

# Advancing Nutrition Science

## FEDERAL NUTRITION ADVISORY COALITION

Poor nutrition is challenging almost every aspect of our society, contributing to poor health, health disparities and preventable healthcare spending across the United States and around the world. In turn, the Federal Nutrition Research Advisory Coalition (FNAC) is dedicated to improving our nation's understanding of the value of good nutrition and its connection to health. Our members believe that advancing nutrition science plays a pivotal role in improving consumers' eating habits, preventing, or reducing the risk of chronic diseases across the lifespan, promoting good health, and minimizing health care expenses. Knowing the nutritional value of our food — as well as the ways in which Americans consume foods and beverages has proven critical in treating costly, diet-

related health conditions like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. Nutrition science, however, extends far beyond that; it affects the decisions made every day by individual consumers, the nutrition guidance that health providers offer to patients, and the nutrition standards and policies that form the basis for Federal, state, and local public health programs.

Strengthening federal research — one of FNAC's core priorities — will enable individuals, health care providers, food system stakeholders, and government policymakers to better improve health through nutrition — particularly in underserved communities where access to nutritious foods is often constrained. Poor nutrition is the number

one cause of poor health in America, with hundreds of billions being spent each year on preventable, diet-related illnesses. Critical research conducted and financed through the federal government simultaneously informs preventive health care decision-making and drastically minimizes expenses for regulators, states, employers, and — most importantly — families. We believe that now, more than ever, Congress and other government stakeholders should prioritize advancing nutrition science as an effective mechanism to improve health outcomes for countless Americans, reduce healthcare spending, and increase health equity.

## KEY FACTS AND FIGURES



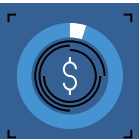
Diet-related diseases create enormous economic challenges for private American businesses, families, and individuals through rising health care premiums, out-of-pocket-costs, missed work, and lower productivity. The annual medical and economic **costs of chronic diseases associated with diet alone have been estimated to exceed \$1.72 trillion** — equivalent to 9.3 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.<sup>i</sup>



Between 1980 and 2018, the percentage of **adults with obesity increased from 15% to 42.4%**.<sup>ii</sup> These diet-related concerns impact our nation's military readiness. In fact, active-duty forces have specifically seen a 61 percent rise in obesity since 2002, and **1 in 4 adults are too obese to serve in the U.S. military**.<sup>iii</sup> This serves as a national security concern, limiting our ability to effectively recruit new service members.



**Nutrition research** is advancing quickly, but there's still much left to learn. Among areas of research that warrant significant funding, leading nutrition scientists have recommended: The cardiometabolic effects of phenolics, nutritional impacts on specific foods (e.g., dairy fat, probiotics, fermentation, coffee, tea, cocoa, eggs, specific vegetable and tropical oils, vitamin D, individual fatty acids, etc.).<sup>iv</sup>



**Only 5% of the National Institute of Health (NIH)'s budget** currently goes towards nutrition science, although it is well-established that poor eating patterns are the leading cause of poor health.<sup>v</sup> Aligning and elevating the position of nutrition science at the federal level will tackle this research deficit head-on and respond to America's diet-related disease epidemic.

# Advancing Nutrition Science

## CORE POLICY OBJECTIVES



### Provide new funding to NIH and USDA for foundational science

and clinical trials that test the impact of food and lifestyle interventions on metabolic health, COVID-19 severity, boosting the immune system, and much more. The FNAC also recommends strengthening nutrition research at USDA on the intersections of human health, agriculture, and sustainability across the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) agencies.



### Ensure sufficient scientific expertise and leadership

on food, nutrition, and agricultural issues across critical federal offices, including within the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST), and similar bodies and appointments within HHS, USDA, DoD, and VA.



### Significantly expand funding for research

to help strengthen the public health impacts of the federal nutrition safety net, improve the evidence-base for developing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) and the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs), and increase investments at CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO), who is charged with leading our nation's prevention activities against diet-related chronic diseases and health disparities.

## ABOUT THE COALITION

**The Federal Nutrition Advisory Coalition (FNAC)** serves as an ad hoc alliance of more than 85 advocacy organizations, public health nonprofits, academic institutions, and global food brands dedicated to building national momentum and support for effective policymaking across three key areas:

- (1) **advancing nutrition science through strengthening funding, coordination, and authority within the federal government,**
- (2) **leveraging Food is Medicine interventions in healthcare, and**
- (3) **creating greater coordination of federal food and nutrition policy.**

Convened through the **Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University** with generous support from The Rockefeller Foundation, our coalition members recognize the need for greater investment and coordination in federal nutrition research, which can — and will — play a critical role in reducing health disparities, lowering healthcare spending, strengthening our food system, improving military readiness, and advancing innovations that stimulate economic growth. Our coalition assembles regularly to discuss and publish commentary on issues relevant to this effort, bringing evidence, objectivity, and actionable policy recommendations designed to accelerate solutions that address the United States' most pressing food and nutrition challenges.

The FNAC is an ad hoc alliance and may not fully represent the views of its members on all policy issues. To learn more, contact [Nutrition@WaxmanStrategies.com](mailto:Nutrition@WaxmanStrategies.com), [FederalNutritionResearch@Tufts.edu](mailto:FederalNutritionResearch@Tufts.edu), or visit [sites.tufts.edu/nutritionadvisory/about](https://sites.tufts.edu/nutritionadvisory/about).

<sup>i</sup> <https://milkeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/reports-pdf/Mi-Americas-Obesity-Crisis-WEB.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6913a6.htm?s\\_cid=mm6913a6\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6913a6.htm?s_cid=mm6913a6_w)

<sup>iii</sup> <http://missionreadiness.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/MR-NAT-Retreat-Not-an-Option.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://nutrition.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FIM%20Infographic-Web.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> <https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/112/3/721/5873352?login=true>