

**Comments of the International Dairy Foods Association to the  
IOM Committee on the Dietary Reference Intakes for Calcium and Vitamin D  
August 4, 2009**

IDFA represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing more than 85% of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States. We applaud the committee for undertaking the massive task of reviewing the body of research on intakes of calcium and vitamin D and making recommendations for Americans.

IDFA believes that calcium and vitamin D are important components of a diet that promotes good health, both in the short term and long term.

Calcium is well known as a building block of strong bones, but also is necessary for healthy muscle function. Emerging research points to additional benefits of calcium related to blood pressure and healthy weight.

Vitamin D increases calcium absorption, supporting the benefits of calcium, while also providing health benefits of its own. Multiple studies have indicated that vitamin D is associated with the prevention of various types of cancer and some studies note an association with preventing hypertension and diabetes.

Both of these nutrients are underconsumed by Americans. The calcium intake of most Americans of all ages tends to be below the current recommended levels. Newly released data indicates that significant numbers of American children are deficient or insufficient in their intake of vitamin D, potentially setting the stage for health problems in the future.

The Food and Drug Administration recently recognized the important link between calcium and vitamin D and strong bones, by approving a new health claim that links a combination of calcium and vitamin D and a reduced risk of osteoporosis. Many dairy products meet the requirements of this claim because they provide both calcium and vitamin D in a single food. Consuming both of these nutrients in a single food is even more advantageous because it provides the benefits of the vitamin D increasing absorption of calcium.

Milk is the number one source of calcium in the American diet. In addition to milk, other dairy products are also good sources of calcium: natural and processed cheese and yogurt.

Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> has been added to milk since the 1930s and is now also fortified in many yogurts and processed cheese. The majority of milk sold in the US is fortified with 25% of the Daily Value per cup. Milk is the number one source of vitamin D for Americans. This helps in calcium absorption and therefore bone health, but may also provide an even

wider range of health benefits. One of the reasons commonly cited for a relatively low intake of vitamin D in Americans is the low intake of dairy foods.

IDFA appreciates the upcoming work of the committee. We believe that calcium and vitamin D are important components of a health-promoting diet and that dairy products can be excellent sources of both nutrients.