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Nutrition Policy and Dietary Guidelines Updates

Policy decisions will affect beef's role in the diet.

by **Kindra Gordon**, field editor

More than 8,100 cattlemen attending the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show in San Antonio, Texas, Feb. 4-7 had the opportunity to hear the latest information and policy affecting beef's role in the diet.

Dietary guidelines update

Since May 2013, a 14-member Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) has convened seven public meetings to gather comments and review scientific evidence related to dietary health. The committee, which is supposed to be primarily composed of scientists and medical doctors, is tasked with creating a report with their recommendations for the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The guidelines are updated every five years as a joint effort between USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Beef checkoff staff have been involved

in this process from the start, including nominating eight scientists for appointment to the 2015 DGAC and providing testimony and public comment on beef nutrition research. Shalene McNeill, executive director of Human Nutrition Research, Education and Innovation with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), provided a brief update on the *Dietary Guidelines* process at the convention.

McNeill emphasized that the *Dietary Guidelines* are critically important because they establish the national nutrition policy, which influences federal, military and school lunch programs. Additionally, the guidelines influence health professionals in their food recommendations to clients, as well as packaging and marketing of foods.

McNeill said, "Consumers may not know the specific *Dietary Guidelines*, but what they hear about the guidelines does impact their choices." As an example, she said that

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Americans have had "a steady drumbeat telling them to eat less beef and increase their consumption of fish," which has been what the *Dietary Guidelines* have recommended in past years. She continued, "They'd eat more beef if they felt better about including

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it in their diet [e.g., if the *Dietary Guidelines* recommended beef].

The final DGAC public meeting was convened in December 2014. Its final report was released in February 2015. The report will then be delivered to the secretaries of Health and Human Services and USDA, who ultimately set the policy for the new guidelines.

Beef industry concern has been raised several times during the committee's process.

- Some of the DGAC's initial considerations focused on the food environment and systems — including sustainability — which beef industry proponents felt was outside the scope of the committee's work and expertise in nutrition.

- The beef checkoff-funded *Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet* (BOLD) study

was excluded from the USDA National Evidence Library, which the DGAC uses as the basis for its recommendations. Despite several attempts by beef checkoff staff requesting reconsideration for inclusion of the study, it was denied.

- At the seventh and final public meeting of the DGAC in December 2014, the committee defined common characteristics of dietary patterns associated with positive health outcomes. Initially, the recommendation to “consume lean meat” was included in those dietary patterns. However, after a private meeting, “lean meat” was removed from the recommended pattern and the recommendation to “lower consumption of red and processed meat” was included.

McNeill said the beef industry is now awaiting the release of the committee's final report. She emphasized that beef checkoff staff will provide public comment when that occurs. She added that the staff will continue working to generate credible evidence about the nutrition benefits of beef in a healthy diet, as well as increasing scientific acceptance of

positive beef nutrition research.

She also encouraged others to do their part to educate and influence family and friends about the nutrient- and protein-rich benefits of beef.

Lastly, during the update session a brief audio clip was played featuring Richard Gebhart, who serves as the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association president and vice chairman of the Oklahoma Beef Council,

questioning USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack about concerns that the nation's *Dietary Guidelines* could remove beef from its recommendations. The exchange occurred on Jan. 30 at an event in Oklahoma celebrating the one-year enactment of the Farm Bill (you can listen at <http://bit.ly/1E6FAGo>).

Vilsack responded by saying he was monitoring the situation and has told the DGAC that he has concerns

and some reservations scientifically about the guidelines.

He also stated, “I am emphasizing the word ‘recommendations’ for a reason ... because it doesn't necessarily mean that is what the guideline will be or should be. It is what this group believes ought to be.”

Vilsack concluded his comments emphasizing moderation: “It's moderation of all things. It's not excluding something, it's just moderation.”

Vindication of butter, meat & cheese

“Bacon is better for your hips than pasta,” said Nina Teicholz as she addressed the American National CattleWomen Inc. (ANCW) during their general session Feb. 5.

Teicholz is an investigative journalist who has spent the past decade studying the existing nutrition research on dietary fats.

What she found is that nutrition science has had extreme selection bias in the past that led to the low-fat nutrition recommendations — and has most likely contributed to obesity and poorer health in America. In truth, other research has proven that dietary fat — including saturated

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PHOTO BY KINDRA GORDON

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fat — is what leads to better health, wellness and fitness.

Teicholz, a former vegetarian herself, has documented these findings in her book *The Big Fat Surprise: Why Butter, Meat & Cheese Belong in a Healthy Diet*. The book has stirred many conversations and has earned much recognition, including being named Best Book of 2014 by *The Economist*; Most Memorable Healthcare book of 2014 by *Forbes.com*, and a Top 10 Nonfiction pick of 2014 by *The Wall Street Journal*.

Not surprisingly, there have been some unwilling to accept Teicholz's conclusions. She shared that no New York publication has printed one word acknowledging the book — despite the fact she was a frequent contributor to many of those publications with her past work. She believes liberals are not willing to acknowledge the book because they “are squarely on board with environmental arguments against meat.”

She added, “There's all this amazing science that seems to vindicate meat. There have been a lot of good headlines about how fat doesn't make you fat. However, the bias against meat has never been stronger. The USDA website has vegetarian and vegan options.” She noted that there is certainly a movement toward a plant-based diet in America's society — and even the White House.

“There's a tremendous challenge to your



group and community to combat this,” Teicholz said to CattleWomen and other beef industry proponents in attendance. She challenged them to “Study and reclaim your history and study the science to help restore the health of America.”

She concluded, “Inform congressmen, engage journalists; [your] efforts are needed on many different levels.”

Learn more about Teicholz’s book at www.thebigfatsurprise.com/.

Continuing beef nutrition research update

Purdue University professor Wayne Campbell provided updates about ongoing research looking at protein’s role in the diet. Campbell shared his remarks with the beef checkoff’s Nutrition and Health Subcommittee meeting Feb. 6. Campbell, who works in the Department of Nutrition Science and serves as director of the Indiana Clinical Research Center, said the focus for most of the work conducted by his research team is on interactions among nutrition, exercise, physiology and aging.

“Our goal is nutrition and fitness research to help us be healthier as we get old,” he stated. Some of the research conducted by Campbell and his associates has been funded with beef checkoff dollars during the last 15 years.

He emphasized that research takes time. He has been a researcher for 25 years and has published 120 papers in research journals or other publications. About 40% of his work during the past two decades has focused on protein.

Campbell said one of the fundamental research questions they are interested in is: How much protein and what types of protein-rich foods should older adults consume? He added, “You’d really think we would have figured this out a long time ago.” The answer has still not been determined — and agreed upon — by the scientific community.

One study that Campbell’s team is involved with is currently focused on examining the effects of dietary protein quantity and different sources of protein on weight-loss-induced changes in body composition and health of middle-aged and older adults.

Campbell noted it is important to not lose muscle as you age, and said, “We need to continue to move toward protein recommendations based on function and health outcomes.”

He shared that some studies looking at protein intake indicate that individuals

Agriculture & food policy

The NCBA Agriculture & Food Policy Committee met Feb. 6. Attendees from across the nation heard reports from speakers addressing issues such as immigration and border security, human dietary guidelines and beef carcass grading.

Stephanie Gadbois, senior counsel for the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, explained how that group’s chairman, Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), favors replacing the H-2A program applied to foreign agricultural workers seeking temporary or seasonal work in the United States. According to Gadbois, the Congressman has proposed an “H-2C” program, which would be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture instead of the Secretary of Labor. Gadbois said the new program would involve less red tape while easing access to a supply of labor. She emphasized that the proposed H-2C program is not a pathway to citizenship for guest workers, and Congressman Goodlatte favors the naturalization process for guest workers wanting to become U.S. citizens.

NCBA Washington, D.C., staffer Christina Butz explained how the advisory council responsible for making recommendations for USDA’s *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* caused concern in cattle country when lean meat was dropped from the list of foods recommended for inclusion in a healthful diet. Butz introduced Purdue University nutrition scientist Wayne Campbell, a member of said advisory committee. Campbell emphasized that the committee report does not constitute a finalized version of new dietary guidelines. He said the omission from the guidelines resulted from a lack of a definition differentiating lean meat from processed meat.

Stating that he spoke only for himself and not the advisory committee, Campbell said, “I’m an omnivore and my diet includes meat. Nothing I have found in my research, in over 20 years, suggests that the inclusion of meat will compromise a healthy diet. That’s my personal opinion.”

Lawrence Yates of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service addressed the group, explaining how potential changes to the beef grading system are being studied. Yates said some proposed changes would be administrative, but it has also been suggested that the formula by which carcass yield grade is calculated is not sufficiently accurate. As a result, some loss of value might occur.

“Extensive industry input is needed since grading system changes could impact markets,” stated Yates. “If changes are adopted, they will be based on strong science and abundant data.”



— by Troy Smith, field editor

eating more than the recommended daily allowance for protein showed less change in fat-free mass (i.e., muscle), indicating that the increased protein consumption was beneficial.

Additionally, he shared that including red meats as part of a healthy diet may have several positive impacts. It increases satiety or fullness; it may help lower blood pressure; and initial studies suggest sleep quality is improved with protein, particularly red meat, consumption.

Campbell was one of the 14 people on the DGAC that had been meeting during the past 18 months to develop recommendations for the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines* to be announced later this year.

Because the committee’s report had not yet been released, Campbell would not speak publically about the committee process, but did say, “The Dietary Guidelines Advisory

Committee has no role in policymaking. We issue a report with recommendations, and the USDA and Department of Health and Human Services jointly set and publish the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.”

The DGAC issued its report as anticipated Feb. 19. The public is encouraged to submit written comments to the federal government on the Advisory Report. Public comments will be accepted through midnight EDT April 8, 2015. For information on how to comment, visit <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2015/comments/>.



Editor’s Note: This article includes Angus Journal coverage of the 2015 Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show. Comprehensive coverage of the event is available in the newsroom at www.4cattlemen.com.