

Embargoed until Thursday, June 2, 10:30 am

**GRAIN CHAIN UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTS NEW FOOD ICON
*STRONGLY ILLUSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF GRAINS IN A HEALTHY
LIFESTYLE***

We commend the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA), Health and Human Services (HHS), and First Lady Michelle Obama for their work to develop the new healthy eating icon released today. The icon will be a critical tool in educating children, parents, and individuals in healthy and sensible eating. With grains appropriately occupying a large portion on the dinner plate graphic, the agencies are making a strong statement regarding the importance of grains as the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. The average American should eat six servings of grain foods daily, at least half of those whole grains and the rest enriched grains, according to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

We continue to hear from consumers that they are looking for simple, clear directives that are easy to follow. We believe the new icon, with its clear illustration of the portions and food groups comprising a healthy meal, will be very valuable in helping consumers integrate better nutrition choices into their daily eating habits.

Complex carbohydrates in grain foods provide essential fuel the body needs on a daily basis. Wholesome grain foods provide an excellent and cost-effective way for Americans to obtain good nutrition. Scientific research continues to support the importance of grain foods in a healthy diet. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines recommend Americans consume 45-65 percent of their daily calories from carbohydrates. The July 2009 *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* reported that individuals who consume a medium-to-high percentage of carbohydrates in their diets have a reduced risk of obesity.

Both whole and enriched grains offer a wide array of health benefits and can help to prevent a number of different health conditions and ailments. Enriched grains contain niacin, thiamine, riboflavin (except rice) and iron in amounts equal or greater than to those found in whole grains. Enriched grains are also responsible for eradicating pellagra and beriberi from the US population. Additionally, folic acid is fortified at twice the amount found in whole grain products. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently identified folic acid fortification as one of the top ten public health achievements of the first decade of the 21st century for its role in helping prevent neural tube defects (NTDs) in babies. However, NTDs remain a serious public health concern, with data showing rates among Hispanic women to be six times the national average.

Three servings of whole grains a day can reduce the risk of many chronic diseases and may help in weight management. A greater whole grain intake is associated with decreased levels of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol. Whole grains are naturally low in fat and are a good source of important nutrients such as fiber, selenium, potassium and magnesium, which collectively may help boost immunity, lower blood pressure and prevent heart disease as well as some forms of cancer.

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While not depicted in the new food icon, it is important that all ages engage in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, are enjoyable, and offer variety to encourage a routine. While exercise alone is not as effective in reducing weight, it is very effective in preventing weight gain and in preventing re-gaining by those who have lost weight.

We look forward to working with USDA and HHS on educating consumers about the new icon and how to use it to make more healthful eating choices. Such efforts will be integrated into the grain chain's ongoing consumer outreach regarding the healthy benefits of whole and enriched grain foods as the foundation of a healthy lifestyle.

American Bakers Association
AIB International
Grain Foods Foundation
Grains for Health Foundation
Independent Bakers Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Pasta Association
North American Millers' Association
Retail Bakers of America
Tortilla Industry Association
USA Rice Federation
Wheat Foods Council
Wheat Quality Council

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**ATTACHMENTS:
TALKING POINTS -- THE ROLE OF GRAINS IN A HEALTHY DIET
LIST OF INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH DESCRIPTORS AND CONTACTS**