



## **Moving Beyond Calcium: Dairy's Total Nutrient Package**

June 14, 2011

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Dairy farmers' long investment in nutrition research is paying dividends. Dairy is becoming recognized for its unique nutrient package and health benefits in the nutrition community. However, few consumers are aware of what dairy has to offer, and other foods and beverages are capitalizing on dairy's nutrients. The time is now to promote dairy's inherent attributes, coupled with emotional benefits among consumers to help maintain and grow our share of market. There is an opportunity for industry to better leverage dairy's equity (beyond calcium and bone health) to meet evolving consumer needs.

### **Dairy recommendations**

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) continue to recommend three daily servings of low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products for Americans 9 years and older, and two servings for 2- to 3-year-olds. The daily recommendation was increased for children ages 4-8, to 2 ½ servings from two servings in the 2005 dietary guidelines.

It has been estimated that 85% of Americans do not meet dairy recommendations, with the current average being 1.8 servings per day. Recognizing this, the DGA called for increased consumption of low-fat and fat-free milk and milk products. Not only can dairy help close nutrient gaps, as noted in the 2010 DGA, but also current evidence shows that intake of milk and milk products is linked to improved bone health, especially in children and adolescents, and is associated with reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and lower blood pressure in adults.

### **Dairy packs a nutrient punch**

Nutrient intake data from the 2003-06 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey underscores the nutrient richness of dairy and its value to the American diet. The dairy group (milk, cheese and yogurt) is a substantial contributor of many nutrients that are important for good health, including calcium, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, as well as riboflavin. In fact, dairy provides the majority of calcium and vitamin D in the diet, yet only one-tenth of the calories. (See chart at <http://tinyurl.com/DairyResearchInstitute>).

Milk is the No. 1 food source of three of the four nutrients (calcium, vitamin D and potassium) the DGA identified as nutrients of public health concern, as well as the leading contributor of vitamin A, riboflavin, magnesium and phosphorus. Cheese, including cheese in food mixtures,

provides 21% of calcium, 11% of phosphorus, 9% of protein, 9% of vitamin A and 8% of zinc while only 5% of calories. Moreover, cheese is the No. 1 food source of calcium for adults 19-50 years old. Flavored milk is helping children meet their dairy needs, providing the same essential nutrients as white milk while contributing only 3% of the added sugar in their diet.

### **Are consumers “in the know”?**

Most people associate milk with calcium and vitamin D and building strong bones. However, consumer research shows that few people are aware that dairy provides vitamin A, vitamin B12 or potassium, and few look to milk for phosphorus, riboflavin or niacin despite the fact that it provides all of these essential nutrients. Similarly, only 15% of consumers know that dairy provides protein. This is unfortunate given that more than 25% of consumers are reducing or not eating meat and looking for additional sources of protein. Furthermore, when considering dairy, consumers currently think that lower-fat options contain fewer nutrients. Education about dairy's nutrient package is clearly needed, but what is the most impactful way to reach consumers?

### **Call to action**

Health and wellness are top of mind with consumers, presenting an opportunity for dairy. Clear, compelling and unified messages across the industry are needed to reframe dairy's place in consumers' minds as one of the best dietary sources of many nutrients in an affordable, appealing and readily available package. Communicating the presence of multiple nutrients and linking the nutrients to a specific benefit is powerful and builds to higher emotional and personal values.

Consumers understand nutrients help to achieve a “healthy body,” and this message should be reinforced. Beyond calcium, the most compelling dairy nutrients today are vitamin D, protein, potassium and vitamin B12. For example, a top scoring message is “Milk: America's No. 1 food source of calcium, potassium and vitamin D.” Another example that communicates a health benefit is “milk's powerful nutrient package of calcium plus eight other essential nutrients helps nourish your body, not just your bones.” Protein messages resonate with consumers, particularly for cheese. In fact, nearly half of consumers say the message “good source of protein” is very important on product labels. One that scored well was “help curb hunger with a diet higher in protein. Cheese is a good source of high-quality protein.”

The Dairy Research Institute provides “Dairy's Contributions to the U.S. Diet,” an online ([www.USDairy.com](http://www.USDairy.com)) collection of charts, data tables and key points to support messaging on dairy's nutrient richness. Marketing communications materials are also available online to help industry members leverage dairy's nutrient-rich story.

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