

Appendix 1 – OPH response to the online survey on revising Canada’s Food Guide

Health Canada’s: Canada’s Food Guide Consultation Survey

Which of the following best describes you?

- ☐ Member of the general public
- ☒ Health professional, educator or representative of an organization

Are you answering this questionnaire on behalf of an organization?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No

The sector my organization belongs to is:

- ☒ Government
- ☐ Food industry
- ☐ Schools/day cares
- ☐ Hospitals/Health care facility
- ☐ Research/academia
- ☐ Private practice/consulting
- ☐ Health/nutrition organization

☐ Other

What is your organization's main interest in healthy eating recommendations?

☐ Food industry

☒ Health promotion

☐ Health research/monitoring/surveillance

☐ Other

For which activities does your organization use healthy eating recommendations most often?

Select up to three.

☐ For program design

☐ For food product development or marketing

☐ For tool and resource development

☐ To develop policies and guidelines

☐ For assessment of eating habits in research or surveillance/monitoring

☐ For group education (for example, school, college or university, community)

☐ For group training (in-service and train-the-trainer)

☐ For individual nutritional counselling and assessment

☐ Other

To develop policies and guidelines, which of the following types of guidance are most useful to your organization? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Recommendations on the **amount** of food and beverages to consume
- ☐ Nutrients to limit like sugars, sodium, saturated and trans fats
- ☐ Recommendations on the **types** of foods or beverages to consume and to limit
- ☐ General healthy eating tips like enjoy a variety of foods
- ☐ General recommendations on eating behaviours like cook at home more often
- ☐ Other: Tips on interpreting nutrition labels

To inform your organization's work - To develop policies and guidelines - what is the most useful way to present recommendations on amounts of food? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Measured amounts of food to eat per day or per meal (for example, grams, cups or millilitres)
- ☐ Recommendations on portion size (for example, eat smaller portions of these foods)
- ☐ Calories per day
- ☐ Proportionality per meal (for example, make half your plate vegetables and fruit as shown in the Eat Well Plate)
- ☐ Frequency per day (for example, eat vegetables and fruit at all meals and for snacks, or eat an orange coloured vegetable every day)
- ☐ Other: Calories would not be useful for a population based healthy eating guide, unless a contextual statement was also provided. Calories are useful for the contextual statement when providing nutrition information for food labels and menu labelling.

For tool and resource development, which of the following types of guidance are most useful to your organization? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Recommendations on the **types** of foods or beverages to consume and to limit
- ☐ General healthy eating tips like enjoy a variety of foods
- ☐ Recommendations on the **amount** of food and beverages to consume
- ☐ Nutrients to limit like sugars, sodium, saturated and trans fats
- ☐ General recommendations on eating behaviours like cook at home more often
- ☐ Other: Tips on interpreting nutrition labels

To inform your organization's work - For tool and resource development - what is the most useful way to present recommendations on amounts of food? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Measured amounts of food to eat per day or per meal (for example, grams, cups or millilitres)
- ☐ Recommendations on portion size (for example, eat smaller portions of these foods)
- ☐ Proportionality per meal (for example, make half your plate vegetables and fruit as shown in the [Eat Well Plate](#))
- ☐ Calories per day
- ☐ Frequency per day (for example, eat vegetables and fruit at all meals and for snacks, or eat an orange coloured vegetable every day)
- ☐ Other: Calories would not be useful for a population based healthy eating guide, unless a contextual statement was also provided. Calories are useful for the contextual statement when providing nutrition information for food labels and menu labelling.

For group training (in-service and train-the-trainer), which of the following types of guidance are most useful to your organization? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Recommendations on the **types** of foods or beverages to consume and to limit
- ☐ General healthy eating tips like enjoy a variety of foods
- ☐ Nutrients to limit like sugars, sodium, saturated and trans fats
- ☐ Recommendations on the **amount** of food and beverages to consume
- ☐ General recommendations on eating behaviours like cook at home more often
- ☐ Other: Tips on interpreting nutrition labels

To inform your organization's work - For group training (in-service and train-the-trainer) - what is the most useful way to present recommendations on amounts of food? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Calories per day
- ☐ Proportionality per meal (for example, make half your plate vegetables and fruit as shown in the [Eat Well Plate](#))
- ☐ Recommendations on portion size (for example, eat smaller portions of these foods)
- ☐ Measured amounts of food to eat per day or per meal (for example, grams, cups or millilitres)
- ☐ Frequency per day (for example, eat vegetables and fruit at all meals and for snacks, or eat an orange coloured vegetable every day)
- ☐ Other: Calories would not be useful for a population based healthy eating guide, unless a contextual statement was also provided. Calories are useful for the contextual statement when providing nutrition information for food labels and menu labelling.

Please rate the importance of including content on each of the following topics to support your organization's work related to healthy eating.

	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
Impact of ultra-processed foods on healthy eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Traditional food, food access and other factors among Indigenous populations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Impact of the food environment on food choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Dietary patterns – such as Mediterranean, vegetarian, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoyment of eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impact of eating habits on the environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating behaviours (for example, eating together, mindful eating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Role of food skills (for example, cooking) in supporting healthy eating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Other, specify: Marketing of unhealthy/ultra processed foods and beverages

Somewhat important	Very important	Essential
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Would healthy eating recommendations based on the level of processing of foods be helpful to you?

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Unsure

Why do you say that?

- The food supply is saturated with processed foods (both minimally and ultra-processed) and consumption is high. Consumers rely on processed foods due to lack of food skills and time constraints.
- If consumers were more aware of the nutrient value of ultra-processed foods, they may be better able to make informed food choices. Consumers face barriers to making healthy food choices because they are unaware of what 'healthy' means. This is largely due to powerful advertising tactics that position products as healthy based on inclusion of certain nutrients. A greater focus on eating foods made from ingredients and whole food choices is needed.

Consumption of sugars has become a concern for many people. Some countries and international health organizations have set limits on sugars. With more evidence on the health effect of sugar-sweetened beverages, Health Canada is considering ways to encourage Canadians to reduce their consumption of sugars.

How useful would the following approaches be to your organizations work?

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
Restricting the marketing of foods high in sugars to children	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Messages about how to reduce consumption of sugars	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A Health Canada policy position on sugar-sweetened beverages	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A recommended limit on amount of sugars to eat each day	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More information on food labels about sugars	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Targeting messages to the highest consumers of sugar-sweetened beverages	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Grouping foods is important to communicate healthy eating recommendations. Health Canada is exploring different options to grouping foods to help you understand and use the recommendations.

Health Canada's current healthy eating recommendations classify foods into the following groups:

- Vegetables and Fruit;
- Grain Products;

- Milk and alternatives; and,
- Meat and alternatives.

Additional recommendations are provided on:

- Limiting foods and beverages that are high in calories, fat, sugar and/or salt;
- Including a small amount – 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tablespoon) of unsaturated fat each day.

To what extent are the current food groupings useful to your organization's work?

- ☐ To a great extent
- ☒ To some extent
- ☐ Not very much
- ☐ Not at all

Why do you say that?

- Useful in the development of policies and programs including our childcare, after-school program, and workplace healthy eating guidelines
- Useful for knowing which nutrients are common in which foods to encourage healthy eating patterns
- Provides a teaching tool for group trainings and resource development
- However current food groupings exclude many beverages, “junk foods”, and other food products Canadians are eating regularly. More direction on these ‘other’ foods is needed due to high consumption by Canadians
- Recommended revision to food groups: split up vegetables and fruit, group starchy vegetable with grain products (i.e. potatoes, sweet potatoes), include protein group with emphasis on plant based protein sources

People get healthy eating information in a number of different ways. From the following list of sources, which have you used to look for healthy eating information in the past year? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Print materials like magazines, factsheets, newspapers, posters
- ☐ Social media like Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest
- ☐ Web / Mobile based applications/ interactive tools
- ☐ Websites like web pages, blogs, news articles
- ☐ Other sources: Professional organizations (Eat Right Ontario, Dietitians of Canada, Practice-Based Evidence in Nutrition, Health Canada), Industry organizations (Canadian Produce Marketing Association), peer-reviewed journal articles, professional judgement and consensus within practice groups
- ☐ None of the above

How often does your organization work with the following client populations?

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Low income earners	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Newcomers to Canada	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Older adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children/youth	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Indigenous peoples	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individuals with a low literacy level	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What should Health Canada know about tailoring messages or resources for healthy eating recommendations to:

Children/youth

- Needs to be fun and kid-friendly. Include very practical ideas for meals, snacks, packed lunches, and beverages.
- Guiding principles are needed for parents and providers at childcare centres, schools, recreation centres, community centres etc., who are responsible for purchasing, preparing and serving foods to children and youth.
- Guidance is needed for children under 2 years of age
- Serving sizes on the current food guide don't reflect portions eaten by young children, therefore a tailored tool for this group is necessary.
- Need a focus on the division of responsibility in feeding. Caregivers are responsible for what, when, where food is served; children are responsible for which and how much food is eaten.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to include children in food (meal, snack) preparation from a young age.

Indigenous peoples

- Involve diverse indigenous groups when developing messages and resources so it is relevant to their setting and cultural practices.

Low income earners

- Needs to be relevant and applicable to this group.
- Provide practical examples of lower cost foods to meet nutritional requirements.

Newcomers to Canada

- Use low-literacy language and pictures
- Culturally diverse food options

Individuals with a low literacy level

- Use low-lit language and pictures

This consultation workbook has asked about your use and perspectives on healthy eating recommendations and some of the challenges we aim to address with the revision of these recommendations.

What else can Health Canada do to help improve the uptake and use of its healthy eating recommendations?

Information on healthy eating for Canadians should be clear and easy to understand and include comprehensive dietary guidance to inform future policy development and provide a foundation on which to build consistent messaging and diverse tools. The food guide would be one of these tools to support healthy eating. Ottawa Public Health envisions a revised food guide that focuses on: total diet approach; choosing more “minimally processed foods” and less “ultra-processed foods”; building food skills and eating together as a family; shifting from meat to meat alternatives; and excludes industry involvement in setting dietary guidelines.

Focus on total diet approach

This means shifting from a nutrient-based approach to a whole food-based approach in which the healthy, least processed foods are clearly identified as a foundation for healthy eating. The use of daily servings has shown to be cumbersome for general public (Health Canada, 2016). The food guide should also address how foods should be consumed in a context of a total diet. For example, the Mediterranean Food Guide Pyramid and Swedish Food Guide are very good representation of healthy eating patterns. The Mediterranean Pyramid illustrates what foods to eat daily, weekly and occasionally in order to follow a healthy eating pattern

(UNESCO, 2015; Sofi et. al.,2008). The Swedish food guide conveys food-based message by highlighting foods to: ‘eat more’, ‘switch to’, and ‘eat less’ (National Food Agency Sweden, 2015).

Focus on choosing more natural or “minimally processed foods” and less “ultra-processed foods

Make natural or minimally processed foods the basis of the diet. Limit the use of processed foods, consuming them in small amounts as ingredients in culinary preparations or as part of meals based on natural or minimally processed foods. Avoid ultra-processed foods. Because of their ingredients, ultra-processed foods—such as packaged snacks, soft drinks, and instant noodles—are nutritionally unbalanced as they are high in added sugars, trans fat, saturated fat, sodium, artificial flavours and colours. As a result of their formulation and presentation, they tend to be consumed in excess, and displace natural or minimally processed foods (Monteiro et al. 2013; Ministry of Health of Brazil, 2014; Ludwig, 2013; Willett et al, 2005).

Possible Definitions

Ultra-processed foods are industrial formulations made entirely or mostly from substances extracted from foods (oils, fats, sugar, starch, and proteins), derived from food constituents (hydrogenated fats and modified starch), or synthesised in laboratories from food substrates or other organic sources (flavour enhancers, colours, and several food additives used to make the product hyper-palatable). Manufacturing techniques include extrusion, moulding, and preprocessing by means of frying (Ministry of Health of Brazil, 2014)

Minimally processed foods are products manufactured by industry with the use of salt, sugar, oil or other substances added to natural or minimally processed foods to preserve or to make them more palatable. They are derived directly from foods, and are recognised as versions of the original foods. They are usually consumed as a part of or as a side dish in culinary preparations made using natural or minimally processed foods (Ministry of Health of Brazil, 2014).

Focus on other aspects of healthy eating beyond types and amounts of foods, including habits like building food skills and eating together as a family

Eating together as a family has a very positive influence on healthy eating and weight for children and adolescents. When parents and children eat together, they are more likely to eat healthy balanced meals and improve their intake of fibre and important vitamins and minerals (Dietitians of Canada, 2009). Typically, these families have been shown to eat more vegetables, fruit, and calcium-rich foods, and drink less pop. Eating family meals is associated with a lower risk of becoming overweight and may also help

to prevent disordered eating in adolescence. The evidence strongly suggests that regular family meals have long-term nutritional benefits (Larson et al, 2007; Burgess-Champoux et al, 2009). While many of today's families have hectic schedules, it is clear that making family meals a priority can provide important health benefits. Eating together allows parent(s) to model healthy eating behaviours which helps teach children habits that last a lifetime. Furthermore, hands on cooking activities are a great way to improve mealtime practices and eating habits (Condrasky, 2006; Horodynski et al, 2004; Chenhall, 2010). Involving children and youth in food preparation help build their self-confidence and self-efficacy through skill development.

Shift the focus from meat to including more plant based sources of protein.

“Meat” is a good source of protein; however, there are many other good sources of protein: fish, poultry, legumes, tofu, eggs, nut and seeds. All these food are currently included in the “Meat and Alternatives” on the Canada's Food Guide. Red meat also includes processed meats (meats that are preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or the addition of chemical preservations), i.e. hot dogs, ham, sausages, beef jerky, canned meat.

Evidence from a number of studies indicates an association between red meat and processed meat consumption to increased risk of colorectal cancer (World Cancer Research Fund, 2007), heart disease (Ministry of Health of Brazil, 2014) and type 2 diabetes (Harvard Magazine, 2012). Food guide should include direction to limit red and processed meats.

Beef production places a huge strain on our environment. By reducing consumption and production of animal foods will reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming, of deforestation caused by creation of new grazing areas for cattle, and of intensive use of water. It will also reduce the number of intensive animal production systems, which are particularly harmful to the environment. (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health).

Encourage Canadians to choose protein sources other than red meat (mostly plant based – legumes, nuts – but could also fish, poultry) that contains less fat, particularly saturated fats, and other healthy nutrients and limiting red meat and avoiding processed meat.

Limit industry involvement in setting dietary guidance

The food industry should not be included in the decision making processes of establishing national dietary recommendations. The food industry is definitely a stakeholder that influences the availability of foods and nutritional health of Canadians, but the goals of public health are not aligned with the financial interests of the food industry; “in a market-driven economy, industry tends to act

opportunistically in the interests of maximizing profit” (Ludwig and Nestle, 2008). Furthermore, industry involvement undermines the public’s confidence in dietary recommendations (Nestle, 2013).

The food industry has historically influenced what foods are featured in dietary guidance, market their products intensively to children, influence the conduct of research and development of public health policy, and lobby against policies that may promote health but hinder profits from current food product lines (Nestle, 2013; Ludwig and Nestle, 2008).

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