

October 17, 2022

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As agricultural leaders, we want to send our sincerest thanks for your strong leadership and representation as the White House convened the Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, and in delivering a National Strategy which aims to realize the goal of ending hunger and reducing diet-related disease by 2030. From the farm to the consumers' table, these actions brought together many stakeholders committed to improving the nation's health and ensuring all Americans have access to nutritious food choices.

As farm, food, and agribusiness organizations representing the breadth of the supply chain, we commit ourselves to the Conference's goal and the National Strategy's Five Pillars and remain engaged partners and resources to the Administration and Congress. As you lead the evaluation and execution of the ambitious and achievable actions identified in the National Strategy, we urge you to consider the following priorities:

- Ensuring evidence-based research is the foundation for all decision-making and that research is prioritized in a systematic and transparent manner. This includes working through USDA and in partnership with the agricultural sector to study the intersection of climate change, food security, and nutrition, and the links between soil health and human health. It also includes USDA maintaining its important role in interagency work for cross-cutting areas, such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and critical updates to the Dietary Reference Intakes. In all areas, public research should strive to incorporate best-available private sector and farmer-led research around priority outcomes and include study of potential benefits as well as unintended consequences of any recommendation.
- Recognizing agriculture innovation and emphasizing the role technology will continue to play in food production and sustainability, including the positive impacts on health, nutrition, and the reduction of food waste. We applaud the President's recent commitment to streamline regulations for products of biotechnology so that valuable products can come to market faster without sacrificing safety.
- As FDA considers standards for front-of-package labeling and health claims, we urge USDA to affirm and communicate to FDA that qualitative definitions of food such as "healthy" or "nutritious" should be based on the food's actual nutrition composition and the role it plays in a healthy diet, without regard to geographical origin, growing practices, type of crop (e.g., local foods, biotech traits, organic, etc.), or level of processing.

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- Adopting procurement policies for federal facilities and federally funded programs that provide the widest array of choices to consumers to meet their own dietary needs, whether “conventional” or driven by religion, health goals, cultural or environmental preferences, or other concerns.
- Ensuring that the agricultural sector has a strong safety net and the necessary workforce and infrastructure to grow, harvest, and deliver abundant and affordable farm goods to market.

Our groups are committed to improving food quality and security and eliminating hunger and health inequities. Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue and for your consideration of our views. Please know that we will continue to be a resource to you, your team, and the entire intergovernmental group working to implement the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Please feel free to have your staff reach out us if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association

American Feed Industry Association

American Seed Trade Association

American Soybean Association

American Sugar Alliance

CropLife America

Farm Credit Council

International Fresh Produce Association

National Association of Conservation Districts

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Cattlemen’s Beef Association

National Corn Growers Association

National Cotton Council

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Farmers Union

National Grain & Feed Association

National Milk Producers Federation

National Pork Producers Council

National Sorghum Producers

North American Meat Institute

The Fertilizer Institute

USA Rice Association