NATIONAL FOOD MUSEUM

Statement by Michael F. Jacobson, PhD
Founder, National Food Museum
(co-founder of the Center for Science in the Public Interest)
January 7, 2026

New Dietary Guidelines – a Real Shocker! But Will It 'Make America Sick Again'?

For the past year HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been issuing sensible (eat real food, avoid sugar and food dyes) and nonsensical (eat beef, beef tallow, full-fat dairy products, raw milk; avoid "toxic" seed oils) dietary advice.

HHS and USDA released the new edition of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which informs the public and determines what is served in school meals, VA hospitals, and other federal food programs. One shocker? Some of Kennedy's blatant nonsense—which nutrition experts feared would dominate the Guidelines and confuse the public—is not included!

But another shocker is its powerful endorsement of meat and full-fat dairy products.

The new Guidelines, like all previous editions, emphasizes eating whole foods like fruits and vegetables, foods low in added sugars, and whole grains instead of white flour. And it still recommends limiting alcoholic beverages, which cause 178,000 deaths per year, and sodium, which causes as many as 100,000 deaths annually. One new addition—and no longer controversial except to food and chemical manufacturers—is that it strongly discourages eating highly processed foods and foods concocted with dyes, non-caloric sweeteners, preservatives, and artificial flavors.

The Guidelines reiterates the long-standing advice to limit saturated fat, a cause of heart disease, to 10 percent of calories. However, that recommendation was directly undermined by administration officials at a White House press conference who stressed that they were ending the

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"war against" and the "demonization" of saturated fat. The Guidelines repeatedly advises people to consume meat and full-fat dairy products and includes butter (and beef tallow) as healthy fats. Such advice reads as if it was written by industry lobbyists (and it might well have been). In those regards, the new Guidelines harkens back to nutrition advice offered in the 1950s.

The full-blown support for the meat and dairy industries is underscored by the Guidelines' unfounded recommendation to consume 50 to 100 percent more protein than the Recommended Dietary Allowance. That support is buttressed further by warnings of possible vitamin and mineral deficiencies in vegetarian and vegan diets. But the Guidelines never acknowledges, let alone highlights, that those diets are associated with lower rates of diet-related illnesses.

The Guidelines doesn't specifically warn against consuming what Kennedy has called "toxic" seed oils (soy, canola, corn) that allegedly cause obesity. But in the "Healthy Fats" section, it only advises, cryptically to most people, "prioritizing oils with essential fatty acids"—indeed, the oils in seeds. In fact, replacing the saturated fat in meat and dairy products with the polyunsaturated oils in soybean or canola oil does reduce the risk of heart disease. The Guidelines doesn't even recommend that switch for people with cardiovascular disease.

In a world in which science mattered, the Guidelines would have emphasized replacing at least some dairy, beef, and pork with beans, chicken, seafood, and other healthier sources of protein and foods rich in seed oils (soy, canola, corn, etc.), such as salads with dressing. It also would have stated that animal products are a major cause of environmental problems, including the climate crisis.

The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, along with discouragement of vaccines, cuts in SNAP, and defunding of nutrition research, will only Make America Sick Again.

The nascent National Food Museum is a nonprofit organization that looks at the world through the lens of food. It is particularly concerned about the impact of diet on health and the environment, particularly the climate crisis.