



**Intended Remarks of Susan Backus, Vice President of Regulatory and Scientific Programs  
To the  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Listening Session**

**November 28, 2017**

Good morning, I am Susan Backus, vice president of regulatory and scientific programs at the North American Meat Institute. Consumer health and safety are the driving forces in the production of meat and poultry products. The meat and poultry industry is committed to offering nutrient-dense protein food products, while working continuously to produce safe and wholesome food. The Meat Institute appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (National Academies) reports on the Dietary Guidelines, as well as additional insights on the process.

The Dietary Guidelines serve as the foundation for nutritional policies and are intended to measurably improve the health of Americans. The Meat Institute supports dietary guidance that is practical, achievable and affordable and that helps Americans achieve a more healthful diet. The Meat Institute appreciates USDA's priorities for the *2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to be transparent, data driven and science based.

There are two key areas from the National Academies report on the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) selection process that are relevant for the 2020 Advisory Committee: promoting diversity of expertise and experience among the Committee members and managing conflicts of interests and biases.

The Advisory Committee must include representatives from a cross-section of disciplines and professions to ensure a balance of experiences and perspectives are considered. Broad representation would minimize bias and ensure all perspectives are considered based on scientific merit. In order to minimize conflicts of interest and bias and preserve a wide range of viewpoints, it is important the Advisory Committee is selected through a transparent process.

The National Academies report, *Redesigning the Process for Establishing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, also has several recommendations that could improve the development of future Guidelines. These include: USDA and HHS prioritizing topics to be reviewed in each Dietary Guidelines cycle; a clear separation between USDA's Nutrition Evidence Library staff and the Advisory Committee; and ensuring all Nutrition Evidence Library systematic reviews align with best practices.

USDA and HHS identifying and prioritizing topics allows for thorough evaluations on issues where there are data gaps or where new scientific evidence may be used in the review of a research question to determine if there is support to change dietary advice. A more narrowed focus aids time and resource management while ensuring the breadth and scope of the evidence supports the scientific recommendations.

The Nutrition Evidence Library should also function in a transparent, independent fashion using established evidence evaluation procedures, and with formal oversight to ensure that the Library serves its function as a repository of high-quality evidence and to confirm its use of evidence-based methodology to evaluate this evidence. Ensuring the systematic reviews adhere to best practices provides another layer of transparency and demonstrates the evidentiary standard supporting dietary recommendations.

In addition to the National Academies reports, the Meat Institute believes it is important to make systematic review study design criteria publicly available to ensure appropriate research can be submitted for inclusion in the review or designed for future reviews.

The 2020 Dietary Guidelines will include recommendations for pregnant and birth to 24 months populations. Given this new responsibility, it is imperative for the Advisory Committee and Departments to develop recommendations transparently and supported by strong scientific evidence. However, the evidence is limited in these populations and in the absence of strong evidence, recommendations should not be made.

The Meat Institute looks forward to participating in the *2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* process. Thank you for this opportunity.