added back at twice the original amounts found in whole grain

- Enriched grains like bread, cereal and tortillas also supply about half of dietary iron in the US. Iron deficiency anemia is still a significant cause of poor pregnancy outcomes and poor health in general in women of child-bearing age and in young children.
- Members of the Grain Chain, with our culturally-diverse applications of wheat and rice products, provide healthful, nourishing food for nutrition assistance programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), National School Lunch and Breakfast programs; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- Grain foods often provide some fiber, B vitamins, iron, and some protein, and help improve diet quality, especially when paired with healthy low-calorie, high protein foods (e.g., beans, lean meats), and increasing fruit and vegetable intake (e.g., tomato sauce, salsa, or pesto). The 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) recommend frequently including at least three food groups at each meal: whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. The DGAs deemed these three foods essential to the plate.

Pillar #3 Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy

choices: Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.

- Grain Chain organizations and their members pro-actively engage in creative efforts to integrate messages about health equity, cost consciousness, and nutrient density in nutrition communications to assist diverse demographic groups navigate and make informed decisions in food choices. However, it is clear that innovative, and broader communications

strategies and public-private partnerships are needed in order to reach intended audiences.

- The Grain Chain regularly provides input to federal nutrition policy. Last year, we proactively met with USDA Under Secretary for the Food and Nutrition Service Stacy Dean and her team to strategize on how the grains industry can partner with the Agency to build synergies for a stronger public-private partnership as well as opportunities for partnership to promote the sustainability of a grain-based diet.
- When the 2020 Dietary Guidelines were published, the Grain Chain created a website dedicated to grain nutrition, www.GoGrains.org. The site includes recipes, a messaging toolkit for nutrition communicators, as well as links to important research studies about grains and health. It highlights the scope and breadth of grain foods which speaks to the cultural diversity of our food supply and provides numerous ways to create healthy ethnic cuisine and adapt to consumer personal preferences.
- A number of Grain Chain members are USDA MyPlate National Strategic Partners, joining with other industry sector groups in targeted education campaigns to increase consumer knowledge about healthy eating and encourage food choices that will improve public health and well-being.
- The Grain Chain produced a consumer video series hosted by a registered dietitian on economical ways to incorporate grains into every eating occasion, including tips on preparation, storage, and savvy shopping. The videos were featured on the USDA MyPlate website.

Pillar #4 Support physical activity for all: Make it easier for people to be more physically active (in part by ensuring that everyone has access to safe places to be active), increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity, and conduct research on and measure physical activity.

- The Grain Chain strongly supports emphasizing physical activity and the critical need for balance when addressing Americans' overall healthfulness and issues of overweight and obesity. Whole and enriched grain foods are complex carbohydrates that fuel active lifestyles and provide nutrients the

body needs to re-charge after physical activity. The Grain Chain strongly supports emphasizing physical activity when addressing Americans' overall healthfulness and issues of overweight and obesity. Whole and enriched grain foods are carbohydrates that fuel active lifestyles and provide essential nutrients.

- Obesity does not indicate nutritional adequacy. In fact, it may indicate poor diet quality, particularly when poverty is a factor. A focus on nutrient density, as well as total diet, alongside calorie deficit for weight loss is essential.
- The White House Conference planners should also be sensitive and mindful of messaging to consumers with eating disorders regarding messages about body weight image and calories. Eating disorders and body image are multi-layered and extremely complicated issues and need to be addressed by experts in these areas.

Pillar #5 Enhance nutrition and food security research: Improve nutrition metrics, data collection, and research to inform nutrition and food security policy, particularly on issues of equity, access, and disparities.

- Grain Chain members have long supported the important work of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) flagship research programs – the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Economic Research Service (ERS) – as mainstays of the full range of food and agriculture-related research. We support expanded research to address nutrition and health equity.

Grain Chain Feedback to the Conference

- As planners finalize details for the September White House Conference, the Grain Chain encourages awareness of the 2025-2030 DGA process that began in April 2022. Discussions and actions resulting from the White House Conference will influence the ongoing DGA process. The White House Conference can enhance this process by using strong evidence-based criteria to create recommendations that are consistent with existing federal nutrition policy rules.

- We also encourage the Conference planners to clearly define terminology for such descriptors as “nutrient-dense,” “non-dairy,” “non-meat alternatives,” “ultra-processed,” “processed,” and “minimally processed.” Definitions must be data-driven and evidence-based with clear consensus around the scientific evidence.

Grain Chain Commitment Statement

The 1969 White House Conference on Nutrition was a landmark event, resulting in a number of actions that directly addressed hunger, nutrition, and food access. As grain producers, processors and food makers that provide some of the most-widely eaten and universally enjoyed staples in the American diet – whole and enriched bread, crackers, cereal, pasta, tortillas, and rice – we stand ready to work with government and industry to identify steps toward a healthier America and, most importantly, put those steps into concrete action.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input and feedback as you prepare for the September Nutrition Conference and look forward to working with the White House, other federal agencies, Congress, and other industry groups to achieve a healthier and more equitable food system for the benefit of all Americans.

For additional information, please contact Lee Sanders, Senior Vice President, Government Relations & Public Affairs, American Bakers Association.

Sincerely,

American Bakers Association

AIB International

Cereals and Grains Association

Independent Bakers Association

National Pasta Association

National Association of Wheat Growers

North American Millers’ Association

Retail Bakers of America

U.S. Wheat Associates

USA Rice Federation

Wheat Foods Council