

NUTRIENT DATA RESEARCH GROUP PRIORITIES FOR NUTRIENT ANALYSES

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The primary functions of the Nutrient Data Research Group (NDRG) are in gathering, evaluating, and compiling data on the nutrient composition of foods. Although the NDRG has no laboratory for direct analyses, it is involved in nutrient determination in several areas: (1) taking part in planning work to be done by others; (2) initiating and sponsoring contracts for analysis of specific foods or nutrients; and (3) encouraging industry, university, and government laboratories to expand their work in nutrient analysis for needed data.

The NDRG is, in principle, in complete agreement with the criteria and conclusions presented by Dr. Stewart. At the same time, however, the nature of the NDRG's work imposes some necessary qualifications or accommodations. This is because of: (1) Lack of control over some sources of data; (2) emphasis on foods rather than nutrients; and (3) responsibility to needs of data users. There is a demand for data on some nutrients which fail the criteria of adequate methodology and relation to health. Researchers want the best estimate now, with the realization that improved methods may result in subsequent revision. Those involved in research on nutrients not yet proven for their relation to health problems argue that data are needed to test the possibility.

There is also a need for extending analyses to foods which may fail the criteria of nutrient contribution or frequency of consumption. Questions arise as to what concentrations may be in some less popular foods and whether some of these foods should be stressed over others. With reduced calorie diets the nutrient density of certain nutrients becomes critical and relatively small contributions must be taken into account.

The schedule for publication of revised sections of Agriculture Handbook No. 8 is to a large extent determined by completion of analytical studies now in progress. The first six revised sections were described by Betty Perloff. No. 7, "Sausages and Luncheon Meats," and No. 8, "Breakfast Cereals" will be published this year. Sections on pork, beef, vegetables, fruits, fish, beverages, and cereal grain products are expected to reach the computer analysis stage in 1981 but the sequence cannot be predicted yet. Those on legumes, baked foods, and nuts and seeds will await completion of studies. Sections on lamb, veal, and game, and on candies are given lower priority because of their lesser importance as nutrient carriers. The final section on mixed dishes is expected to require the longest time in preparation because of the complexity of the group.

In addition to the Handbook sections, the NDRG will continue to produce provisional tables to expedite the release of information. A table on Canned and Frozen Vegetables was distributed to this group last year. This year, one on Canned, Dried and Frozen Fruit is available. Tables on individual nutrients are also prepared. A supplemental table on Folicin has been published, one on Sodium will be published in July, and another on Iron is in preparation. It should be understood that these provisional tables are intended to have temporary value. The data may be amended by subsequent release of completed sections.