

Topic: Child Nutrition and Obesity

Relevance to GFF

Few topics elicit emotional responses as strong as those associated with the national dialogue on children's health. Child and adolescent obesity rates have doubled and quadrupled, respectively, in the past 30 years, putting an immense strain on the health and well-being of America's future generation (and associated healthcare costs). Advocates from both the public and private sectors have dedicated immense resources to reversing this trend; efforts include programs aimed at increasing physical activity, improving access to healthier foods and revising federal school meal guidelines.

Issue at Hand: School Meal Guidelines

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was signed by President Obama in 2010 and carried revisions to federal school meal guidelines that were intended to be phased in over time. Specific to grain foods, the bill called for a transition to all whole grain products and initially placed limits on daily/weekly grain servings. The allowances were subsequently delayed with a flexibility made permanent in early 2014 to ensure schools could implement the guidelines in a way that would best meet individual district needs.

Since that time, there has been further discussion in the school meal community (represented by the School Nutrition Association) and among members of Congress, with some school districts requesting the ability to opt out of the school meal regulations; arguments for this request include costs associated with and feasibility of implementation. The debate is ongoing and bitter with First Lady Michelle Obama leading the charge against creating the ability for schools to opt out.

Issue at Hand: Refined Grains and Obesity

As GFF has experienced with the adult community, there is a general misperception that enriched/refined grain consumption leads to obesity. Coupled with the phasing out of enriched grain products from the school meal program, some child nutrition advocates featured in films such as the documentary *Fed Up* discourage enriched grain consumption in this population. This is an educational opportunity for GFF.

Why GFF Should Be Concerned

Recognizing the heated debate in Washington, DC around school meal guidelines, the final decisions on grain allowances and overall guidelines could significantly impact the industry, both in terms of product perceptions and sales. Furthermore, the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act will be up for Congressional review in 2015.

Also in 2015 the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans will replace the DGA 2010 and the outcome of those recommendations will serve as the backbone of nutrition standards incorporated into governmental nutrition programs. The committee authoring these forthcoming guidelines has shown a

○ keen interest in not only healthful eating patterns, but also programs which support sustainable health behaviors across the lifespan. On a related note, the current DGA provide dietary advice for Americans two years of age and older but there is work underway to develop guidelines for the population from birth to 24 months of age; known as the B-24 Project, the United States Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services are collaborating to address this gap with an eye toward the DGA 2020.

Articles of Interest

Michelle Obama, Food Addiction and the Battle Over School Lunches

The Hill (Blog), 7/2/14

Financial concerns and children's opposition to new "healthy" options are challenging Michelle Obama's efforts to implement new standards for school lunches nationwide. Food addiction, the article's writer argues, may be playing a role in children's unhealthy food preferences.

Mediterranean Diet Has Many Health Benefits, and May Help Control Kids' Weight

The Washington Post, 6/30/14

New research examining dietary data for approximately 9,000 European children found that those children following a Mediterranean diet pattern were 15% less likely to be overweight or obese. These findings were presented at the European Congress on Obesity.

Offer Kids Whole Grains; They'll Eat Them, UF/IFAS Study Shows

University of Florida, 6/23/2014

○ Many parents presume their children will shun whole grains because they think they don't like them, a University of Florida researcher says, but a new UF study may debunk the notion. If whole grains are offered, kids eat them; specifically, former graduate student Allyson Radford and two faculty members found children ate whole and refined grain foods in equal amounts.

Children Recognize "Unhealthy" Food Brands More Than "Healthy" Ones, Finds Study

FoodNavigator.com, 6/13/14

Young children more easily recognize unhealthy food brands than healthy ones, say researchers.

High Fat Low Carb Diet Trumps Low Calorie Diets for Obesity and Diabetes

Examiner.com, 6/11/14

Low carb, high fat (LCHF) diets that focus on restricting starch and sugar while boosting fats have become increasingly popular paths to weight loss success. And in contrast to the many dietitians and doctors who continue to preach counting calories and cutting fat, David Ludwig, director of the Obesity Prevention Center at Boston Children's Hospital, is touting low carb, high fat diets as the way to cure obesity.

The Most Eaten Vegetable in the U.S. Is the Potato

The Atlantic, 6/11/14

○ In the setting of the ongoing debate about the implementation of new school meal standards, this piece highlights some of the issues around children's acceptance of the newly required foods. It shines a gloomy picture on what people are actually eating, noting they are not meeting MyPlate recommendations.

**In Pitching Veggies to Kids, Less Is More**

The New York Times, 6/7/14

The best way to pitch food to children, according to new research, is to present it with no marketing message whatsoever. Basically, don't tell them it's healthy or that it will make them smart or strong. When giving food to children, "nothing helps beyond no message whatsoever."

Michelle Obama's School Lunch Agenda Faces Backlash from Some School Nutrition Officials

The Washington Post, 5/30/14

The highly politicized battle in DC continues over the implementation of the new school lunch standards. The School Nutrition Association is teaming up with food companies in support of delaying the timing of these standards in some districts where food waste has been especially high due to low rates of acceptance.

The Campaign for Junk Food

The New York Times, 5/28/14

This features an op-ed from Michelle Obama about her efforts to encourage more healthy habits among America's youth and the attempts by other parties to undo what efforts have been accomplished thus far. The article cites WIC as an example, noting that the House is considering a bill to override certain guidelines of the program, as well as threatening to roll back the new school lunch standards.

First Lady Rebuts Effort to Weaken School-Lunch Rules

The New York Times, 5/27/14

Reports that Michelle Obama is pushing back against a pending measure that would let some schools opt out of federal dietary standards for school lunches.

**Fed Up Asks, Are All Calories Equal?**

The New York Times, 5/9/14

Discusses *Fed Up* and highlights its focus on childhood obesity and how not all calories are actually the same, despite the old myth that the cure for obesity is to eat fewer calories and exercise more.

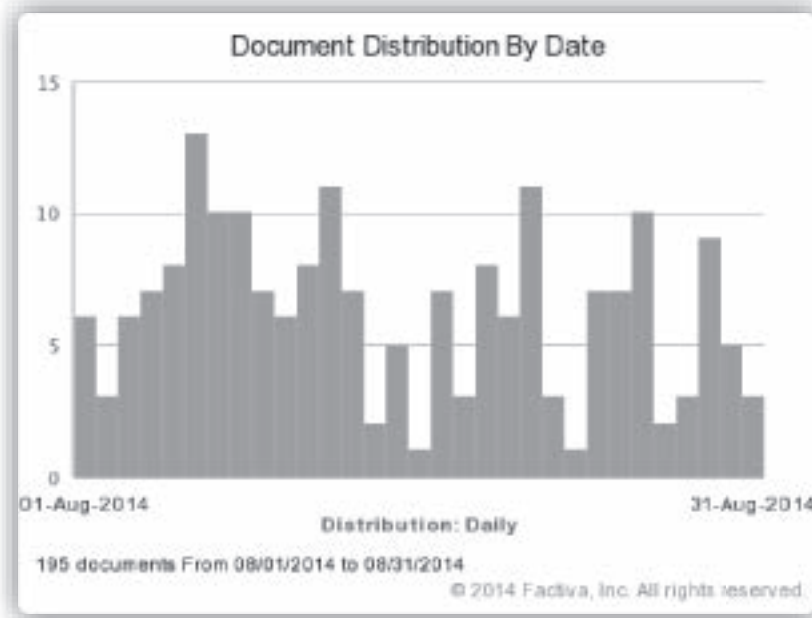


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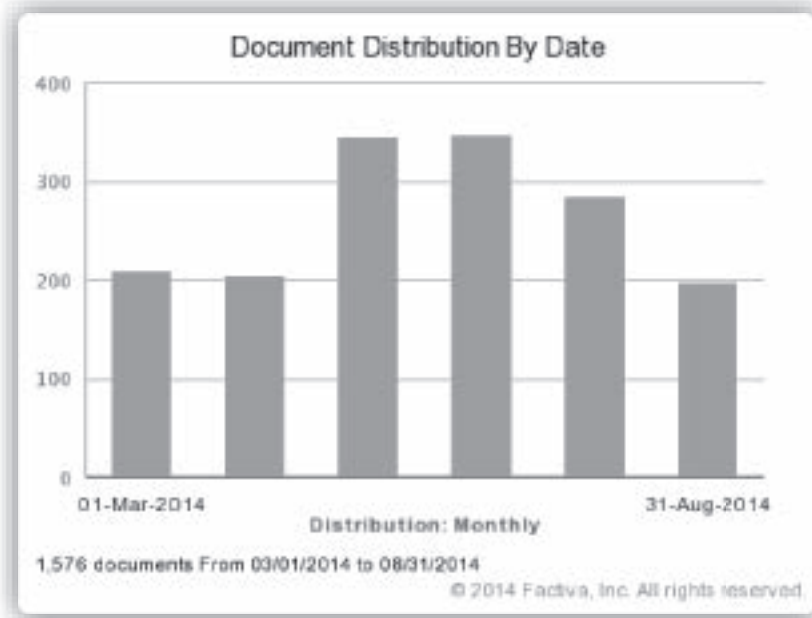
Media Charts

Over the GFF 2014 fiscal year, the coverage on Child Nutrition and Obesity fluctuated with a focus on the government, both in October 2013, and particularly the summer of 2014 as Michelle Obama actively pursued maintaining school lunch reform efforts.

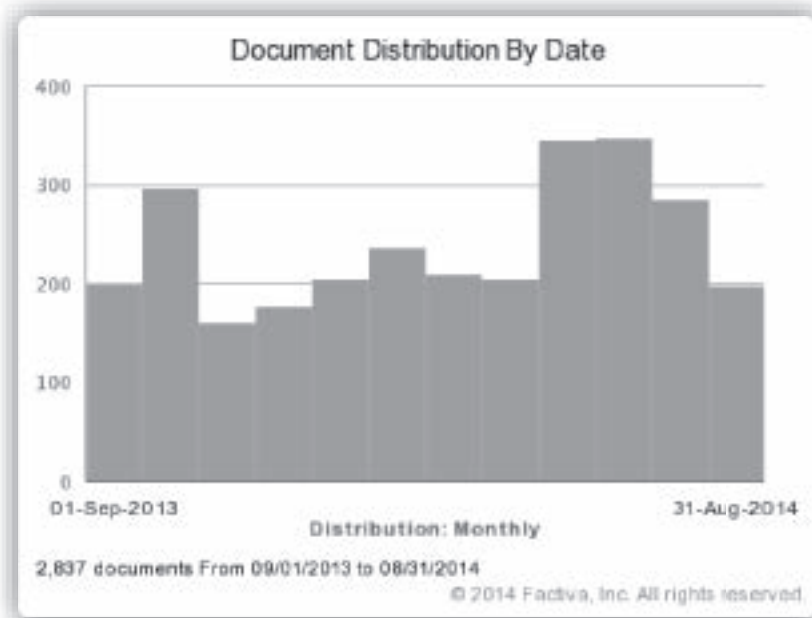
Child Nutrition and Obesity Mentions (Past Month)



Child Nutrition and Obesity Mentions (Past 6 Months)



Child Nutrition and Obesity Mentions (Past Year)



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GFF Positive Platform: Child Nutrition and Obesity

As an organization dedicated to public education about the health benefits of all grain foods, the GFF is a strong proponent of the fact that all foods can fit into a healthful, balanced diet for kids and adults.

The GFF supports the USDA guidelines that call for half of grain servings to be whole grain, and actively promotes the consumption of both whole and enriched grain products.

The GFF does not support denigrating one food, food type or food group to benefit another. Rather we believe in a public education platform based on common sense eating that anyone can apply to their lifestyle regardless of age or income.

Questions and Answers

How is the GFF engaged in the child nutrition debate, particularly the school lunch program?

The GFF does not lobby policymakers. It is not in our charter, nor are we licensed to do so. We do actively participate in a number of activities, including the USDA MyPlate Partnership and the DGAC, which are instrumental in shaping public food policy, and will continue to do so.

How has the GFF engaged children and their parents in the dialogue concerning healthy eating and grain consumption?

The GFF, through its consumer-facing programming, often speaks directly to parents about the health benefits of grain-based foods, both enriched and whole. In the past, the GFF has worked with educators and others to deliver grain-based food messaging to children through a variety of classroom and lunchroom initiatives. Programs like these are continually evaluated and considered as part of the GFF overall strategy.



Child Nutrition

Recognizing the heated debate in Washington, DC around school meal guidelines, the final decisions on grain allowances and overall guidelines could significantly impact the industry, both in terms of product perceptions and sales. Furthermore, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015 will replace the DGA 2010 and the outcome of those recommendations will serve as the backbone of nutrition standards incorporated into governmental nutrition programs. On a related note, the current DGA provide dietary advice for Americans two years of age and older but there is work underway to develop guidelines for the population from birth to 24 months of age; known as the [B-24 Project](#), the United States Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services are collaborating to address this gap with an eye towards the DGA 2020.

YES ←

NO

Do we have a public position that can be used?

Positive issue platform

- Variety
- Nutrition
- Health
- Process
- Choice
- Insights
- Origin

RESOURCES

GFF Partners:
ABA
HWCF
IFIC
WFC

GFF Scientific Advisory Board:
 Julie Miller Jones PhD, LM, CNS
 St. Catherine University

Additional Resources:
AND
Healthy Child/AAP
SNA
USDA FNS
USDA NAJ

Holding statement

Refer to external experts

Document & monitor

