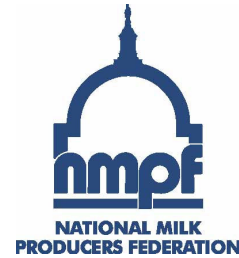




**International Dairy Foods Association**  
Milk Industry Foundation  
National Cheese Institute  
International Ice Cream Association



May 29, 2009

Chairman Max Baucus  
Senate Hart Building Room 511  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Charles Grassley  
Senate Hart Building Room 135  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Max Baucus and Ranking Member Charles Grassley:

The International Dairy Foods Association and the National Milk Producers Federation strongly oppose the proposed financing option, for health care reform, that would impose a federal excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. We urge the Committee to reject that proposal. Taxing food is not an appropriate way to finance health care reform. The consumption of flavored milks, in particular, should be encouraged, not discouraged by the addition of a Federal excise tax.

IDFA represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers, with a membership of 550 companies representing a \$110-billion a year industry. IDFA is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). IDFA's 220 dairy processing members run more than 600 plant operations, and range from large multi-national organizations to single-plant companies. Together they represent more than 85% of the milk, cultured products, cheese and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States.

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of U.S. dairy producers and the cooperatives they collectively own. The members of NMPF's 31 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of nearly 40,000 dairy producers of Capital Hill and with government agencies.

Flavored milks are nutrient rich beverages that provide nine essential nutrients, including three of the five nutrients identified as "nutrients of concern" for children in the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* – calcium, magnesium and potassium. Milk is the number one source of calcium, magnesium, potassium and phosphorus in children's diets. According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines

for Americans, milk is a major source of vitamin A, and is also the top source of calcium and potassium in American's diets.

Flavored milks are excellent sources of vitamin D, a nutrient currently being studied for a variety of nutritional and health benefits. The majority of flavored milk sold in the US is fortified with 25% of the Daily Value per cup. This helps in calcium absorption and therefore bone health, but may also provide an even wider range of health benefits.

An 8-ounce serving of low-fat flavored milk contains only 2.5 grams of fat, the same amount as in low-fat unflavored milk. The main difference between flavored and unflavored milk are the added sugars, which adds about 60 to 70 calories per 8-ounce serving.

Recent research has shown that milk and dairy intake are associated with a healthier body weight in both adults and children. Some observational studies suggest adequate milk consumption is associated with healthier weights in children. Low intakes of milk during childhood may contribute to acquiring more body fat and higher body weight during adolescence. A study of 99 children followed over 12 years from ages 2-3 found that children who consumed more dairy products had lower gains in body fat and body mass index than children who consumed less dairy. The study suggests that low intakes of dairy products during childhood may be associated with greater acquisition of body fat by adolescence. In a further analysis of this same group of children, researchers found that diets moderate in dietary fat and high in dairy products, fruits and vegetables were associated with lower risk of adolescent obesity.

According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, adding a small amount of sugar to nutrient-rich foods such as reduced-fat milk products helps enhance their palatability and improves nutrient intake. Increasing taxes on flavored milk because of its added sugar, may only have the undesirable effect of further reducing intakes of essential nutrients provided by milk.

Leading nutrition groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have recognized the value of flavored milk with modest amounts of sugar for school children and encourage the consumption of low-fat or fat-free white or flavored milk as a healthful alternative to soft drinks. A clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests flavored milks (reduced fat or fat-free) with modest amounts of added sweeteners are “generally recommended” to help optimize the bone health and calcium intakes of children and adolescents.

Despite the clear health benefits of milk, children and adolescents are drinking less milk – a troubling trend that’s been identified as one potential reason for chronic calcium shortages and the rising rates of obesity among America’s youth. Researchers studied the diets of more than 3,000 children ages 2 to 18 years using food consumption data from the government’s National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. They found that consumption of milk declines gradually as a child gets older. This finding is consistent with other recent studies.

Almost 90% of girls don't meet their recommended intake of calcium, while about 70% of boys fall short of the calcium recommendation. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans showed that more

than one-third aren't getting enough magnesium compared to the recommended intakes. The report of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans also indicated that calcium intake is considerably less than the Adequate Intake level for Americans of many ages, beginning at nine years old. This shortfall is particularly evident for females. In discussions by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, calcium, phosphorous, magnesium and vitamins A, C and E have been identified as shortfall nutrients in the diets of American children.

Flavored low-fat or fat-free milk is an excellent way to increase milk consumption among children and teens. According to 2005 data from the United States Department of Agriculture, 66% of the milk chosen by children in schools is flavored. Ninety per cent of the milk offered is low-fat or fat-free. For this reason, IDFA and NMPF have been working with Senate Agriculture Chairman Tom Harkin and others to assure that nutrition guidelines continue to allow low-fat flavored milks in our nation's schools. In fact, the dairy industry is working hard to develop flavored milk formulations that have fewer added sugars and total calories.

Research indicates that children who consume flavored milk tend to drink more milk and have higher calcium intakes than those who don't. According to a study in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association, children who drink flavored milk, drink more milk overall and are more likely to meet their calcium needs without consuming more total fat and calories as compared with their peers. In addition, those who consume flavored milk have higher total milk and calcium intakes yet do not have higher intakes of added sugars or total fat, or have a higher body mass index (BMI) than children who do not consume flavored milk.

IDFA and NMPF recognize the challenge facing the Committee in finding funding streams to pay for health care reform. However, given the many health benefits of flavored milks, these beverages help support good health and their consumption should be encouraged, not discouraged by a Federal excise tax. Flavored milks are and should remain a critically important part of children's diets.

Sincerely,



Connie Tipton  
President and CEO  
International Dairy Foods Association



Jerry Kozak  
President and CEO  
National Milk Producers Federation

cc: Senate Finance Committee membership