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USDA Releases School Meal Nutrition Standards, Recognizes the Unique Nutrient Package of Dairy Foods

Dairy Industry Innovations Meet New Nutrient-Dense Meal Requirements

ST. PAUL, Minn. – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) new Nutritional Standards for School Meals help ensure the nation’s schoolchildren have access to lunches and breakfasts that meet federal dietary guidance for good nutrition. The standards will encourage students to meet federal recommendations for dairy consumption by requiring that either fat-free flavored milk or low-fat or fat-free white milk be offered with each school meal. As the number one food source of three of the four nutrientsⁱ the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans identified as lacking in children’s diets (vitamin D, calcium and potassiumⁱⁱ), milk plays an important role in delivering critical nutrients.

“On average, by the time they are 4 years old, children fall below the Dietary Guidelines for Americans’ recommended dairy intake.^{i, iii} By requiring that schools offer low-fat or fat-free milk with every meal, these standards can help children come closer to meeting their nutrient needs,” said Jean H. Ragalie, R.D., President of National Dairy Council. “Building nutrient-rich school meals is an important step toward helping students develop healthy eating patterns at an early age, and we commend the USDA for making important updates to school nutrition standards at a time when providing children access to proper nutrition has never been more important.”

While the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends increasing intake of low fat and fat free milk, especially among children, the new school meal standards include a provision that all flavored milk offered in school be fat-free. Working together, dairy farmers, milk processors and schools have proactively reformulated milk and milk products to meet children’s taste and nutrient needs. Since 2006, added sugars in chocolate milk offered in schools have been reduced by an estimated 38 percent,^{iv} though flavored milk contributes just 3 percent of the added sugars and 2 percent of calories to children’s diets on average.ⁱ This school year, an estimated 95 percent of flavored milk served in schools is 150 calories or less^{iv} – with an average of 134 – just 31 calories more than white milk.^{iv}

The updated nutrition standards reflect a school meal environment that goes beyond lunch. More students are taking advantage of school breakfast programs,^v and eating breakfast can enhance

schoolchildren's diets by contributing essential nutrients.^{vi} Additionally, some studies show its intake may provide additional benefits toward academic achievement.^{vi} Nutrient-rich foods, such as low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt are important options for school menus to help students fuel their day in a nutritious way.

Providing children access to proper nutrition and nutrition education in schools has been a priority for National Dairy Council for nearly a century. In response to the growing obesity epidemic and the majority of American students not meeting physical activity recommendations,^{vii} National Dairy Council and the National Football League, in cooperation with the USDA, launched a unique in-school nutrition and physical activity program called Fuel Up to Play 60. The program encourages consumption of low-fat and fat-free milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and achieving at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. With a massive reach of more than 70,000 schools, Fuel Up to Play 60 is helping empower students to play a leadership role in shaping the nutrition and physical activity opportunities in school for themselves and their peers.

For more information about dairy's important role in child nutrition and access to resources for educators and health professionals, visit NationalDairyCouncil.org or follow @NtlDairyCouncil on Twitter. To learn more about Fuel Up to Play 60, visit FuelUpToPlay60.com.

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National Dairy Council® (NDC), the non-profit organization funded by the national dairy checkoff program, is committed to nutrition education and research-based communications. NDC provides science-based nutrition information to, and in collaboration with, a variety of stakeholders committed to fostering a healthier nation, including health professionals, educators, school nutrition directors, academia, industry, consumers and media. Established in 1915, NDC comprises a staff of registered dietitians and nutrition research and communications experts across the country. NDC has taken a leadership role in promoting child health and wellness through programs such as Fuel Up to Play 60. Developed by NDC and the National Football League (NFL), Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. For more information, visit www.NationalDairyCouncil.org.

Fuel Up to Play 60 is an in-school nutrition and physical activity program launched by National Dairy Council (NDC) and National Football League (NFL), in collaboration with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program encourages youth to consume nutrient-rich foods (low-fat and fat-free dairy foods, fruits, vegetables and whole grains) and achieve at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

Fuel Up to Play 60 is designed to engage and empower youth to take action for their own health by implementing long-term, positive changes for themselves and their schools. Customizable and non-prescriptive program components are grounded in research with youth, including tools and resources, in-school promotional materials, a website and student challenges. Fuel Up to Play 60 is further supported by several health and nutrition organizations: Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition

Association. Visit www.FuelUpToPlay60.com to learn more. Media resources, including related video footage and photos are available at www.FuelUpToPlay60MediaResources.com.

Midwest Dairy Council®, an affiliate of National Dairy Council, is the nutrition education division of Midwest Dairy Association. The Council is dedicated to dairy nutrition research and education through the investment of more than 11,000 dairy farm families across 10 Midwestern states, and is committed to child health and wellness through our collaborative program, Fuel Up to Play 60. For more information, visit www.midwestdairy.com. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and find us on [Facebook](#) at Midwest Dairy.

ⁱ Dairy Research Institute™, NHANES (2003-2006). Ages 2-18 years. Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2003-2004; 2005-2006]. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm]

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ Dairy Research Institute™, NHANES (2007-2008). Ages 2 years and older. Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [2007-2008]. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm]

^{iv} 2011-2012 Projected School Milk Product Profile. Funded by the Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP) and conducted by Prime Consulting Group.

^v Food Research and Action Center. School Breakfast Scorecard, 2009-2010; 1. January, 2011. FRAC. Washington, DC. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/sbscorecard2010.pdf>. Accessed January 18, 2012.

^{vi} Rampersaud G. Benefits of breakfast for children and adolescents: update and recommendations for practitioners. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*. 2009;3:86-103.

^{vii} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2010 *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report* 2008;57(No.SS-4). Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss5905.pdf>. Accessed on January 23, 2012.