



International Dairy Foods Association

Milk Industry Foundation

National Cheese Institute

International Ice Cream Association

SNA Briefing Points: 4th General Session

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I am Ruth Saunders, with the International Dairy Foods Association. IDFA represents dairy companies across the country many of whom are suppliers to USDA's Child Nutrition programs. I appreciate the opportunity to participate on today's panel and provide a perspective of the food industry. I will briefly discuss the actions we have taken to improve access to foods that are healthier, and describe our position and goals under Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

We applaud the First Lady's initiative and that she is reaching out to forge partnerships, working with states, schools, businesses, and nonprofits – everyone has a role in getting our nation's children's healthier. Your role in schools is critical, and the food industry has and will continue to work with you in developing foods and beverages that meet the nutrition and health objectives of this great effort.

1. Food companies have invested in research and developing products with reduced fat and sodium that still function well with foods that kids like. In dairy, there are many new varieties of reduced fat cheeses, so that schools can more easily provide entrees that fall under USDA's meal plan guidelines. **The dairy industry has also reduced calories from milk by over 4% in each of the past two years and the average milk served in schools is now 9-10 calories fewer per 8 ounce serving. This is significant since 7.5 billion servings of milk were served in schools last year. Over the past two years, 13% of school milk has shifted from reduced fat to low fat.**
2. Today schools can choose from a much broader variety of foods and beverages than in recent history, making it easier to create menus with less fat and sodium, more whole grains and fresh produce than historically has been the case. But we still have a long way to go - that's evident from the reports that USDA and Institute of Medicine have issued on the status of schools meals. The challenge, as you well know, is not only making these meals as nutritious as possible, but also feasible with the resources, staff, and equipment that you have.

That's why we support the positions of the School Nutrition Association - as food suppliers we know you need additional resources and nutrition standards that cover all foods and beverages in schools. On milk specifically, the dairy industry has formed an alliance with SNA, the American Dietetic Association, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest to recommend to Congress that all milk served in schools be consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Dietary Guidelines recommend that school age children consume either fat-free or 1% milk, which may include flavored milk. Under our proposal, we would eliminate whole milk and reduced fat milk in schools. No longer would schools be given these higher fat milk choices.

The dairy industry has also committed to meeting the voluntary school beverage guidelines of the "Alliance for a Healthier Generation" and the majority of your milk suppliers have reformulated their products to offer school milks with fewer calories.

3. Unfortunately, over the last five years, even as dairy companies are providing lower fat and lower calorie milks -- children are drinking even less milk per capita and the consumption rate is dropping off more rapidly as children reach their teenage years. USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children 9 years and older consume three servings a day, but at school, children on average get only 3.8 servings of milk per week across all ages. Students from inner city schools and the largest schools districts generally consume even less milk than the average.
 - The statistics are alarming; **almost 90% of teenage girls don't meet their recommended intake of calcium, while about 70% of boys fall short of the calcium recommendation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**
 - **The reality is that kids are drinking less milk, and more and more of other beverages.** In just the past year, surveys show a la carte milk consumption declined 33% in secondary schools and declined 16% in elementary schools. Schools are offering fewer varieties of milk, while more are increasing the varieties of sports drinks and flavored waters.
 - **While consumption rates have fallen, obesity rates have increased.**
4. Our commitment to being part of the solution to the obesity epidemic has inspired our participation in several programs that have proven the palatability and appeal of more healthful products. I would like to comment briefly on a few of them:

Many popular school lunch entrees can be made healthier, the best example of this might be pizza – very popular with kids but often criticized under this program; yet, pizza is a nutrient rich food meaning you get a lot of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients per calorie and commonly containing 3-4 of the 5 food groups. The challenge to food manufacturers is how

to make significant improvements to the nutritional profile of the foods while minimally affecting taste.

Let me give you a specific example. A school district in Colorado that worked with a national pizza brand to develop pizza that meets USDA meal requirements but also the picky taste buds of kids. The pizza uses 100% lite Mozzarella (50% less fat and saturated fat than the part-skim mozzarella often used), and also delivers 100 fewer calories, and more protein per slice of pizza.

- Since implementing this pizza program, the district has reduced costs and seen a 25% increase in school lunch participation. They bundle the lower fat pizza offerings with salads, fruits, and low fat milk to make a complete reimbursable meal.
- The school district has also worked with its national brand partner to decrease the sodium in its sauce, and to add whole grains to the crust. This collaborative innovation makes parents and USDA happy, but for the kids, it's all about the taste.
- The pizza being served as part of this innovative program supports the school's mission to provide a healthy well-balanced meal that in turn supports their education throughout the day.

I do not think that the dairy industry is unique among the food industry in being interested in developing foods to meet the nutrition and health objectives of schools, either through USDA's commodity programs or directly.

- i. The key to improved nutrition is not to ban food categories that are perceived negatively, but to set the targets for nutritional profiles and let innovative food manufacturers develop products to meet those targets. When we have successes like this we also need to share the learning so that other school districts can benefit and serve healthier foods.
5. I would like to end with a request that Congress recognize the higher cost of improved nutrition and increase budgets accordingly.
- a. For example, lower fat cheeses are more expensive than their full fat counterparts because the fat is displaced by milk proteins that due to marketplace and government factors cost more.
 - b. IDFA estimates that 75 - 80 percent of the milk industry is capable of producing milk products as recommended by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (150 cal/8 ounces). However, the manufacturing of the lower calorie flavored milks requires a higher cost ratio of flavor and sweetening ingredients. In the

competitively bid milk environment with extremely tight food service budgets, schools often make their decisions based on the lowest price offers, which can be higher in calories.

- c. Milk is more expensive than other competing beverages that may be low in calories, but without the nutrition that kids need. We propose extending an a la carte milk reimbursement rate through the Special Milk Program to all schools.

Dairy products are an essential part of school meals because they are highly nutritious, providing protein and essential nutrients, like calcium, that are deficient in school age children. - 98% of maximum bone density is reached by age 20, making it especially important that children get enough calcium.

With current food selection practices, consumption of dairy products may constitute the difference between getting enough calcium in one's diet or not.