



May 17, 2024

THE HONORABLE SUSAN M. COLLINS
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

Thank you for your letter dated March 26, 2024, cosigned by your colleagues and jointly addressed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regarding the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's work regarding vegetables, including potatoes.

We appreciate the opportunity to correct misinformation that has been circulating and creating misunderstanding. Let us assure you that there is no intent and no effort underway to reclassify potatoes as a grain, nor are there analyses singling out potatoes.

USDA and HHS are in the midst of the multi-year process to develop the next edition of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. At this time, an external Federal Advisory Committee of scientific experts – the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee – is reviewing the evidence on scientific questions related to nutrition and health to inform its scientific report that will be submitted to USDA and HHS later this year.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans is a framework for healthy eating, not a one-size-fits-all mold everyone must fit into. The U.S. population is diverse, and this is reflected in what and how we eat. In exploring the flexibility of the [USDA Dietary Patterns](#) in the Dietary Guidelines, the Committee is examining data within and across food groups. For example, in some population groups in the United States, vegetables or legumes like beans, peas, or lentils (e.g., corn, beans, taro root) might be emphasized more than breads, pasta, or rice. These analyses are based on known dietary preferences of certain population groups in the United States, and the intention is to better understand the nutritional impacts of these dietary patterns. Additionally, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) noted in its study reports on the Dietary Guidelines development process the importance of advancements that could help yield insights on “providing flexibility in food and taste preferences, cultural norms, and other individual factors.”

This analysis will help the Committee more equitably consider the diversity of foodways and range of population needs, norms, and preferences in the United States. It is part of the Committee's work using [three approaches](#) to examine the scientific evidence on a broad range of topics that will inform their advice to HHS and USDA as the Departments develop the next edition of the Dietary Guidelines.

The Committee's work is available to the public, as is the Committee's discussions and deliberation at its [meetings](#), which are all open to the public. We continue to encourage all who are interested to stay connected via [DietaryGuidelines.gov](#) and [participating in our process](#).

Again, thank you for the opportunity to correct the misunderstanding on this topic. A similar response has been sent to your colleagues who cosigned the letter of March 26, 2024. If you have any questions about this response, please have a member of your staff contact the USDA Office of Congressional Relations at (202) 720-7095.

Sincerely,



THOMAS J. VILSACK
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

XAVIER BECERRA
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

Cc:

Hon. Michael Bennet
Hon. Maria Cantwell
Hon. Kevin Cramer
Hon. Mike Crapo
Hon. Steve Daines
Hon. John Hickenlooper
Hon. John Hoeven
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