

TRENDS



FOOD AND NUTRITION ISSUES LIKELY TO IMPACT THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN THE NEXT 1 TO 3 YEARS

TOP 10 NUTRITION TRENDS FOR 2016

1. Dairy's positive contributions to nutrient intakes and health are often ignored.

Consumption of milk and dairy foods continues to be linked to better nutrient intakes and health outcomes (prevention of heart disease, metabolic syndrome and diabetes and better weight management). A growing body of research also supports dairy fat as potentially providing health benefits, offering an opportunity to promote whole milk and cheese.

However, public health advocates and other health professionals do not consistently endorse dairy foods. While the 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) advise two or three daily servings of dairy in eating patterns, consumers sometimes reach for milk substitutes such as almond, rice and soy products. Research shows that consumers believe in the goodness of milk ... but this belief doesn't always translate into practice.

Dairy Council of California strives to make the nutrient and health benefits of milk and dairy foods top of mind with health professionals and consumers. The industry can intensify efforts to develop innovative milk and dairy products that are tasty, convenient, affordable and nutritious to compete with alternative beverages. In addition, industry investment in research on the nutrient profile of milk and dairy foods to reinforce messaging will be important.

2. Plant-based eating patterns are on the rise due to many factors.

Until recently, plant-based eating patterns were advocated primarily for their health benefits and chronic disease-fighting attributes. Now, the popularity of these patterns is growing due to economics, animal welfare concerns and sustainability needs. Many public health groups promote diets based on plant foods; for example, the focus of the dietary patterns endorsed by the new DGAs is more heavily plant-based. Efforts are being made at many levels and in many organizations to adopt these eating patterns.

Campaigns such as Meatless Mondays are frequently offered in hospitals and schools, and documentaries on the righteousness of this approach abound.

Milk and dairy foods may or may not be included in these plant-based patterns. Dairy Council of CA has multiple efforts highlighting how milk and dairy foods can and should be incorporated into plant-based diets for their unique package of nutrients, affordability and convenience. Dairy foods can also be marketed as natural and minimally processed, to fit into the plant-based movement. Health professionals and consumers will need reminders that “plant-based” does not mean “plant-only,” and indeed, for long-term health and well-being, meat and dairy foods can be consumed.

3. The quest for protein intensifies; plant proteins are in the limelight.

Protein continues to be the “nutrient of the decade” as its list of health benefits grows beyond muscle-building to include satiety and weight-management benefits, blood-glucose control, bone health and healthy aging. Consumers are seeking protein sources at every meal and snack, but alongside the move toward plant-based diets, plant-derived protein sources are increasingly popular. Meat, eggs and dairy—traditionally excellent sources of protein—are often overlooked for new and innovative proteins such as hemp, pea, quinoa, tempeh, spirulina and even insect. There is little talk or awareness about protein quality, of which animal sources are unparalleled.

Consumers and health professionals need to be reminded that dairy foods are superior sources of protein. This can be accomplished through product labeling and marketing messages. Dairy Council of CA has numerous materials on protein benefits and good sources and also communicates the research-supported importance of distributing protein evenly throughout the day—most people need more protein at breakfast and lunch.

4. Disease is down-aging, opening opportunities for nutrition education.

Obesity rates continue to rise slowly across the United States. Incidence of diabetes and metabolic syndrome are also increasing with a predicted one in three Americans having type 2 diabetes by 2050. Children are being diagnosed with these chronic diseases at younger ages. To reduce lifelong health care costs and to optimize quality of life, more focus will be on prevention at early ages.

Many prevention strategies focus on controlling and changing the environment by removing sources of unhealthy foods and improving access to parks and recreation. Emphasis needs to be placed on nutrition education, using parents as the gatekeepers to children's healthy food choices. As snacks replace meals, milk and dairy foods can be positioned as a superior choice.

Opportunities will emerge for organizations like Dairy Council of CA that have a family of programs reaching across the lifespan with healthy diet and lifestyle messages. There will be more support for these efforts, but also possibly more competition as the need for such programs and materials increases. Dairy Council of CA's nutrition education programs are unique in that they induce behavior change and encompass all five food groups.

5. Food choices are increasingly based on consumer values beyond nutrition.

Personal values about food as it relates to a higher cause—such as animal welfare, feeding the world and environmental concerns—are increasingly driving food choices. Many consumers believe that what they eat is a reflection of who they are. For example, someone may choose to eat only cage-free eggs, organic milk and grass-fed beef due to concerns about how animals are treated on the farm. Nutrition, cost and even taste may be less important factors. This will greatly impact the food industry, which will need to demonstrate to consumers that their concerns and values about animal welfare, sustainability and global needs are shared. Transparency and communication will be critical to maintain the trust of often skeptical consumers. In an inclusive manner, Dairy Council of CA acknowledges the many reasons for food choices and provides messages on dairy industry efforts to improve sustainability and animal welfare.

6. Stakeholders are taking a more holistic approach to health.

A broader definition of health—one that encompasses good nutrition and includes proper sleep, stress reduction

and improved mental health—is being embraced by stakeholders. Such an approach requires community-based, multi-faceted efforts that might involve, for example, building parks and sidewalks to encourage physical activity, requiring healthy food options for all students in schools, charging higher prices for less healthy products in the marketplace and facilitating farmers markets at hospitals and other community venues. Stakeholders advancing these strategies promote the likelihood that this comprehensive approach better ensures sustainable, long-term behavior change.

These efforts may or may not include nutrition education; often, there is a preferential focus on policy and environmental changes. In addition, the parameters for monitoring the success of such programs are broad-reaching and address markers of health like body mass index and other biometrics. Dairy Council of CA has historically documented changes specifically in eating behaviors such as food choices from the five food groups and consumption of “extra” foods and is collaborating with public health stakeholders to ensure that nutrition education is part of the broader strategy to improve public health at all levels.

7. Nutrition education channels are changing.

Paper-and-pencil nutrition education programs are no longer the gold standard for teaching healthy eating habits. Mobile and increasingly time-stressed consumers expect information to be readily available when and where they want it, packaged in short bytes that are quick to assimilate. Visuals, emotions and stories resonate with consumers of all ages. Technology-based personalized messaging is critical to reach tech-savvy children and parents.

Traditional settings such as schools and doctors' offices are still important venues, but effective messages will need to be spread through multiple touch points such as grocery and drug stores, gyms, workplaces and even restaurants. In addition, with consumers seeking health information on specific topics of interest, employing strategies such as search engine optimization are critical to drive them to appropriate and credible websites.

Dairy Council of CA is proactively developing materials for these new venues to reach consumers of all ages with messages that are pertinent, personalized and supportive of behavior change. Its new Internet-based high school program, *Eat Move Win*, is a good example of employing innovative ways to reach this audience with messages that resonate.

8. There is growing acknowledgment that health inequities are linked to socioeconomic status.

Low-income populations are at higher risk of food insecurity, obesity, type 2 diabetes, lipid abnormalities and mental health issues, and it is increasingly clear that these issues are linked to socioeconomic status. At the same time, changes in health behaviors are limited due to inadequate resources, lack of time and motivation and other priorities. This becomes a vicious cycle, and often the only perceived solution may be to improve—and sometimes legislate—the environment of local communities so default food-choice decisions are the healthiest ones. This approach of adjusting the environment to optimize health decisions is termed the behavioral economics model.

Over the past few years, Dairy Council of CA has helped foodservice operations throughout the state employ this model to school cafeterias using the [Smarter Lunchrooms Movement](#). This environmental approach, coupled with Dairy Council of CA's classroom nutrition education curriculum, has proven successful in promoting behavior change in schoolchildren across all socioeconomic groups.

9. The growing distrust of science, the government and the food industry results in consumers forging their own nutritional path.

Friends and family, bloggers and websites, celebrity figures and self-proclaimed nutrition experts have become sources of nutrition advice. Consumers often self-diagnose and make decisions regarding health and food choices based on shared symptoms and on what works for others, leading to “free from” diets such as gluten-free, GMO-free, lactose-free, meat-free and dairy-free. Such diets, if followed rigorously over a period of time, may result in unintended consequences such as nutrient deficiencies and related health maladies.

Distrust of government-based dietary recommendations such as the recently released Dietary Guidelines for Americans feeds into this do-it-yourself movement as consumers disregard the science and research substantiating these recommendations. The food industry is also a victim of distrust. The results of research funded by the industry are often marginalized due to perceived bias. To minimize that bias, industry-funded research should be subjected to a very rigorous scientific process involving expert reviewers and published in peer-reviewed journals.

Dairy Council of CA continues to base programs and materials on consensus science and credible research. Efforts are underway to further educate consumers of the importance of the scientific process. Promoting

critical-thinking skills and equipping health professionals and consumers to question hearsay will help to bring the credibility back to nutritional science and its application.

10. Sustainability approaches broaden to encompass waste, packaging.

Efforts to improve the sustainability of food-production practices, which originally focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, have expanded to include factors such as reducing waste, minimizing water usage and using packaging materials that are recyclable or biodegradable. Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environment and receptive to ways they can make a difference individually. Often they will avoid foods that are packaged in non-recyclable materials. Buying local is another popular tactic to help the environment.

There is a strong opportunity to improve sustainability by reducing waste, given that about 40 percent of food from farm to fork is discarded. Considerable consumer confusion over “use by,” “sell by” and “best by” dates results in large amounts of nutritious and wholesome food being discarded. A small but growing effort is underway to standardize these dates nationwide to help minimize food wasted at retail outlets and in the home.

Dairy Council of CA educates on how the dairy industry has made great strides toward decreasing the environmental impact of producing milk and dairy products. In addition, it continues to message that the lifelong health and well-being of individuals is part of the whole sustainability equation. Efforts to educate about minimizing waste are being examined as well.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Produced twice annually by Dairy Council of California, the TRENDS newsletter updates industry leaders on emerging nutrition issues likely to have a positive or negative effect upon the dairy industry. The trends tracking system, monitored by a team of Dairy Council of California staff, is designed to identify issues early and track their development through multiple communication channels. Analysis is done semiannually on the issues. For more information or to receive a hard copy of the TRENDS newsletter, please contact Kendall House at KHouse@DairyCouncilofCA.org.



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