



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

January 10, 2017

Oral Testimony on the Process of Developing Future Editions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Provided by Sarah Ohlhorst, MS, RD, ASN Senior Director of Advocacy and Science Policy

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the process used to develop the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). ASN is a scientific, professional society with more than 5,000 members who conduct nutrition research to help all individuals live healthier lives.

The major challenge ASN members face in implementing the DGAs is that regular updates of the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) are needed. The DGAs are dependent on the DRIs, but the DRIs are outdated. The DRIs must be based on current scientific evidence to ensure that identification of nutrients of public health concern and other nutrient needs used in the development of the DGAs are accurate. Updating the DRIs should be prioritized before the next edition of the DGAs is developed. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Database and other relevant databases that serve as the foundation for nutrients and dietary patterns should be continually updated.

ASN supports the continued use of a strong evidence-based approach to inform the development of future editions of the DGAs. ASN also supports rigorous systematic review of all the evidence on key topics, based on the National Academies' Standards for Systematic Review. Consideration is needed on how to strategically update the availability of new evidence for systematic reviews in the Nutrition Evidence Library. Achievement of high quality of evidence requires continued investment in nutrition research that promotes the health of all Americans; this peer-reviewed scientific evidence provides the fundamental basis for the DGAs.

ASN sees many opportunities for future editions of the DGAs to promote chronic disease prevention and ensure nutritional sufficiency. The DGAs have an opportunity to go beyond advising Americans on what to eat and will help individuals understand how to change their behavior in order to improve eating habits and nutrients consumed. Future editions of the DGAs may feature culturally specific dietary patterns to better reflect our multicultural society.

Chronic disease prevention should continue to be a focus of future DGAs. ASN supports the consideration of diet and nutritional biomarkers for chronic disease endpoints when developing dietary recommendations that address health and disease. However, the development of recommendations should not be hindered or delayed by the process of discovery and validation of nutritional biomarkers for diet-related disease risk.

More emphasis on implementing the DGAs and moving Americans toward DGA compliance is needed. ASN recommends that collaborators continue to be engaged to ensure the DGAs are widely disseminated to the public and will support improved public health outcomes. Thank you!