USA Pulses
Sept 2025

Aligning Dietary Guidelines with the Scientific Evidence on Pulses

Background

Fewer than 10% of Americans consume adequate dietary fiber each day.[1,2] This shortfall poses a significant public health concern, as fiber plays a critical role in numerous bodily functions, including maintaining a healthy gut microbiome. Dry beans, dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas - collectively known as pulse crops - are excellent sources of fiber and can help close this gap.[3,4] The *Make America Healthy Again Report* specifically recognizes pulses for providing both "fiber and resistant starch that help nourish beneficial gut bacteria."[5] In addition to fiber, pulse crops are rich in key nutrients such as potassium, iron, magnesium, and folate.

Gaps in the Current Dietary Guidelines Recommendations

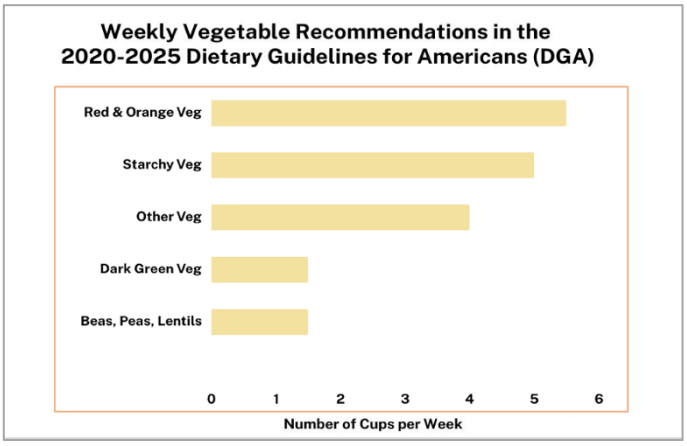
Despite their high fiber content, pulses are significantly underrepresented in the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans relative to other vegetable subgroups.

Beans, Peas, and Lentils are recommended at just 1.5 cups per week - the lowest of any vegetable subgroup.

<u>Weekly Vegetable Recommendations in 2020-2025 DGA:</u>

- Red & Orange Vegetables: 5.5 cups
- Starchy Vegetables: 5 cups
- Other Vegetables: 4 cups
- Dark Green Vegetables: 1.5 cups
- Beans, Peas, and Lentils: 1.5 cups

This disproportionately low recommendation for pulses represents a missed opportunity to support public health by improving fiber intake.



This chart illustrates the weekly vegetable recommendations for the 2,000 Calorie Healthy U.S.-Style Dietary Pattern that is used as the reference for U.S. food and nutrition regulations.

Scientific Evidence Supports Increasing Pulse Recommendations in the 2025 Dietary Guidelines

To reflect current science and address key nutrient gaps, HHS & USDA should increase the weekly recommendation for Beans, Peas, and Lentils to at least 2.5 cups per week in the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

A growing body of evidence links adequate pulse consumption to reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers.[6-18] Research consistently supports a recommended intake of 2.5 cups per week - approximately ½ cup on most days - for optimal health benefits.[6-13,19-21]

- In 2005, the Dietary Guidelines recommended 3 cups of pulses per week.[19] The 2005 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) supported this level due to the high nutrient density of pulses and their importance in meeting unmet nutrient needs.[20]
- The 2025 DGAC similarly concluded that pulse intake should increase from 1.5 to 2.5 cups per week, based on current scientific evidence.[21]

Advancing Public Health through Stronger Pulse Recommendations

Despite strong scientific evidence supporting the health benefits of pulses, their relatively low prioritization in the Dietary Guidelines may be contributing to insufficient intake across the population. Increasing the recommended intake of Beans, Peas, and Lentils - from the current 1.5 cups per week to **2.5 cups per week**, as supported by recent scientific reviews - represents a clear, evidence-based strategy to help reduce rates of diet-related chronic diseases.

Because the Dietary Guidelines serve as the foundation for key federal nutrition programs, strengthening the emphasis on pulses could also improve access through school meals and WIC, helping ensure that more children benefit from their nutritional value.

Increasing the weekly recommendation for pulses in the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans is a science-based, actionable step to improve public health.

Pulse Terminology in the Dietary Guidelines

In addition to the weekly quantitative recommendation, how pulses are defined in the Dietary Guidelines matters. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines - released under the Trump Administration - was the the first edition to formally define and use the term "pulses," highlighting it on page 31.[1] Pulses were described as the nutrient-dense, dry edible seeds of legumes, including dry beans, dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas.

Including the definition of pulses in the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines is critical to support clear consumer understanding and to distinguish pulses from other legumes based on their unique nutritional value.

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