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AMERICAN FROZEN FOOD INSTITUTE

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Dear Mr. Mele,

This letter is in response to your November 29, 2018 article in *The New York Times* titled "You Don't Want Fries with That."

Your article refers to potatoes as "starch bombs" and states that "potatoes rank near the bottom of healthful vegetables and lack the compounds and nutrients found in leafy green vegetables." In fact, this is nutritionally inaccurate and misleading.

The potato has a nutrient content similar to other vegetables (and exceeds that of other starchy vegetables). One medium-sized (5.2 ounce) potato with the skin provides 30% of your daily value of vitamin C, 10% of vitamin B6, 8% of thiamin, 6% of iron and magnesium, more potassium than a banana (620 mg per serving which is 15% of your daily value), 2 grams of fiber, 3 grams of complete protein. All of this for just 110 calories, no fat, no sodium and no cholesterol.

Any vegetable – no matter its color - that is deep fried and "topped off with salt, cheese, chili or gravy" will inherently become unhealthy. To single out one specific vegetable – the potato - as a "weapon of dietary destruction" is both exaggerated and erroneous.

Your piece also refers to the 2017 study that was published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (AJCN)* which examined the association between the frequency of potatoes consumed either fried or un-fried and "all-cause mortality" (i.e., dying from any and all causes). The study suffered from a number of methodological weaknesses and analytical flaws that severely impacted the validity of the study as well as the generalizability of the results. Any observational study that examines "all-cause mortality" *should be examined with extreme caution.* "All-cause mortality" literally means those participants who died during the study died from any cause. The death of a participant as a result of an auto accident will count the same in the data as the death of a participant as a result of heart disease. But if you're studying the effects of nutrition on heart health, one of those deaths is far more relevant than the other*. When death for any reason is the outcome, the data is not meaningful.*

To that end, the potato industry prepared a letter of response which was published by the journal in May of 2018, which you can review here: https://academic.oup.com/ajcn/article/107/5/847/4964952?guestAccessKey=9df35c70-e4cc-46aa-be62-50fea022e8ff.

Finally, contrary to what is stated in your article (i.e., potatoes have a high GI). The Glycemic Index (GI) of potatoes is highly variable and depends on a variety of factors including the potato type, origin, processing and preparation. Moreover, the glycemic index (GI) has come to be understood — incorrectly — as an inherent property of a food when in fact it is actually a measure of a *specific individual's response to a food*. Despite the fact that the definition of GI is quite narrow and its calculation quite complex, the

concept has been oversimplified by proponents who have inappropriately recast it as a broad dietary tool for weight loss and disease prevention. After a comprehensive review of the literature, the 2010 and 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee concluded that the GI was not a useful tool for such uses.

Attached to this email is further background for your review on the subject of potatoes and GI, as well as the AJCN study. We appreciate your attention to this information. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch for more information.

Best regards,

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