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USDA's MyPlate Celebrates Its First Anniversary

MyPlate Serves as Reminder to Help Consumers Make Healthy Food Choices

BOSTON, May 30, 2012 -- Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan today joined local officials, educators, and students to highlight the first anniversary of the MyPlate food icon and announced a month of nutrition events and promotions to mark the occasion. In June 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled MyPlate, the federal government's primary food group symbol, to serve as a reminder to help consumers make healthy food choices consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. *MyPlate* is a new generation icon with the intent to prompt consumers to think about building a healthy plate at meal times and to seek more information to help them do that by going to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

"A year ago First Lady Michelle Obama and I joined together to launch *MyPlate* and to encourage people to think about their food choices in order to lead healthier lifestyles," said Merrigan. "Today we celebrate the great strides we are making from our local schools to the dinner table as Americans embrace MyPlate and find practical ways to apply it to their daily lives."

USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) estimates that about 90 percent of nutrition professionals are familiar with MyPlate and are using the resources and messages that support MyPlate in client counseling. Since it was released, there have been over 7 million downloads of MyPlate graphics and other materials. CNPP and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) have distributed educational tools to those who have requested materials including schools, churches and youth groups, gym and fitness centers, clubs, and others. Currently, over 6,000 Community Partners have joined along with 90 National Strategic Partners all committed to promoting the recommendations found in the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA). In the first quarter of this year, there were 34 million page views at the ChooseMyPlate.gov website and over 700,000 registered users of the MyPlate *SuperTracker*, the web based tool to gauge one's diet and physical activity.

Development of MyPlate came as a result of a 2010 report of the White House Childhood Obesity Task Force. The report challenged USDA to design a new generation symbol as a cue to inspire consumers to choose healthier foods at mealtimes – something simpler and more direct than the Food Pyramid.

The MyPlate icon shows a plate with the five food groups on a placemat that is suggestive of

proportions; i.e., to make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Integral to its design is the incorporation of the ChooseMyPlate.gov website address where consumers can apply the recommendations of the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in a personal way. The ChooseMyPlate website provides the public, particularly school children, with the practical 'how-tos' to put the Guidelines recommendations of getting more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy foods into action in their own lives.

During the month of June, CNPP will be celebrating the first anniversary of MyPlate with special blog postings on its website, daily Tweets on healthy eating, recipes, partner images, a resource for having healthy celebrations, and MyPlate Happy Birthday coloring pages for kids, among other user-friendly resources. In addition, the quarterly MyPlate message for May through June will be "Drink Water Instead of Sugary Drinks" to highlight that thirst quenching water can be "dressed up" with a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange as a great way to round out a healthy plate.

USDA has been in the food guidance business for well over 100 years dating back to 1894 with the publication of food buying guides and graphic images representing the Basic Seven in the 1940's, the Basic Four during the 1950s through the 70s, the Food Guide Pyramid in the 1980s and 1990s, and MyPyramid in 2005. However, never, until the launch of MyPlate in June 2011, has USDA taken a more pro-active, comprehensive approach to reaching all consumers – kids, parents, and educators --with practical ways to apply the *Dietary Guidelines* wherever they learn, play, shop and prepare foods. Public acceptance over the last 12 months of the MyPlate food icon suggests that USDA's new vision for healthy eating will be a popular and useful image for years to come.

CALL TO ACTION:

If you haven't already done so, now is the time to incorporate the MyPlate messages into your life. For more information on MyPlate resources and to join the MyPlate First Year Birthday Celebration, go to www.choosemyplate.gov/celebrate.html.

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