

2010 Nutrition Summit

Changing the Food Environment: Making it Happen

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Improving Food Labeling For Healthy Food Choices

Pamela Bailey, BA

President and Chief Executive Officer, Grocery Manufacturers Association

I really appreciate the opportunity to be with all of you today to talk about the special role that the food and beverage manufacturers play in the battle against obesity. Our member company strongly supports Mrs. Obama's initiative. Earlier today I was at a luncheon of thousands of women from all over the country, and I think the earlier speaker referred to Mrs. Obama as coalescing all of us to work together on the same page. And I must tell you, to see her in front of a non-food audience, you really feel like we are all a part of her initiative -- and she is truly our leader -- and it's really just terrific to see the response when she talks about her initiative. We are really at a watershed moment. For the first time, I think we can agree the government, the food and beverage industry, parents and other stakeholders are really all on the same page. We may not agree on every line, we may want to continue to talk and work things out; but I think we are definitely on the same page, and we are literally in the same room today. Our commitment at GMA extends beyond the labeling initiative I'm going to talk about in more detail, so if you will just let me take a couple of minutes to set the context here. We really are committed to providing parents and children with healthy choices, promoting healthy eating habits, enhancing nutrition knowledge and supporting new opportunities for physical activity at school and in the workplace and in the neighborhoods. We really take a holistic approach to our shared challenge. We are confident, when we make this commitment, that we will be able to continue to find new and innovative ways to help support a healthy diet. In recent years, we've changed the way we develop and market over 10,000 products: reducing fat, sugar, salt and calories without sacrificing the convenience and tastes that we know consumers demand, and we are committed to continuing to listen to our consumers and to innovate. Beginning in the early part of this decade, our industry took a hard look at our products, at what they were hearing from consumers and began to make significant changes aimed at responding to consumers' needs and society's changing values. Specific actions that our companies took included: Products and choices through innovation and packaging; product promotion policies, especially with regard to promotion of products to children; nutrition and lifestyle information on product labels and in advertising and marketing; workplace wellness; community and charitable activities and stakeholder dialogue. We are very proud that we helped

launch the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation last October, a \$20 million-dollar initiative aimed at reducing childhood obesity by 2015 by promoting energy balance in the marketplace, in schools and in the workplace. We pledge to continue this effort and to find innovative ways to continue to provide healthy choices and to support the First Lady and other stakeholders.

It may go without saying, but I want to emphasize that, in our extremely competitive business environment, companies to survive must change. If they don't, they will not. Survival is synonymous with innovation and meeting the ever-needing changes of our consumers. In recent years, we have heard our consumers loud and clear and transformed the way we do business and how we provide information to consumers. For example, many of our companies offer free websites with substantial healthy-living content including tens of thousands of nutritious recipes, detailed nutrition information on products, articles by registered dietitians and physical activity ideas and tips. Packaging has also played an important role in providing consumers with information on portion sizes, more helpful preparation, and the benefits of the healthy diet. How best to provide the information consumers want about their food is a process of continuous improvement and innovation. We will and we must continue to find new ways to provide that information. Underlining the development of this information is what was true at the beginning of this decade and we believe, quite firmly, it's still true. Mothers see themselves as being in charge of their families' decisions about healthy living and the food they serve. They see themselves as primarily responsible for the health and wellness in general of their families, but we have also heard from mothers that they want our companies and our government to work together collaboratively to provide them with the information they need to make informed decisions about the products they buy and they serve to their children and how they build a healthy diet.

And so when the First Lady and the FDA urged us as food manufacturers to work together with them on a new voluntary front-of-pack nutrition labeling approach so consumers could understand and be able to use information to build those healthy diets for themselves and their families, we promptly signed up. GMA sees front-of-pack nutrition labeling in the same broad way that FDA conceptualizes it, voluntary system that could be applied to the great majority of foods in the marketplace. This is an important consideration. For food companies to use voluntary labeling on most, if not all, of the food products in their portfolios, the type of labeling will need to be acceptable to food manufacturers as well as meet consumers' needs and the goals of the First Lady and FDA and other regulatory agencies. And so we all must figure this out together, and that is the spirit for which we approach this project. GMA and its member companies are currently engaged in a three-step process to develop, test, and implement a voluntary front-of-pack nutrition

labeling system that could be applied to the great majority of food sold in the United States. We believe that the front-of-pack nutrition labeling should get consumers' attention, be easily understandable, and be something that consumers will actually use in their daily lives. It should inform people about the food they can choose, not tell them what foods to choose. And it should be something that could be used on all foods and motivate consumers to examine and use the nutrition fact panel. We also agree with FDA that the public health focus for front-of-pack nutrition labeling should be reductions in obesity and chronic disease. To achieve that, we believe that front-of-pack nutrition labeling should be grounded in the dietary guidelines for Americans which are intended to help consumers follow dietary patterns that can reduce the risk of obesity and other chronic diseases. Those guidelines provide an outline for us of nutrients and food elements that would need to be considered in creating such dietary patterns such as the appropriate intake of calories and nutrients to limit. They also provide guidance on nutrient shortfalls and food groups to be encouraged in the diet. Those recommendations are a very important foundational element for the front-of-pack labeling discussions we are currently engaged in.

Our member companies also have a great deal of knowledge and insight into consumers' food shopping practices, and we have great respect for consumers' abilities to make good decisions if they have good information and choices. We are sharing our thoughts and ideas with FDA. We are also planning a high-quality robust consumer research agenda that is consonant with consumers' food shopping experiences so that we can add to the consumer research and body of knowledge being developed independently by FDA. This research will measure consumers' abilities to make nutritionally informed choices in a range of food products. It will also seek to understand consumers' reactions to and understanding of front-of-pack nutrition labeling, and it will allow us to understand a range of consumers' responses, including population segments known to be at higher risk for obesity and other chronic diseases. And our commitment to doing this doesn't end with simply providing the information on the front of the package. To support consumer understanding, our industry is going to undertake a comprehensive, nationwide public education campaign to accelerate actual consumer use and acceptance of the new information. We also would hope to partner with the federal government on this effort.

Finally, this is a landmark project. We undertake it with great enthusiasm, and we are certain that our industry is up to the challenge. Over the last 100 years, the food manufacturing and beverage industries in the United States have developed a culture of continuous improvement. We see this as a further step in that journey we undertake together with our consumers. And so we are going to continue, not only to develop innovative products, but find new ways to provide that

information to consumers, and we are dedicated to ensuring; but, once developed, we do our part in educating consumers so that they can use the information to achieve the goal we all share, which is improved abilities for our consumers to build healthy diets for their families. Thank you.

Michael F. Jacobson, PhD

Executive Director, Center for Science in the Public Interest

I am really honored to have been invited to speak at this landmark event that I hope will mark the beginning of more cooperation, collaboration and progress on this important issue. I think everybody here is concerned about the impact of diet on our health. What we are eating is contributing to several hundred thousand deaths a year. That's really why we are here. It's deaths from cancer, stroke, heart attacks, diabetes, as well as our diet causes all kinds of other problems related to obesity and other conditions. Let's not forget tooth decay. And there are all kinds of ways that we are attacking, that the companies are providing some healthier foods. Community groups are lobbying for improved local programs getting fresh produce into schools and other places. Lawyers are filing lawsuits against companies for inappropriate practices. Legislators are providing free fruits and vegetables to many school kids. There are many roads that I think are contributing to what should be tremendous progress in the coming years.

For 70 years, food labeling has been seen as a way to inform consumers about what it is they are buying in the marketplace. It started in 1938 with ingredient labeling that was extended in 1990 with nutrition labeling. Ten years later some allergen labeling was added. And then we took a landmark step just a month ago to get a little bit of information on some restaurants, chain restaurants, just getting calories. And that will provide people with a key piece of information about the foods they are eating at so many restaurants around the country. And I would like to acknowledge Margo Wootan, who really carried the water for CSPI in working with local groups, local legislators, and federal legislators, to get this landmark bill passed. Obviously, the menu labeling is going to help people choose lower calorie foods. The only reliable study of menu labeling that has been done was done by Starbucks. And they deserve credit for doing it. And what they found is that, in New York City, the calorie labeling led to a 14 percent reduction in the calories people bought in the form of food, the pastries and cookies that they sell. Unfortunately the calorie labeling hasn't had an effect on the beverages. And what that indicates, the need for a lot of education to go along with just putting calories on menus and menu boards. Besides consumer choices, I think menu labeling is going to have another important effect; and that is, encouraging restaurants to lower the calorie content of existing foods and consider calories when they are introducing new foods. Starbucks has cut the calories in some of its products. Dunkin Donuts has come out with a line of lower calorie sandwiches. And one other example is Cosi®

sandwich shop has cut the calories in its signature salad by more than a third. And I think we are going to be seeing those kinds of changes throughout the restaurant marketplace, possibly even in restaurants that don't provide that calorie information.

So, this is what we are seeing now. And so all this is past what I have talked about. I would like to talk now about some of the things that I hope will be happening in the future. Calorie labeling could be extremely important. A soup offered by a California restaurant chain is 250 calories. And calories aren't everything. The enormous sodium content in one serving of this soup. It contains basically a whole day's worth of sodium. And that suggests the need for FDA, when it implements the menu labeling or Congress or state legislators, to think about how do you inform consumers about other key information in restaurant foods, and warning labels is one way to do it. And this would be a salt warning label for foods that are high in sodium. And there may be other considerations for other things. And I want to come back to the concept of warning notice in a bit. Now, restaurants are part of the picture, but we get most of our calories from packaged foods. We have had nutrition labeling for more than 15 years now. It might need a little brushing up in a number of ways. The CSPI has designed a somewhat improved label so that calories are made more prominent. Up at the top, there is a grain food. It shows the percentage of whole grains in this food. For some of the nutrients, like saturated fat, the foods are high in these nutrients. It would be highlighted in red. Maybe the word "high" is put there to alert people. We list trans fat. Trans fats should be eliminated from the food supply and from nutrition labels, and I am talking about artificial trans fat, that the FDA can do like that.

Replace sugars with added sugars and a number of other changes like that that I think would make the nutrition label more helpful. But as we have heard, front-of-package labeling could be extremely important, especially for the several million people in America who are not dieticians. It's hard to balance these ten or 20 numbers on a nutrition label. And so companies, governments, have come up with a wide variety of approaches. And I am glad to hear that GMA is going to be doing some tests. Food and Drug Administration is doing some tests. There are several key things we need to find out, which nutrients to include and in what format should that information be presented. The British Government has one system. Several supermarkets in the U.S. have another one. And the FDA's tests are unfortunately limited. They are not going to answer all the questions. They don't include all the different formats, but there will be a start and certainly gives some information to move this important measure along, to move information on the side to the front of the package. Now, the food industry loves to put good information on packages, "Smart Choices." The Swedish Government has its keyhole symbol. Some people say that these are

maybe not good choices but at least not bad-for-you choices. And there are other approaches that I think we need to look at, and including something like the British Government's colored dots of red, amber and green. And some people have suggested one dot, one single dot, to summarize the overall nutrition value of a food: red, yellow or green. We need to consider some kind of warning labels on foods because they have been extremely effective in some certain uses. The European Union has passed a law that will require a hyperactivity warning notice on most foods that contain synthetic dyes. And you can bet that that requirement will essentially get artificial dyes out of the European food supply. The Brits have already gotten rid of almost all the dyes. The Finnish Government has set some thresholds of sodium above which you have to put a high sodium notice. That has led the food industry in Finland to avoid the highest sodium foods in key categories, and the Finnish Government is now lowering that level to further lower the sodium in the food supply. California requires warning notices, not just on foods, but all kinds of products that pose a significant risk to reproduction or cancer. And those proposition 65 notices read: Warning this product contains a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer. Those warnings have been effective in getting manufacturers to reformulate their different products. So, while the food industry is fond of saying, "warning notices don't work, people don't like them," in fact, they do work and a lot of people like to have that information highlighted and like that little salt shaker on a restaurant menu.

A lot of little changes that would cost industry virtually nothing and would work on all but the smallest packages. Now, one thing that the British Government and some other governments are doing is putting percentage ingredient labeling on foods to show consumers how much of the expensive, the valuable ingredient they are getting in the food. 55 percent fish in this lightly battered fish cakes; and another brand might have 70 percent; another, 30 percent. Very helpful, simple information. Industry knows that they have the numbers. It should be very easy to implement, Congress or the FDA could. The FDA has a regulation called "percentage characterizing ingredients," and I think there are two foods that have been there were two regulations, one for seafood cocktail, and I don't know what the other one is for. It specified percentages. FDA could easily expand this to many, many other kinds of foods. And the U.S. Department of Agriculture could do exactly the same for foods like chicken potpies. So, there are all these regulations, but they are not worth a hoot if the government doesn't enforce those regulations. There are vague terms like "clear and conspicuous," which in the eyes of many FDA inspectors means that it's okay to have black lettering on dark blue background. Impossible to read. But the FDA and USDA need to enforce the deceptive labeling regulations that they have on

the books. Many products that contain vitamins A, C and E claim that they will benefit your immunity presumably reducing your risk of colds or the flu or cancer or who knows what. That's malarkey. Everybody knows that. The companies know it, but the FDA has let companies get away with that. I want to pat the FDA on the back for issuing about 20 warning notices to companies that have, in FDA's eyes, deceptive labeling, and I was glad to hear from Dr. Hamburg this morning that companies have responded favorably and are improving their labels.

The FDA is getting millions of dollars in new resources, and hopefully some of that would be applied to enforcing the laws so that the agency is no longer a paper tiger. And USDA, of course, approves every single label, and it could stop some of the deception. My favorite one is Hormel has a pork roast. You know, it looks like a salami, a big pork roast. In big print it says, "pork roast." So, you think you are buying pork roast. You read the little print, and it says T-H-I-R-T-Y P-E-R-C-E-N-T W-A-T-E-R A-D-D-E-D. You are only buying 70 percent of a pork roast. 30 percent of that product is water that they have added, and they are stealing money from you.

So, despite that it's an exciting time because this is the first administration in probably history, at least going back to Teddy Roosevelt, that has cared about obesity, other diet-related illnesses, that cares about nutrition, and we have regulators who believe in enforcing the law and who are really trying to make changes. So, I think I could speak for the entire consumer community that we are going to be behind you a hundred percent and push you to get you to do the right thing as aggressively as possible. Thank you very much.

Dawn Sweeney, MBA
Chief Executive Officer, National Restaurant Association

I would like to just begin quickly by introducing to you, for those of you who may not be familiar, the National Restaurant Association. We are an organization that was founded in 1919, so we are a 91-year-old organization, and we are the leading business association for the restaurant industry comprised, as was mentioned, of nearly a million restaurant locations and food service outlets at a work force today of almost 13 million employees. We are the nation's second largest private sector employer after the health care industry. The National Restaurant Association is very hard at work to lead America's restaurant industry into a new era of prosperity and prominence and participation, importantly, as we say and as we believe and as we do, enhancing the quality of life for all that we serve. Our philanthropic foundation, the National Restaurant Association's Educational Foundation enhances our industry service to the public through community education and community engagement and the promotion of career opportunities. One of our four core areas of interest, we call them "industry imperatives" of the National Restaurant Association is food and

healthy living. Our industry serves over 130 million meals a day through restaurants, through schools, campuses, through hospitals and institutions. And we are conscious of the important role that food plays in a healthy lifestyle. Our industry is highly sensitive to the consumer demands and trends. And while past research has found that consumers frequently perceive that foods that were healthy were unpalatable and actually years back the monitor often that would be put next to restaurant menu items of healthy foods was the clear way to denote for sure that nobody was going to order those items. Today, consumers are rapidly responding to -- and restaurants are as well -- to the trends that are emerging for healthy menu choices. Many, many restaurants across this nation today offer a wide variety of menu choices to meet individual dietary needs and taste preferences. But to continue to meet the changing needs of our guests, we are creating a healthy living platform for the industry that is giving all of us a framework to move forward in a direction that, not only creates a healthier America, but also maintains a healthy and thriving restaurant industry.

Our vision is to create an environment that encourages voluntary, flexible options for restaurateurs to be able to address today's healthy living challenges and to create a level playing field that encompasses a multitude of solutions all geared toward improving the health of those we serve. One of what we believe to be one of our most recent significant accomplishments, the enactment of the Federal Nutrition Disclosure law as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. For more than a year, we worked with key members of Congress, with industry leaders, with consumer groups through a coalition called The Coalition For Responsible Nutrition Information, and very importantly with CSPI. And I really do want to acknowledge what we believe as an historic agreement to establish a national menu labeling standard that is supported today by more than 77 health organizations, including the American Heart Association and the American Dietetic Association. This law, as has been pointed out, creates a uniform national standard that provides nutrition information to restaurant patrons and preempts what has been an emerging and confusing patchwork of state and local labeling laws. It provides consumers, most importantly, with the information that they need to meet their individual dietary needs in a manner that is consistent wherever they live and wherever they travel. This law requires chain restaurants to provide calories per standard item on the menu, or the menu board, and, additionally, menus must include statements concerning suggested daily caloric intake and that inform consumers that additional nutritional information is available upon request. Such information includes calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, sugars, dietary fibers, and protein. Buffets and salad bars and other self-service items are also included under this agreement and will

provide caloric information adjacent to the item that's being offered. We do look forward to working with you and with your colleagues at FDA and with other consumer and industry groups like ourselves to implement this law in the coming months.

In support of this effort at the National Restaurant Association, we are developing a web-based portal of information featuring healthy living resources both to members and to consumers. We have partnered with several vendors; for example, the healthydiningfinder.com is a consumer site that we actually launched with their support probably close to almost three years ago now, providing information on healthy choices today at tens of thousands of restaurants nationwide. As well, it provides nutrition and menu item consultation and helps our operators, restaurant operators, to be able to make the kinds of recommendations and adjustments that they may choose to make in terms of the recipe modifications as they continue to evolve menu items. This is a consumer site, healthydinningfinder.com where you can go on as a consumer, put in your zip code, and it will pull up for you within a one, five, ten, 15-mile radius, depending upon what you enter, the restaurants within that locality that serve healthy options and what those healthy options are. So, if you know you are dining out, you're going to a particular restaurant, you want to make sure you make a choice that comports with your particular health preferences. You can do that as well as now soon being able to see the information actually at the actual restaurant.

Additionally, we are providing menu-labeling resources to help guide and educate restaurant operators about the requirements of this new law and what it will mean for consumers. And we are highlighting the many healthy living industry innovators within our industry who are providing great examples for the industry such as those who are looking for leadership can find it across multiple restaurateurs, both chain and independents across this country. We are also focused on working with future generations of restaurants, much actually like the Chicago Public School system. We have a program, the National Restaurant Association's foundation has supported for several years called "Pro Start." It's a high-school-level education program used to train the next generation of culinary and management leaders, and it offers opportunities for us now to expand that curriculum to provide a greater emphasis on healthy nutrition innovation. To date, we have graduated more than 80,000 students from this program across the country and partnership with state restaurant associations from coast to coast. And to advance these ideas, we are formulating partnerships with others in the industry as well as with public health organizations, with state and local consumer advocacy organizations, with schools, and with chefs nationwide. As many of you know, the National Restaurant Association has been working in strong support with the First Lady and her staff at the White House as well as with the interagency governmental task

force that has been established on programs to fight child obesity and to encourage early childhood health. This, of course, is one of our top priorities in the coming years. Earlier this year, we have facilitated an agreement with our three largest school food service contract members, as mentioned earlier -- Chartwell, as well as ARAMARK and Sodexo -- to work with the First Lady's "Let's Move" campaign. And these three companies pledged to support the administration's HealthierUS School Challenge by including fruit juice -- fruits, juices, vegetables, whole grain and milk options in the reimbursable lunch program, as well as increasing the foods that meet the IOM recommendations for fat, sugar and whole grains over the next five years. These three companies also pledged to double the amount of produce that they serve through the school lunch program in the next ten years and to increase nutrition education efforts aimed at both students and parents. Under this agreement, these school lunch providers will be working closely through the National Restaurant Association with the administration, with federal and state agencies, with local school districts and others in the private sector to achieve these dramatic objectives. And most recently, we established a working group comprised of culinary institutes, culinary educational organizations across the country, as well as other industry partners such as domestic and international culinary schools, international chef associations, American Culinary Federation and several institutes of hospitality management to begin a dialogue on ways in which the chef community across this country can become more engaged also in addressing childhood obesity.

Beyond the school lunch program, nearly a year ago the National Restaurant Association, the Produce Marketing Association and the International Food Distributors Association announced our joint commitment to actually doubling the number of fruit and vegetable produce offering served in the food service overall across the nation and, not just fresh, but all produce. Our emphasis really will be on all produce and doubling the offerings of fresh and all types of fruits and vegetables over the next ten years. These are just examples of some of the things that our industry is doing and that we at the National Restaurant Association are committed to developing and implementing to increase healthy living and expand healthy options for consumers across the country. We are anxious to hear all of your experiences as we work together on these important issues, and we are very sincere and earnest in our efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the coming months and years on these important issues as we, in the restaurant industry as well, work to improve the quality of life for all that we serve. Thank you.