

International Dairy Foods Association

Milk Industry Foundation

National Cheese Institute

International Ice Cream Association

November 21, 2003

Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane
Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

RE: Docket Number 2003N-0338, Food and Drug Administration Obesity Working Group; Public Meeting

Dear Dr. Crawford:

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments to the FDA Obesity Working Group regarding the growing problem of obesity in this country. We are pleased to highlight scientific evidence that demonstrates that dairy can assist Americans in controlling their weight.

IDFA, which represents the nation's dairy processing and manufacturing industries and their suppliers, is composed of three constituent organizations: the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI), and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). Its 500-plus members range from large multinational corporations to single-plant operations, representing more than 85% of the volume of milk, cultured products, cheese, ice cream and frozen desserts produced and marketed in the United States-- an estimated \$70 billion a year industry.

As so many speakers at the October 23, 2003 public meeting on obesity pointed out, there is not one single solution to this nation's obesity problem. Complex problems have complex solutions. Luckily, milk and dairy products, foods that millions of people enjoy each day, can be part of that solution. As such, we would like to specifically respond to several of the questions that FDA has requested public input on.

Question 3: What is the available evidence that FDA can look to in order to guide rational, effective public efforts to prevent and treat obesity by behavioral or medical interventions, or combinations of both?

Milk and dairy products' role in a nutritious diet has been established by the nutrition and medical community, including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Osteoporosis Foundation, the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, and many other health organizations.

In addition to providing essential nutrients, dairy has also been shown to be helpful in weight loss and weight maintenance. A number of scientific studies have demonstrated a relationship between dairy food consumption and weight control. Some studies have shown that people who consume more dairy products are less likely to be overweight or obese.^{1,2,3} This positive effect of calcium on weight loss or prevention of weight gain has been demonstrated in people of differing ages, genders and races.⁴ Women who consume high levels of calcium while trying to lose weight, lose more weight than women with lower calcium intakes. Overweight and obese women may need to consume more calcium in order to aid in their weight loss.⁵

Studies have also shown that calcium in dairy foods plays a role in body composition, specifically maintaining muscle while lowering body fat. This has been demonstrated in women^{6,7} and children.⁸ One study followed young women for 3 years. The group that was given calcium supplements had a smaller gain of body fat than did the control group.⁹ Another study's results showed that including dairy in patients' calorie-restricted diet helped them lose weight faster and lose more fat from their abdomen. This effect was stronger with dairy products than with calcium supplements.¹⁰ Higher acute calcium intakes were shown to be connected with higher rates of fat oxidation.¹¹ The association between weight loss and calcium intake has been hypothesized to be related to the intracellular calcium in fat cells.^{12,13,14,15,16}

Question 4: Are there changes needed to food labeling that could result in the development of healthier, lower calorie foods by industry and the selection of healthier, lower calorie foods by consumers?

One of the tools that FDA will be able to use to impact the problem of obesity is the food label, including the nutrition facts panel. The food label is an important source of information for the consumer regarding the content and nutritive value of foods. Consumers with health concerns are already used to looking for certain nutrient content claims, such as: "low calorie," "fat free" and "no sugar added." These claims help them in selecting foods as part of their eating plans. While each food label represents the nutrition available in that specific food, the percent daily value information in the nutrition facts panel ensures that this information is presented as part of an overall diet.

IDFA hopes that FDA will proceed cautiously as it considers making changes to the food label. Food labels should continue to present each food as part of an overall diet. Labels should not be used to stigmatize one food as "unhealthy" since all foods can be part of an overall healthy diet. Actions taken to combat obesity should focus on the total diet and on physical activity, and labels already provide information to consumers looking to maintain a complete healthy diet.

Question 5: What opportunities exist for the development of healthier foods/diets and what research might best support the development of healthier foods?

The food industry has a track record of developing healthier foods as consumers demand them. In the dairy industry, there are fat free, lowfat, reduced sugar, no sugar added and low sodium versions of milk, ice cream, yogurt and cheese. With the current consumer demand for fewer carbohydrates based on the Atkins diet, some dairy companies have developed dairy drinks and desserts with fewer carbohydrates than regular dairy products. People are able to select the type of dairy foods they want, based on their preferences for taste and nutrient content.

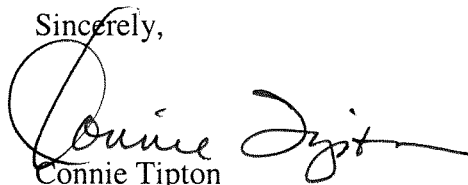
Food technology has progressed to a point where companies can make foods healthier in a variety of ways that will be helpful to a consumer concerned about fat, carbohydrates, sodium or sugar. In some instances, regulations or standards do not allow for these modifications to be made. For example, current cheese standards do not allow for ultrafiltered milk to be used as a dairy ingredient for cheesemaking. However, this high quality product results in a cheese that has higher levels of valuable nutrients, such as whey proteins, than cheese made by the traditional process. Proposed changes to the ice cream standard would allow for more flexibility in using whey protein concentrate as an appropriate dairy ingredient. Whey proteins are high quality proteins that provide essential amino acids and are actually of higher nutritive value than casein or soy protein. As such, one immediate step that the FDA could take would be to move forward on the standards of identity petitions on cheese and ice cream currently pending.

Question 6: Based on the scientific evidence available today, what are the most important things that FDA could do that would make a significant difference in efforts to address the problem of overweight and obesity?

The most important thing the FDA Working Group could do in considering this issue is to continue the focus on rigorous science and hard evidence. Scientific results and proven interventions will increase the chances of success.

IDFA commends the FDA Obesity Working Group and the Administration for undertaking this difficult job. Obesity is an important issue to address for the entire country, including the dairy industry. We are proud that science is showing that dairy foods can be part of the solution for overweight and obese people. Please feel free to contact me if anyone at IDFA can assist you during this process.

Sincerely,



Connie Tipton
Executive Vice President



Michelle Albee Matto, MPH, RD
Regulatory Affairs Manager

-
- ¹ Davies, KM et al. Calcium intake and body weight. *J Clin Endocrin & Metab.* 2000;85:4635.
- ² Pereira, MA et al. Dairy consumption, obesity, and the insulin resistance syndrome in young adults. The CARDIA study. *JAMA.* 2002;287:2081.
- ³ Heaney, RP et al. Calcium and Weight: Clinical Studies. *J Am Coll Nutr.* 2002;21:152S.
- ⁴ Teegarden D. Calcium intake and reduction in weight or fat mass. *J Nutr.* 2003;133:249S.
- ⁵ Gentile C et al. Calcium intake in overweight and obese women may not be high enough to facilitate weight loss. *Obesity Research.* 2001;9:615.
- ⁶ Zemel MB et al. Regulation of adiposity by dietary calcium. *FASEB J.* 2000;14:1132.
- ⁷ Jacqmain M et al. Calcium intake, body composition, and lipoprotein-lipid concentration in adults. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2003;77:1448.
- ⁸ Carruth BR & Skinner JD. The role of dietary calcium and other nutrients in moderating body fat in preschool children. *J Obesity.* 2001;25:559.
- ⁹ Barger-Lux et al. Calcium supplementation may attenuate accumulation of fat in young women. *JBMR.* 2001;16:S219.
- ¹⁰ Zemel, MB et al. Dietary calcium and dairy products accelerate weight and fat loss during energy restriction in obese adults. *AJCN.* 2002;75:342S.
- ¹¹ Melanson, EL et al. Relation between calcium intake and fat oxidation in adult humans. *Int J of Obesity.* 2003;27:196.
- ¹² Zemel, MB et al. Regulation of adiposity by dietary calcium. *FASEB J.* 2000;14:1132.
- ¹³ Shi H et al. $1\alpha,25$ dihydroxyvitamin D_3 modulates in human adipocyte metabolism via nongenomic action. *FASEB J.* 2001;15:2751.
- ¹⁴ Xue B et al. Mechanism of intracellular calcium inhibition of lipolysis in human adipocytes. *FASEB J.* 2001;15:2527.
- ¹⁵ Zemel, MB. Calcium modulation of hypertension and obesity: mechanisms and implications. *J Am Coll Nutr.* 2001;20:428S.
- ¹⁶ Zemel, MB. Regulation of adiposity and obesity risk by dietary calcium: mechanisms and implications. *J Am Coll Nutr.* 2002;21:146S.