

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington DC 20250

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington DC 20201

Dear Secretaries Perdue and Azar,

The 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, appointed on February 21, 2019, has completed its review of topics and questions requested by the Departments of Agriculture and of Health and Human Services and is submitting the attached report for use in preparing the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The work of the Committee has been guided by the Federal Advisory Committee Act as well as recent changes in the process to develop the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In part, improvements in developing the Committee's report were implemented in response to the 2017 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report, *Redesigning the Process for Establishing the Dietary Guidelines*, to make the process more transparent, inclusive, and science-driven. In addition, the Agricultural Act of 2014 mandates the inclusion of infants and toddlers and women who are pregnant or lactating in the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. As a result, this edition will cover the full lifespan.

The Committee's report emphasizes 2 major themes that can inform the development of the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*:

- **The importance of considering life stage in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans***
  - These life stages include pregnancy, lactation, birth to age 24 months, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.
  - Special nutrition considerations exist at each life stage, and improvements in recommended food patterns at each stage have the potential to influence healthy food choices at the next life stage.
- **Dietary patterns provide a framework for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* within and across life stages**
  - Healthy dietary patterns are defined by the quality of foods that are included, as well as foods that should be limited.
  - A high-quality dietary pattern can promote health, achieve nutrient adequacy and energy balance, and reduce the risk of diet-related chronic diseases.
  - The evidence on specific dietary components (e.g., beverages, seafood, added sugars, dietary fats, macronutrient profile) consistently supports the importance of foods consumed in healthy dietary patterns as a framework for the Guidelines.

The Committee identified these themes to address the major public health challenges in the U.S. population of overweight and obesity and their related co-morbidities that are associated with dietary patterns in which typical food choices result in excess energy intake and inadequate nutritional quality. The Committee's work culminated in the development of this report, which summarizes the Committee's review of nearly 1,500 primary research articles included in original NESR systematic reviews, 16 existing NESR systematic reviews, more than 50 analyses of Federal data sets, and numerous food pattern modeling analyses that represented, for the first time, the entire lifespan. In addition, the Committee relied on evidence from the 2015 Committee report and the NASEM Dietary Reference Intake recommendations. To complete its tasks, the Committee worked in subcommittees, and their protocols, conclusions, and recommendations were brought forward for full Committee discussion in public meetings. Work on the questions was prioritized to enable the Committee to provide advice that is most relevant to the charge in the Committee's charter. In addition, the work of the Committee was posted on the Dietary Guidelines website in draft form as it evolved, to facilitate transparency and opportunities for public comment. An additional strength of the current process is that all of the systematic reviews that provided the evidence considered by the Committee underwent peer review before inclusion in the full report.

The Committee began its work in March 2019. As the 2020 Committee submits its report and the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are prepared, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic. As more is learned about infection by SARS-CoV-2 and the development of COVID-19, it is clear that it has significant nutritional implications. These parallel epidemics, one non-infectious (obesity and diet-related chronic diseases) and one infectious (COVID-19), appear to be synergistic. Those at most risk for the most serious outcomes of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death, are people afflicted by diet-related chronic diseases (obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease). Finally, throughout the world, the consequences of physical isolation and financial disruption by the threat of COVID-19 infection has led to significant increases in food insecurity and hunger, further increasing susceptibility to both infectious and diet-related chronic diseases. Thus, these interrelationships between chronic diseases, COVID-19, and social determinants of health, emphasize the critical importance of improving dietary patterns. These parallel epidemics demonstrate the central role of nutrition and healthy dietary patterns in susceptibility to both infections and diet-related chronic diseases and these relationships should be further examined in future dietary guidelines.

The public comments received by the Committee provided useful insights as the Committee developed its protocols for examining the relevant evidence. However, many comments identified areas that were beyond the scope of the Committee's charge. For example, comments identified the need to evaluate dietary patterns that are effective in the management, support, and treatment of those with chronic diseases and disabilities to determine their value in clinical practice. In addition, comments identified the importance of evaluating sustainability of recommended dietary patterns, addressing the social and economic aspects of access to foods that are components of healthy dietary patterns, and considering systemic changes to encourage behavior change consistent with the guidelines. These comments point to areas that are important for USDA and HHS to address through appropriate mechanisms, and their consideration may provide useful approaches for implementing the recommendations in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

To develop this report, the Committee had outstanding support from the staff at USDA and HHS. The Committee, through its subcommittees, was responsible for developing the protocols, grading the evidence, and drafting conclusions and recommendations that are a part of each chapter. However, our work would not have been possible without the diligent and careful work of the staff to assemble all of the information needed for these reviews and evaluations. It is hard to put into words the scope of the work and the outstanding quality of the staff's contributions to the process, other than to simply state that the Committee could not have done its work without this support. The Committee also benefitted from the peer review process organized by USDA's Agricultural Research Service. These reviews provided useful feedback on the systematic reviews and we appreciate the input from the Federal scientists who participated.

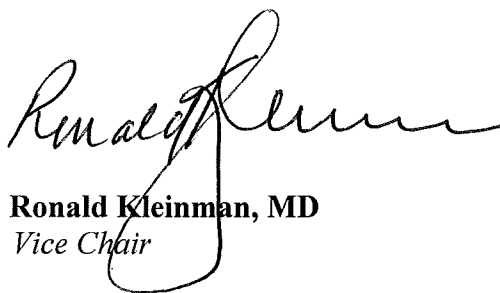
The National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act of 1990 mandates that the Secretaries of USDA and HHS review and release the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* at least every 5 years so that they reflect "the preponderance of scientific and medical knowledge that is current at the time the report is prepared." We believe that this report accomplishes this goal. As chair and vice-chair of the Committee, we are grateful to our fellow Committee members for their incredible commitment to the work of this Committee, even as their work environments changed due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Each member's expertise brought a unique and essential contribution to the report. The members have analyzed large volumes of material, synthesized it into conclusions and recommendations, and placed our findings in context to illustrate how our assessment can be used in the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. By exhibiting respect for the opinions of their fellow Committee members, evaluating public comments, providing constructive suggestions on drafts, and keeping the focus on the scientific evidence, the members have developed a report that reflects the analysis and advice of the Committee as a whole. It has been a pleasure to work with, and learn from, the entire group.

We look forward to seeing the contributions of our Committee incorporated into the *2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Sincerely,



**Barbara Schneeman, PhD**  
*Chair*



**Ronald Kleinman, MD**  
*Vice Chair*