



CONNECTING AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH

PATH TO THE PLATE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MISSION

To help Texans better their lives through education on the important connection between agriculture and health.

VISION

We are working to ensure the world has safe food, improved health, thriving agriculture and complete understanding.

OBJECTIVES

- ☆ Establish and build trust between Texans and producers of food and agricultural goods.
- ☆ Help youth and adults better understand how food and fiber production relates to nutrition, health and wellness.
- ☆ Partner with food and agricultural organizations to extend appropriate messaging to consumers at every stage of the production chain.
- ☆ Work with agricultural producers and food processors to understand best practices for sustaining family farms and ranches and corollary agricultural and food businesses for the benefit of future generations.
- ☆ Inform the public about innovations in food and fiber production that allow for land, water, and human resources to be utilized in an effective, efficient, and socially responsible manner for a growing population.
- ☆ Help those working in agricultural and food processing industries to better understand the needs of consumers in producing healthy, safe, and affordable food products.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW, CONTINUED

RATIONALE

The population is estimated to reach 54 million in Texas and 9.7 billion globally by 2050 (Texas State Data Center 2014, UN 2015). To meet this increasing demand, the supply of food, fiber, and other agricultural products produced and processed in Texas must grow as producers employ best practices to sustain water, land, animal, and human resources and minimize food waste.

According to a Center for Food Integrity survey (CFI, 2017), only 42% of consumers believe that the U.S. food system is on the right track. A lack of consumer trust can be attributed in part to a lack of understanding about food and agricultural production systems in general. This knowledge gap impacts consumers' food choices and is counterproductive to the goal for all Texans to make informed food purchase decisions based on truthful, relevant and accurate information. Further, a lack of knowledge regarding food, agriculture and its relationship to health leads to increased risk for chronic disease in adults and children, resulting in a loss of productivity and higher health care costs (CDC, 2010).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has estimated (2011) that one-third of the food produced in the world is never consumed; this waste occurs during the planting, harvesting, storage, transportation, and distribution stages, and is also due to processing errors, food discoloration and spoilage prior to users' purchase and consumption. Communicating with retailers, food service personnel and consumers about best practices in ensuring healthy and safe food products are consumed will potentially reduce food waste.

Agricultural and food producers must understand their stewardship role to meet the wants and needs of consumers. By producing food, fiber and other agricultural goods in a way that utilizes our land, water, and human resources sustainably, we can leave a healthy legacy for future generations.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension can foster trust in consumers through education on agriculture, food and health while advancing the stewardship position of agriculturists and food processors. The scientists/specialists who study, investigate and identify best practices, along with Family and Community Health, Agriculture and Natural Resource, Horticulture, and 4-H Youth Development Agents who share the findings, makes the agency uniquely positioned to implement **Path to the Plate**.



POTENTIAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- ☆ *Texans will better understand agricultural production systems, including why farmers, ranchers, and food companies operate as they do and how values are shared between these entities and consumers.*
- ☆ *Youth will understand the connections between themselves and agriculture, fiber, food, nutrition, health and well-being.*
- ☆ *Consumers and agriculture and food producers will better understand best practices to reduce food waste.*
- ☆ *Agriculturalists and food companies will better understand their stewardship role in utilizing resources for production.*
- ☆ *Texans will recognize the contributions of Texas agriculture and food companies to consumer nutrition and health, as well as to the Texas economy.*
- ☆ *Texas will have a thriving, more sustainable agricultural and food production system to benefit both consumers and future generations of family farms, ranches, agriculture and food businesses.*
- ☆ *Agriculture and food producers will be better positioned to support our growing population, resulting in growth of the Texas economy and enhanced quality of life for Texans and people around the world.*

Understanding Food Packaging and Marketing Claims

Do You Know What You're Eating?

"Non-GMO" or "GMO-Free"

- Used by the food industry to advertise that a food is free from genetically modified organisms. This is a VOLUNTARY label

"Local"

- Produced and processed within a particular area (e.g. within an undefined # of miles, commonly considered to be less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the State in which it is produced)



"Natural"

- Generally means that a product has nothing artificial or synthetic added to it

"Fresh"

- Food is unprocessed and has not been frozen or subjected to any form of thermal processing or any other form of preservation
- NOTE: This definition still allows for wax coatings, post harvest use of approved pesticides, application of mild chlorine wash, and treatment with ionizing radiation

*Terms in **RED** do NOT have a formal definition right now...Stay tuned!



"Made with Organic _____"

- Used when a product contains at least 70% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"Organic"

- any product that contains a minimum of 95% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"100% Organic"

- Any product that contains 100% organic ingredients (excluding salt and water)

"USDA Certified Organic"

- Grown and processed using strict guidelines
- NO genetically modified organisms
- Produce: no synthetic fertilizers/pesticides
- Meat: animals raised in living conditions that reflect their natural behavior, fed 100% organic feed and forage, and not given antibiotics or hormones
- Packaged foods: no artificial preservatives, colors, or flavors; ingredients are organic with a few exceptions (ex: baking soda, pectin, etc.)

Grain Terms

"Whole Grains"

- Whole grains contain the bran, germ, and endosperm (examples of whole grains: brown rice, oatmeal, corn)

Egg and Chicken Terms



"100% or All-Natural"

- Only means nothing was added to the egg (coloring, flavoring)
- Does NOT indicate how the chicken was raised

"USDA Organic"

- Certified organic eggs are from uncaged hens that have free range of their houses and access to outdoor spaces. They are also fed an organic diet

"Vitamin Enhanced"

- Hens are given a special diet that helps them produce eggs with a higher vitamin content (e.g. Vitamin E)

"Omega-3 Enriched"

- Hens are fed a diet that includes flaxseed, algae or fish oils to increase the Omega-3 fatty acid content of the eggs

"No Antibiotics"

- Hens are raised without any antibiotics of any type

"No added Hormones"

- NO eggs have added hormones (regardless of what the package says) because the use of hormones is NOT allowed in hog or poultry production
- If you see "No added hormones" on a package, it must be followed by the statement: "Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones"

"Free-range"

- Hens are cage free with continuous access to the outdoors during their laying cycle

"Cage-free"

- Hens are raised in an enclosed structure with unlimited access to food and water. They are NOT required to have access to the outdoors



"No rBST (or rBGH)"

- rBST and rBGH are growth hormones that are given to cows to increase milk production

"Ultrapasteurized (UHT)" Milk

- Milk has been heated to at least 280 degrees F for 2 seconds. This increases shelf life, but may cause a "cooked" flavor

"USDA Organic"

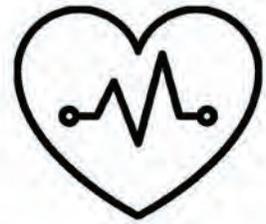
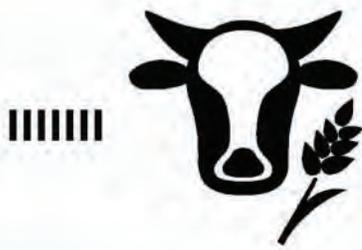
- Cows have year round access to outdoors/pasture. No hormones are used. Cows are fed an organic diet (grains, forage)

"Grass-fed Beef"

- 100% Grass Fed means an animal is fed forage 100% (no grain crops) after being weaned from their mother's milk



Milk and Beef Terms



CONNECTING AGRICULTURE & HEALTH



PATH TO THE PLATE

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

PATH TO THE PLATE is a research-based education program that helps consumers understand how their food choices impact their health.

By understanding more about how food is grown and produced, consumers can make informed food choices for themselves and their families.

Agriculture plays an important role in our daily lives, from the production of food, to its harvest, to how it arrives on our table.

Our health is dependent on what we eat and the choices we make related to food, but it can be difficult to understand the claims in food's **packaging, marketing and labeling**. "Natural?" "Healthy?" "Local?" "Non-GMO?" These terms have no formal definition, are not currently regulated, and are frequently changing. Misinformation shared via social media adds to the confusion.

Path to the Plate strives to provide the best, most reliable science-based information from nutrition professionals, health providers and premier agricultural scientists to help Texans make healthier choices.



98.6% OF TEXAS FARMS AND RANCHES ARE FAMILY FARMS, PARTNERSHIPS OR FAMILY-HELD OPERATIONS



IN TEXAS, THERE ARE

242,000 FARM OPERATIONS

WHICH OPERATE OVER

130 MILLION ACRES



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