

NHA/WASHINGTON

update*

Changing Tides

The USDA recommends nutritional supplements in its new Dietary Guidelines.

The newly released USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans contain a pleasant surprise for the natural products industry: A recommendation for nutritional supplements. Specifically, the guidelines includes pro-supplement statements such as the following:

- “Dietary supplements or fortification of certain foods may be advantageous in specific situations to increase intake of a specific vitamin or mineral ...”
- “Supplements containing combinations of certain nutrients may be beneficial in reducing the risks of some [chronic health problems] when used by special populations.”

Though mentions like these may seem a grudging concession at best, they still represent a victory for the dietary supplement industry. US government institutions that gave little credit to nutritional supplements in the past appear to indicate that their stance may be changing.

Five years from now the USDA will release another set of Dietary Guidelines. It is our sincere wish that the 2015 guidelines contain even more recommendations for science-backed nutritional supplementation, along with a farther-reaching perspective on how supplements help overcome food supply challenges. We especially hope the USDA eventually acknowledges that mass agricultural practices are believed to produce many nutrient-depleted foods.

End Nutritional Bias

It would help if institutions like the USDA simply stopped discriminating between nutrition and supplements. Consider the agency’s statement on omega-3 fatty acids: “Seafood contributes a range of nutrients, notably



the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA. Moderate evidence shows that consumption of about 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood, which provide an average consumption of 250 mg per day of EPA and DHA, is associated with reduced cardiac deaths among individuals with and without pre-existing cardiovascular [health problems]. Thus, this recommendation contributes to the prevention of heart [problems].”

Eight ounces of seafood per week may be cost-prohibitive for many Americans and evidence suggests that cheaper farmed fish contains less healthful omega-3 fatty acids. Other people may be concerned about mercury levels in seafood. If the USDA can strongly recommend the omega-3 fatty acids in fish to support heart health, then why can’t the USDA

extend that recommendation to fish oil supplements, which can be convenient, cost-effective and purified to remove mercury?

Taking it one step further: The CDC’s 2010 *Promoting Preventive Services Report for Adults 50-64* acknowledged that “nutrition among the US population needs major improvement.” The only job of dietary supplements is to improve people’s nutritional status. If there is a nutritional crisis that the CDC acknowledges, and supplements provide an affordable, easy and dependable way to improve nutritional status, then why can’t the USDA and the CDC put two and two together and endorse dietary supplements?

Critical Mass

Perhaps public support of nutritional supplements has reached a critical mass and the government is beginning take a “if you can’t beat ’em, join ’em” position. But we can be sure progress towards an official endorsement of dietary supplements will be slow—and you can count on the enemies of health freedom continuing to deny our access to nutritional supplements.

The beauty of health freedom is that we don’t have to wait for permission to put into practice what we already believe: Safe, natural dietary supplements help promote overall well-being. While you wait for the USDA to fully accept this truth, continue to patronize health food stores that are committed to providing you with superior-quality supplements. For more information on health freedom, visit www.nha2011.com. ♦

*This editorial is a public service announcement sponsored by the Nutritional Health Alliance (NHA).