



2023 National Council of Farmer Cooperatives Annual Meeting Brings Together Industry Leaders

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The GROWMARK Board of Directors, CEO staff, and GROWMARK staff participated in the 94th Annual Meeting of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives February 8-10, 2023. The annual gathering offers opportunities for education/information and professional development for cooperative boards of directors and staff through the Public Policy Conference; Legal, Tax, and Accounting (LTA) Conference; Director Education; and General Sessions. Several topics of interest to GROWMARK and its FS and grain member cooperatives were scattered throughout the conference.

In the Public Policy Conference, a session on “food as medicine” focused on the topic. Sarah Gallo, VP, Public Policy, Consumer Brands Association; Rachel Santos, Director, Sales and Industry Relations, Premium Peanut; Cody Nore, Manager, Quality Assurance, Pacific Coast Producers; and Donn Zea, Executive Director, California Prune Board, shared their perspectives on the emerging trend.

“There is heightened awareness of the scope of information on food as medicine,” Gallo said, or “at the intersection of food and health.”



Understandably, food companies are scrambling to attract consumers in this food and nutrition space, while trying to keep pace with federal regulations.

The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for administering labeling requirements for foods under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) and its amendments. FDA defines words commonly used in the marketplace, like

“functional foods,” “nutraceuticals,” and “healthy” and oversees these claims under the FFDCA.

Panelists voiced some concern over the new nutrition labeling. They noted FDA is redefining “low-calorie” and “healthy,” and it would seem logical for FDA to step up attention to company “food as medicine” claims.

New nutrition labeling was in the works before the White House outlined its domestic strategy for “ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030 so fewer Americans experience diet-related diseases.”

The five-pillar strategy is designed to “shift the country’s food, nutrition, and health policies.”

One pillar is Integrate Nutrition & Health: This would prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health – including disease prevention

and management – and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.

There are many actions under this pillar, focused on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries' access to “food is medicine” interventions, access to nutrition and obesity counseling, and increasing access to nutrition-related services through private insurance and federal programs beyond Medicare and Medicaid.

Another pillar is Empowering all Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices. Actions in this pillar include front of package labeling for prepared foods that “quickly and easily communicate nutrition information.” The front of package labeling updates serving sizes, bolded calorie counts, offers new nutrition information, such as folate and folic acid content, and added sugars. Additionally, the strategy seeks to make sure foods labeled “healthy” are in line with current nutrition science and the Dietary Guidelines for America.

The California Prune Board's Zea noted there is extensive research on the nutritious benefits of prunes. He said research shows prunes can positively impact gut health, bone health, heart health, and weight management.

“California prunes pack a powerful punch,” Zea added.

Santos and Gallo noted their companies work on food labeling regulations that would require labeling on allergens, and traceability.

There is still much to be learned regarding what food interventions successfully treat, reduce, or prevent medical issues like diabetes or hypertension. Panelists agreed the changes in domestic food, nutrition, and health policies will require input and investment from the public and private arenas.



New Label

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

- 1 The serving size now appears in larger, bold font and some serving sizes have been updated.
- 2 Calories are now displayed in larger, bolder font.
- 3 Daily Values have been updated.
- 4 Added sugars, vitamin D, and potassium are now listed. Manufacturers must declare the amount in addition to percent Daily Value for vitamins and minerals.