

May 16, 2016

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
129 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
190 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley:

As you finalize appropriations legislation for FY 2017, we urge you to include language that supports the release of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) draft voluntary sodium reduction targets. We support efforts to inform consumers on the appropriate amounts of sodium in the American diet and believe releasing the draft targets – which will allow for comments and consideration of all perspectives on the issue – will be a good starting point.

The House Committee on Appropriations included language in its FY 2017 Agriculture Appropriations bill that effectively blocked the FDA from issuing draft targets until the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) completes a Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) update report on sodium. This provision unnecessarily delays what could be a productive and educational debate on this issue. In addition, we believe release of guidance and completion of a DRI can be conducted simultaneously.

Excess sodium in the diet can lead to serious health conditions including hypertension, which is strongly linked to heart disease, the number one killer and costliest chronic disease in the United States. Reducing sodium consumption to improve public health is a responsibility that must be shared among consumers, government, and industry.

Each of the signed companies has independently reduced sodium in its products, demonstrating that sodium targets can be met without reducing consumer demand or approval. However, without a common benchmark or target, companies that improve the nutritional value of their products will be forced to compete in a marketplace that favors the status quo. While not binding, voluntary targets can help support alternatives for consumers and level the playing field for companies.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or support for this issue. We look forward continuing this conversation.

Sincerely,

Mars, Incorporated

Nestlé

PepsiCo, Inc.

Unilever

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Heart Association

American Public Health Association

Center for Science in the Public Interest