
**STATEMENT BY
KAM QUARLES
VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC POLICY
NATIONAL POTATO COUNCIL**

**BEFORE THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
2020 DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS
LISTENING SESSION
NOVEMBER 28, 2017**

My name is Kam Quarles and I am the Vice President of Public Policy for the National Potato Council (NPC). The NPC provides a unified voice for U.S. potato growers and represents the interests of the U.S. potato industry on national issues. We thank the Department of Agriculture (USDA) for inviting comments on this important Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) process that will inform nutrition policy decisions in the U.S. for 5 years (2020-2025).

In general, NPC is supportive of the recent recommendations within the two National Academies of Sciences reports on optimizing the committee selection and redesigning the process. We would like to highlight three key ways that the National Academies report can be used to improve the 2020 DGAs:

1. Enhanced transparency
2. Prioritization of topics
3. Increased scientific rigor

We strongly support more transparency in the process, which, given these listening sessions, we are pleased to see is already occurring. Beyond these sessions, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) committee specifically recommended six points within the process where it would be valuable to either update the public on the development and/or when public input should be accepted. We feel these transparency enhancements are key and we encourage the USDA to enact them to the fullest extent possible.

As USDA works to begin the 2020-2025 DGA process, we encourage the determination of clear priorities and that those priorities are made public. By taking this action, it would allow the National Potato Council, and the potato industry research branch, the Alliance for Potato Research and Education, and numerous other participants with valuable insight to better assist with the process, through nominating appropriate experts, research and other targeted resources. Specifically, it would be valuable for USDA to recommend priorities that would better inform policies in the federal feeding programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women & Infant Children (WIC) and school meals.

Lastly, when it comes to making recommendations that can be relied upon for future policy decisions, we feel it is imperative that USDA let the science lead the policy development. The DGA process should use the best available science to identify the nutrients of concern and the relationship of those nutrients

to the needs of program eligible populations. Nutrition science, if consistently and rigorously applied, will yield dietary recommendations that are trusted and meaningful.

A specific example that is important to our industry is that white potatoes should be evaluated based on the nutrients they offer to the important subpopulations in each federal feeding or nutrition program. In that regard, a recent NASEM Committee reviewed the WIC package and looked specifically at the nutrient availability of white potatoes to participants. Based on that review, the Committee recommended including white potatoes in the WIC program.

To that point, we understand that work is being done on the development of guidelines for birth-to-24-months and pregnant-and-lactating mothers. However, we have not been informed on where this process stands and are quite concerned that adequate research may be too limited for the government to publish scientifically sound and definitive recommendations for such a vulnerable group. Given potatoes' role in the WIC program, we would enjoy any opportunity to assist the Agency with filling research gaps that likely exist among this very special population. We feel solid research is the only basis for which strong recommendations can be made and encourage the Agency to consider providing an update on the research gaps. Given the vulnerability of the participants that WIC serves, final recommendations should not be published until those gaps are filled.

The Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) review on sodium and potassium is about to be underway and therefore, we urge the Agency to wait to make recommendations on those two nutrients until that review is complete. We strongly believe that all science being used for these recommendations needs to be peer reviewed and Nutrition Evidence Library process needs to be strengthened according to Cochrane and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality standards, as the National Academies' report dictates.

In closing, we would like to reiterate support for the DGA process to move forward in a transparent manner to provide the most scientifically sound recommendations to the American public.

Thank you again for considering the views of the U.S. potato industry on these important federal policies.