

Grain Chain DGA Oral Comment

Good afternoon, DGAC members. My name is Sam Schneider and I am a rice farmer and miller and owner of Inland Cape Rice Company in Missouri. I serve as the Chair of the Nutrition subcommittee for USA Rice. I am speaking on behalf of the Grain Chain, a grains industry Coalition from farm to fork.

A diet rich in grains has numerous health benefits, including reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke. Enriched grains like some pastas, bread, and rice provide essential nutrients like iron and B vitamins while whole grains provide additional nutrients like fiber and have been found to lower the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

We urge the DGAC to carefully consider how they are addressing ultra-processed foods given that the term does not have a consistent, science-based definition and the breadth and quality of the research on UPFs is limited. Enriched grains, which have mistakenly been considered ultra-processed foods, make up 95% of all refined grains, contribute to a healthy diet, and can affordably provide nutritional benefits for all consumers, including those who are food insecure. Whole grains are greatly under-consumed and more than 90% of adults fall short of recommended fiber intake. We urge the DGAC to draft recommendations that fully consider the many important benefits of processing as they evaluate the evidence. Recommendations to eliminate or reduce ultra-processed foods may adversely affect consumption of key nutrients and food groups, like grains. Therefore, recommendations should support the consumption of grains as they provide critical nutritional benefits, including many that were deemed “under-consumed” in the last DGA.

Grain consumption is essential throughout the lifespan, including nutrients necessary for infant growth and development like folate.

While low-carbohydrate diets have gained some interest among the public, the DGAC should continue to recommend consumption of nutrient-dense carbohydrate foods like grains. The Grain Chain is aligned with the approach by past DGAs that a diet lower than 45% of calories from carbohydrates is considered “low carb.” We support the DGAC in its efforts to explore “staple carbs” as a means of achieving health equity and highlighting the diverse range of nutrient-rich grains, like rice, that different cultures use to meet their nutritional needs.

Thank you.