



Consumer Federation of America

July 12, 2010

Ms. Carole Davis
Co-Executive Secretary and Designated Federal Officer, DGAC
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
U.S. Department of Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302

Re: 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee Report

Dear Ms. Davis:

The Consumer Federation of America (CFA) is pleased to submit the following comments on the final report of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC)¹. We would like to congratulate you and the Committee on your extensive report. The Dietary Guidelines are a key document that can help provide consumers with important information about how to maintain a healthy and safe diet. CFA's comments below will focus on the Food Safety section of the Dietary Guidelines.

Foodborne illness is a considerable public health problem and a critical focus of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines. Each year in the United States, tens of millions of people are sickened by a foodborne disease, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized and thousands die². Although foodborne disease can afflict anyone, those most at risk include children, pregnant women, the elderly and persons with compromised immune systems. The economic toll on society is large as well. A recent study estimated the total economic impact of foodborne illness across the nation to be a combined \$152 billion annually³.

Foodborne illness is primarily a preventable problem. Unfortunately, the food safety section of the Dietary Guidelines stresses the role of consumers in preventing foodborne illness without the appropriate emphasis on the role of the food industry and government in preventing contamination from occurring. Consumers should practice basic self-defense when they are handling and preparing

¹ CFA is a non-profit association of some 280 organizations, with a combined membership of over 50 million Americans. Member organizations include local, state, and national consumer advocacy groups, senior citizen associations, consumer cooperatives, trade unions and anti-hunger and food safety organizations. Since its founding in 1968, CFA has worked to advance the interest of American consumers through research, education and advocacy. CFA's Food Policy Institute was created in 1999 and engages in research, education and advocacy on food and agricultural policy, agricultural biotechnology, food safety and nutrition.

² Mead, P. S., Slutsker, L., Dietz, V., McCraig, L. F., Breese, J. S., Shapiro, C., et al. (1999). Food Related Illness and Death in the United States. *Emerging Infectious Disease*, 5 (5), 607-625.

³ Scharff, R.L., *Health Related Costs of Foodborne Illness in the United States*, Produce Safety Project, March 2010 at <http://www.producesafetyproject.org/media?id=0009>.

food, particularly for foods which present a greater risk for contamination. In order to do so, consumers need access to accurate and actionable safe food handling messages. However, the food industry, including retail and foodservice, has the primary responsibility for producing safe food and preventing foodborne illness. The government also has a critical role to play in setting strict food safety standards and holding companies accountable for meeting those standards, including conducting regular inspections of food plants and restaurants. The Dietary Guidelines should provide information to consumers about safe food handling practices, but they should also emphasize that preventing foodborne contamination from occurring in the first place rests with the food industry and the government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Waldrop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Chris Waldrop
Director, Food Policy Institute