

FVIAC Education and Branding Committee:

The group decided to initially take on two separate topics: 1) Improvement of existing education programs and/or new programs, and 2) GMO labelling.

Education Program discussion themes:

1. Many group members thought that although there are a number of programs such as My Plate, the Food Guide Pyramid, etc. that the message is still not getting through, and in particular to children in school.
 - a. Common thoughts were that message delivery mechanisms such as posters were tired and largely ineffective.
 - b. Serving sizes were confusing due to calorie restrictions in school lunch programs, multiple servings per container, and serving sizes in general.
 - c. Nutritional requirements are also influenced by body types, cultural groups, and activity level such as participation in school sports.
2. The group decided it would be helpful to have appropriate speakers at the upcoming meeting address the current educational programs regarding fruits and vegetables and in particular to school aged children and their parents. Once the working group better understands the current messages and format being deployed, improvements can be incorporated into a position statement for full committee consideration.

The group met December 3 and guest speakers included Heidi Conell from the USDA Food and nutrition service, and Heidi Bishop from the USDA Child Nutrition Program. Heidi spoke regarding curriculum support for pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school. She pointed us to a website which the committee spent time leafing through prior to a subsequent meeting and we were all very impressed. Christina spoke regarding Farm to School and programs available to schools highlighting school planning kits, newsletters, available planning grants, and procurement support for buying local. She also supplied website and link information that upon further review by committee members was highly regarded.

Our group thought that the supplied websites and corresponding information needed to be made more widely known so schools, school children, and parents of school aged children. We submit the following statement proposal for full committee consideration:

We applaud the thorough and varied educational opportunities, resource materials, and grants available for encouraging children to eat fruits and vegetables, such as:

- **USDA Farm to School Website:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school>
 - **USDA Farm to School Census:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/>
 - **USDA Farm to School Planning Toolkit:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census#/toolkit>
 - **USDA Farm to School Grant Program:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

- Fact sheets: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/fact-sheets>
- Procuring local products: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods>
- Healthy Habits Take Root Videos and Webinars: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/videos-and-webinars>
- Smarter Lunchrooms: <http://smarterlunchrooms.org/>
- National Farm to School Network: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>
- Kids Gardening: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

We respectfully recommend efforts be undertaken to make these resources more widely known by the public to increase use and thus consumption of fruits and vegetables by youth.

GMO Labeling:

1. The group had a lively discussion regarding GMO labelling:

Our initial thoughts were:

- a. After much discussion it was decided that the FDA needs to declare that GMO's are either safe or not. If the FDA declares GMO's are safe, then the group thought that GMO disclosure on labels should occur.
- b. The group also thought it is imperative for consumers to know as much as possible from the label in terms of organic, conventional, or GMO so they can make an informed choice at point of purchase.
- c. A national standard needs to be established to avoid a state by state approach.

We met on January 15 to discuss the following draft statement:

The Secretary must insist the FDA publicly state its position that GMO foods are either safe or unsafe. If the FDA's position is that GMO foods are safe, a national program of food labeling must be enacted to educate the public regarding organic, conventional, or GMO contents in order for the public to make an informed choice.

Melissa Bailey from _____? Spoke regarding where and how USDA has plugged into the issue and our group also reviewed three FDA links which outlined the current FDA position on safety and labeling of GE foods. Everyone agreed based on the discussion that our statement needed a total makeover. +

We also discussed the issue that states were creating laws on their own and that GE labeling on a state by state basis was extremely problematic. We tried to put together an additional conference call with a guest speaker from the FDA, but it fell through. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture passed a statement that most in our group supported so it was woven into a refreshed statement for the group to weigh in on for our March meeting. The majority of our group 5 of the 8 agreed with the statement, two did not, and one person did not weigh in. The statement is as follows:

Background: The US consumer is becoming more conscious, more educated and more concerned over the food they are eating. It is important for them to be presented with accurate and transparent labeling so they can make informed purchase decisions. Labeling standards for organic, conventional and genetically engineered products must be based upon sound science. Such standards must also be created on a uniform, national basis. It is unrealistic for food manufacturers to package and label products based upon on a state-by-state distribution basis.

Recommendation: The Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee (Committee) recommends the creation of a uniform national labeling system for all food sold in the United States. Further, the Committee strongly believes the United States Food and Drug Administration is the most appropriate agency to oversee and develop the national labeling system. A priority emphasis must promptly be made on the labeling of genetically engineered products.