

# Sugar in the News

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In January 1977, the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs published Dietary Goals for the United States. This report states that cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer are related to diet and calls for a reduction in the consumption of fat, cholesterol, sugar and salt, with an increase in complex carbohydrate intake. These recommendations have proved to be quite controversial, with some scientists praising the work of the Nutrition Committee and others taking issue with its assumption that by eating certain foods we can improve our health and prevent disease. Following are some selections from scientists' comments on the Dietary Goals that have appeared recently in print.

## COUNCIL FOR AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) described the "Dietary Goals" as "not appropriate for application to the general public." The CAST report, prepared at the request of Sen. McGovern (D-SD), Chairman of the Senate Nutrition Committee, stated that "available scientific data and knowledge are not yet adequate to dictate such a broad nutritional public policy."

Commenting on Goal 5, "Reduce sugar consumption by about 40% to account for about 15% of total energy intake," the CAST task force said "sugar" as sucrose currently provides only about 15% of the average total energy intake. "Sugar and foods high in sugar can be a highly acceptable and utilizable source of calories," particularly for active children and adults, the task force said. "For those above desirable weight," it added, "a successful weight reduction program implies restricted intakes of sugar and foods high in sugar, as well as of other concentrated calorie sources-- fat and alcohol."

FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, Dec. 12, 1977

DR. A.E. HARPER, Professor of Biochemistry, University of Wisconsin

"The Senate Select Committee has perpetrated a hoax by claiming that the American public is suffering from an 'epidemic' of 'killer' diseases. This is blatant sensationalism. It creates unnecessary consternation.

"The rigid goals for reduced salt and sugar consumption are neither necessary nor realistic."

NUTRITION TODAY, Nov./Dec. 1977

DR. A.E. NIZEL, Professor of Oral Health Service, Tufts University

"As a dental scientist, teacher and clinician, the one recommendation of this report that is especially pleasing to me is the reduction of sugar intake by 40% and the concomitant increase of the complex carbohydrates by 100%. There is ample evidence and agreement on the role of sugar in the etiology of dental caries."

DR. FRANK F. SHULER, President, American Dental Association

"...current accepted dental research will not support the conclusion that a reduction in the consumption of sugar will decrease the level of dental caries. Research studies have shown that the total amount of sugar ingested is only one of several factors contributing to dental decay. The frequency with which sugar-rich foods are ingested, the length of time they remain in the mouth, and the physical form of the food are equally important."

DR. D.M. HEGSTED, Professor of Nutrition, Harvard University

"The diet of the American people has become increasingly rich--rich in meat, other sources of saturated fat and cholesterol, and in sugar..."

"The question to be asked...is not why should we change our diet but why not? What are the risks associated with eating less meat, less fat, less saturated fat, less cholesterol, less sugar, less salt and more fruits, vegetables, unsaturated fat and cereal products...There are none that can be identified and important benefits can be expected."

DR. ALEXANDER M. SCHMIDT, University of Illinois, (former Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration)

"...We simply don't know the answers to many questions about purported ties between diet and disease..."

"For anyone to say, 'Let's change the nation's dietary habits even though we don't know doing so will do any good--it can't do any harm,' is naive."

DR. CORTES F. ENLOE, Editor NUTRITION TODAY

"The science of nutrition, for all its fascination, is not yet to the point where it can promise to be a panacea."

"This nation has shown the greatest improvement in health in the past decade and a half that has ever been achieved. This record hardly seems justification for going off half-cocked, wringing our hands, and crying about the 'plague of killer diseases'..."

"Let politicians stick to statesmanship. Leave the practice of nutrition to the health professionals."

DR. GILBERT A. LEVEILLE, Chairman, Dept. of Food Science and Human Nutrition, Michigan State University

"The Select Committee's report erroneously implies that our intake of sugars and sweeteners has increased dramatically in recent decades. In fact, our intake of sugar on an absolute basis has not increased significantly since 1925. What has changed is the form in which sugar is purchased and utilized. A half century ago most of the sugar was purchased as such and utilized in the home. Today a smaller proportion of sugar is purchased for home use and the greater proportion is consumed in preprepared products, such as baked goods. However, it should be recognized that the proportion of calories derived from sugar has increased, for while the absolute amount of sugar consumed has remained unchanged, our per-capita intake of energy has declined. ...There is no evidence that this increased proportion of calories from sugar has any detrimental effect, but it should be recognized that sugar is one of those foods having a low nutrient content and from this standpoint a reduction in its consumption might be warranted."

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE OUTLOOK CONFERENCE, Nov. 1977

ONE STEP BACKWARD

The U. S. Department of Agriculture's proposal to withdraw "formulated grain-fruit products" from the school breakfast program represents "one step backward for the program, for USDA and for the kids," according to James R. Russo, editor, Food Engineering magazine. This proposal would eliminate vitamin, mineral and protein fortified doughnuts, cakes, rolls and similar products from school breakfast programs.

USDA's concern over the sugar and fat content of these products is misplaced, stated Russo, noting that the total energy supplied by fat and sugar combined would represent 8.4% of the recommended daily allowance. "The chances are good that any breakfast eaten, no matter what it is, will provide this relatively small amount of sugar and fat. In short, removing formulated grain-fruit products from the school breakfast program is a poor way to reduce fat and sugar in the diet." Russo concluded.

FOOD ENGINEERING, Oct. 1977

SUGAR IS SAFE

Although sugar has lately been blamed for human ills from obesity to heart disease, from tooth decay to madness, from epilepsy to diabetes, there is little actual evidence to support these charges, according to dietitian Martha Pehl, a food and nutrition consultant for The Sugar Association.

(Continued on page 4)

In a series of series of six scientific papers entitled "Sugar in the Diet of Man," published in World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics, scientists conclude that sugar consumption is not responsible for obesity, diabetes or heart disease. With regard to dental caries, it is concluded that there is not a one-to-one relationship between total sugar consumption and decay, but there is a strong association between cavities and between-meal eating. It seems to be long and frequent exposure to certain foods in certain forms that does the damage.

EL PASO HERALD-POST, Dec. 8, 1977

#### SUGAR AND CORN SWEETENERS COMPARED

Dr. Doelas R. Landes, Indiana University, is conducting a series of experiments comparing the nutritional quality of sucrose and high fructose corn syrup. In recent experiments Landes had found that there was less weight gain among rats fed a diet with half sucrose and half corn sweetener than there was with rats fed only sucrose bread.

Landes believes his newest studies will show that the bread containing high fructose corn syrup will have lower protein quality than bread with sucrose.

EVANSVILLE PRESS (IN), Dec. 29, 1977

#### SALT-SUGAR CONNECTION

A Louisiana researcher has produced high blood pressure in monkeys by feeding them a high-salt, high-sugar diet. The finding by Dr. Gerald Berenson, Louisiana State University, indicates that sugar may heighten the blood-pressure-elevating effects of salt in monkeys.

However, Dr. Harriet Dustan, past president of the American Heart Association and a blood pressure specialist, said scientists should test the apparent salt-sugar connection in large numbers of rats before reaching any conclusions.

WASHINGTON POST, Jan. 18, 1978