



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA TO SPONSOR WEB-BASED NUTRITION GAMING CONTEST IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S OPEN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9, 2009 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS) is launching the **Innovations for Healthy Kids Challenge**, which supports the President's Open Government Initiative by holding a national contest that will promote healthier dietary habits among children.

"The **Innovations for Healthy Kids Challenge** highlights the Obama Administration's commitment to combating childhood obesity and improving the nutritional health of America's youth," said Vilsack. "We are excited to spur innovation by making it easier for high-tech companies and individuals to identify collaborative, entrepreneurial opportunities. Those who participate in this challenge will be important partners in helping our kids make smarter choices about the foods they eat."

USDA released a dataset with 1,000 of the most common food items as well as open source codes from USDA nutrition resources to enable development of a Web-based learning application that incorporates the USDA-generated dataset. This challenge is open to entrepreneurs, software developers and students to design a creative and educational game targeted to kids, especially "tweens," aged 9-12. The dataset is available to the public on Data.gov and MyPyramid.gov.

The Web-based games will help motivate kids to learn about healthy dietary habits and the importance of eating more nutritional foods. Using the foods dataset, the game should be centered on educational messages that emphasize one or more key nutrition concepts from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DietaryGuidelines.gov) and the MyPyramid Food Guidance System (MyPyramid.gov).

The FNCS Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion will begin accepting fully developed Web-based games in the spring of 2010 that will be judged by a panel of public and private sector nutrition and gaming experts. The Popular Choice winner will be selected based on public votes, so stay tuned for more information.

Additional details will be posted at MyPyramid.gov as they are available. The dataset containing more than 1,000 commonly eaten foods and the open source code used for MyFood-a-pedia and the MyPyramid Menu Planner are available on the Website.

For examples of USDA-developed nutrition games and resources, visit the [MyPyramid Blast Off Game](#), [My Pyramid Menu Planner](#), and [MyFood-a-pedia](#).

For detailed information about the **Innovations for Healthy Kids Challenge**, go to MyPyramid.gov.

Congress is currently considering reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, which provides a historic opportunity to advance the health and nutrition of America's children through the National School Lunch Program and other USDA feeding programs. Improving the health and nutrition of kids across the country is a priority of the Obama Administration, as evidenced by the President's request for \$10 billion in additional funding over ten years to improve our Child Nutrition Programs to help reduce barriers and improve access; and to enhance nutritional quality and the health of the school environment.

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