Pork Checkoff Submits Comments on 2015 Dietary Guidelines

Des Moines, Iowa – May 6, 2015 – The Pork Checkoff supports the role of lean meat in a healthy diet, and recently submitted a second round of comments to the secretaries of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The comments include research not previously considered in an earlier report from the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC). This group will recommend new dietary guidelines for the American public. The new guidelines, revised every five years, are scheduled to go into effect early next year.

“The National Pork Board supports the recommendations in the previous dietary guidelines for the consumption of lean meat and protein foods,” said Adria Sheil-Brown, Manager of Nutrition Communication and Research with the National Pork Board. Those recommendations are based on the published science and focused on the benefits of choosing a variety of nutrient-rich foods. “Americans will enjoy better health through more frequent selection of naturally nutrient-rich foods, including lean meat.”

Consumption data shows that nutrient-rich meats are under-consumed in the average American diet. “More than 60 percent of the U.S. population is consuming the Protein Food Group at or below the recommended intake levels and low intake of protein remains a special concern among older adults, according to the technical report,” says Sheil-Brown.

The Pork Checkoff’s comments included details that research has shown how lean meat, including pork, plays an important role in many aspects of a healthy diet:

- Iron – Iron is under-consumed by adolescent and premenopausal women, including women who are pregnant. The 2015 DGAC recommends adolescent and premenopausal women increase consumption of foods rich in iron. Heme iron is only found in meat and is more available than the non-heme iron from plant sources. Data indicate that heme iron is absorbed by the body at levels ranging from 15 to 35 percent while iron from plants (non-heme) is absorbed at levels ranging from only 2 to 20 percent. A 3-ounce serving of pork tenderloin delivers 5 percent of the daily value (DV) of heme iron.

- Potassium – Few Americans consume potassium in amounts equal to or greater than the adequate intake level, yet there are a number of health benefits from dietary potassium including its effect on blood pressure. A 3-ounce serving of pork tenderloin is a “good” source as it delivers 10 percent of the DV of potassium.

- Vitamin B-12 – Lean meat is also an important source of vitamin B-12, a micronutrient not found in plant-based foods. As the dietary research scenarios within the DGAC technical report note, generally when animal foods were replaced in various ways with plant foods, the research indicated “micronutrient intake was generally similar with the exception of a drop in vitamin B-12.” A 3-ounce serving of pork tenderloin delivers 8 percent of the DV of vitamin B-12.

Sheil-Brown says that lean-protein benefits have been linked to better body weight management, positive impacts on cardiovascular disease, lowered hypertension in adults and positive effects in controlling type 2 diabetes.
The National Pork Board has responsibility for Checkoff-funded research, promotion and consumer information projects and for communicating with pork producers and the public. Through a legislative national Pork Checkoff, pork producers invest $0.40 for each $100 value of hogs sold. Importers of pork products contribute a like amount, based on a formula. The Pork Checkoff funds national and state programs in advertising, consumer information, retail and foodservice marketing, export market promotion, production improvement, science and technology, swine health, pork safety and sustainability and environmental management.

For information on Checkoff-funded programs, pork producers can call the Pork Checkoff Service Center at (800) 456-7675 or check the Internet at www.pork.org.

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