



January 12, 2016

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
Committee
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Michael Conaway
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman
House Education and The Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Scott
Ranking Member
House Education and The Workforce
Committee
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson, Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Scott, and Committee Members,

We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have doubled down on their recommendation to include a variety of vegetables and fruits as part of healthy eating patterns for all Americans. While the federal dietary guidelines have long encouraged increasing consumption of fresh produce as a key to decreasing rates of chronic diseases, the message can never be stated too strongly or too often.

In particular, we are encouraged by the language that states that “everyone has a role in helping to create and support healthy eating patterns in multiple settings,” including schools and communities. We interpret the term “everyone” to include federal policymakers, as well. If so, we call on your committees to remedy the gap between nutrition policy and spending.

According to a recent report by the Produce for Better Health Foundation, federal spending fails to support the healthy eating patterns outlined in the federal government’s own dietary guidelines. For example, statistics show that Americans consume less than half of their daily recommended fruits and vegetables. And despite recommendations that vegetables and fruits comprise more than 40% of the daily diet, USDA spending on this food group totals less than 15% of spending on all food programs¹.

¹ Rosenfeld, Allen. 2015 GAP Analysis—The Federal Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Challenge: How Federal Spending Falls Short of Addressing Public Health Needs, 2015. Produce for Better Health Foundation, 2015. Web.

<http://www.pbhfoundation.org/>



Clearly, federal policies are out of alignment with dietary guidelines. As your committees consider funding priorities for nutrition and food-assistance programs, we ask that you place greater emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables. Only then will we be able to achieve the public benefits of a long term shift toward healthier eating patterns in this country.

Sincerely,

Tom Nassif
President & CEO, Western Growers

About Western Growers

Founded in 1926, Western Growers represents local and regional family farmers growing fresh produce in Arizona, California and Colorado. Our members and their workers provide half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, including nearly half of America's fresh organic produce. For generations we have provided variety and healthy choices to consumers.