

## Public Universities' Group Unveils Holistic Research Agenda & Action Plan to Improve Food System & Human Health

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Washington, DC – A group of leading experts from public universities across the U.S. today unveiled a comprehensive research agenda and action plan that seeks to integrate agriculture, nutrition, food and health care systems to holistically improve human health outcomes and help prevent chronic disease. The new research agenda and action plan, *Healthy Food Systems, Healthy People*, is the product of a joint initiative coordinated by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), which aims to convene, integrate and leverage the wide array of expertise housed at the nation's public universities.

The **report** issues a clarion call to rethink the way human health is addressed and reorient national health priorities to reflect the manifold factors that impact health.

"For far too long, efforts to improve human health have fallen short of their potential simply because they've offered one-dimensional solutions to a multidimensional issue," said Ian Maw, Vice President for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources at APLU. "We need to eliminate the artificial barriers that have traditionally kept agriculture, nutrition, food and health care systems walled off from each other. Today's report lays the foundation and sets a plan in place for breaking the mold and underscores the fact that the nation's public universities have a unique ability and responsibility to do just that."

The report identifies five goals:

- Realign research and education approaches using a "systems thinking" model that treats human health as an interdisciplinary issue;
- Identify the drivers of consumer behavior in relation to chronic disease and examine how information can be used to help consumers make better decisions;
- Better understand the complex interrelationships of the food-human-gut-microbiome and its role in human health;
- Broaden the definition of food quality to include the promotion of human health; and
- Improve the lab-to-community pipeline to facilitate the dissemination of new knowledge that medical, public health, education, and Cooperative Extension professionals can use to promote human health and ameliorate the burden of chronic disease.

An implementation committee has been created by the APLU Boards on Agriculture Assembly and Human Sciences to provide leadership in developing the funding recommendations and strategic partnerships for Fiscal Year 2018 and beyond. The strategic partnerships will include governmental entities, private corporations and food service companies, foundations, associations, medical schools and public health officers, and others.

"The team that created this document realized the urgency of bringing agricultural and food systems together with the health care network," said Dr. Richard H. Linton, Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University and Co-Chair of the *Healthy Food Systems, Healthy People* Steering Committee. "Integrating an effective research and outreach plan is the only way that we can make a significant difference in reducing chronic disease."

"The U.S. spends up to 75 percent of its health care expenses on chronic disease," said Christine Ladisch, Inaugural Dean of Health & Human Sciences at Purdue University and Co-Chair of the *Healthy Food Systems, Healthy People* Steering Committee. "The new approaches and partnerships outlined in this initiative hold great promise to reduce the incidence and severity of chronic disease as well as its economic toll."

The *Healthy Food Systems, Healthy People* Steering Committee is comprised of 20 leading experts across disciplines from public universities throughout the country.