

# Soyfoods Association of North America

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1050 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW • Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20036 • USA

## **Comments to the IOM's Committee Reviewing the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program Meal Patterns and Nutrient Standards on the Phase I Proposed Approach for Recommending Revisions**

**January 28, 2009**

The Soyfoods Association of North America (SANA), which represents the interests of small and large soyfood manufactures, soy processors, suppliers, soybean farmers, and other industry stakeholders, appreciates the opportunity to comment to the Institute of Medicine Committee on the Phase I Proposed Approach for Recommending Revisions to the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program (NSLBP) meal patterns and nutrient standards. SANA is committed to providing school-aged children of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds with nutritious, well-rounded meals that ensure healthy growth and development.

Overall, SANA believes the Committee's approach outlined in the Phase I document is thoughtful and encompasses many essential elements. However, SANA believes the Committee should stress that any revisions to the school meal patterns and nutrient standards be sensitive to the cultural diversity of participants in the School Meals Programs.

The NSLBP serves daily an increasingly culturally diverse student population with varied tastes and preferences. According to the USDA's report *Profiles of Participants in the National School Lunch Program* (NSLP), "In fiscal year 2001, 55.2 percent of NSLP participants were White, 19.1 percent were African-American, 20.5 percent were Hispanic, 3.3 percent were Asian, and 2.0 percent were Native American, Aleut, or Eskimo."<sup>1</sup> For school year 2004 – 2005, the NSLP participation by ethnicity was 19.1 percent Black, 24.0 percent Hispanics, 50.4 percent White, and 6.5 percent other races (including Asians and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and students whose parents reported they were biracial) according to the 2007 School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study III (SNDA III).<sup>2</sup> The School Breakfast Program (SBP) tends to serve more free or reduced participants who are more likely to be Hispanic or Black. Besides

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<sup>1</sup> USDA, Economic Research Service. *Profiles of Participants in the National School Lunch Program: Data from Two National Surveys*. August 2006. Accessed at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib17/eib17.pdf> on June 18, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> USDA, Food and Nutrition Service. *School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study—III: Volume II: Student Participation and Dietary Intakes*. November 2007. Report No. CN-07-SNDA-III: Page 36. Accessed at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/SNDAlII-Vol2.pdf> on June 26, 2008.

1050 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202-659-3520 202-659-3522  
[www.soyfoods.org](http://www.soyfoods.org)

increasing racial differences, school populations are also experiencing an increase in different food preferences based on culture and lifestyle choices. The number of students who practice a vegetarian lifestyle, have food allergies, or have religious beliefs related to food have increased over the past decades. According to the recent *National Health Statistics Report*, in 2007 nearly 1 in 200 of American youths reported practicing a vegetarian diet.<sup>3</sup> According to the School Nutrition Association's *2007 School Nutrition Operations Report*, 51.5 percent of school districts have schools that offer vegetarian meals, 15.8 percent offer vegan meals, and 10.5 percent offer soy or rice milk.<sup>4</sup> The NSLBP needs to find a way to meet the nutritional needs of all students while catering to their personal food preferences. Soyfoods can help the NSLBP more effectively serve a culturally diverse student population, maintain the nutritional integrity of the program, and help lower fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and calories in school meals.

The volume of human-based scientific research shows that soyfoods are safe for human consumption by children and adults. Soyfoods help support the growth and development of children by providing many necessary nutrients, including a source of complete protein, without added cholesterol, saturated fat or calories.

We ask the Committee to keep in mind the increasing diversity among school populations and the varied tastes and preferences among students when making recommendations for the school meal patterns for lunches and breakfasts. Soyfoods provide nutritious options for school-age children and should be allowable components of NSLBP for all students who receive these meals.

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<sup>3</sup> Barns, Patricia, et al. *Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics. December 10, 2008. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr012.pdf> on January 12, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> School Nutrition Association. *School Nutrition Operations Report: The State of School Nutrition 2007*. July 2007. Page 19, Exhibit 19: Food Options.