



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice
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November 17, 2025

Marcia McNutt, PhD
President, National Academy of Sciences
Chair, National Research Council
2101 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20418

Dear Dr. McNutt,

On behalf of the American Society for Nutrition (ASN), I am writing to share concerns regarding recent changes to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) Food and Nutrition Board (FNB). Established in 1928, ASN is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the creation, translation, and dissemination of nutrition science. ASN brings together the world's top researchers to advance the science, education, and practice of nutrition. ASN has nearly 8,000 members around the world, including nearly 40 members of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and National Academy of Medicine. Our members work across government, clinical practice, academia, and industry to advance research that supports ASN's vision of "A Healthier World Through Evidence-Based Nutrition."

It has come to our attention that the FNB has been combined with the Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources (BANR) to create a new "Board on Nutrition, Food, and Agriculture" as part of the recent National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) restructuring. The new "Food, Nutrition, and Agriculture" (FNA) program will be led by former BANR Director, Robin Schoen. We also understand that the longstanding National Research Council endowment supporting the FNB has been merged into the NASEM President's Fund.

Given these major structural and financial changes, ASN has concerns about the future of NAS' food and nutrition activities and the possibility that nutrition-focused efforts may become diminished within a broader, agriculture-centric program. Combining nutrition and agriculture under a single board presents the risk of both real and perceived conflicts of interest. ASN strongly urges NAS to maintain nutrition as a separate, fundamental area of focus that continues to produce high-impact, evidence-based nutrition reports, activities, and programs.

NAS has a long history of examining the nation's nutritional well-being and providing evidence-based recommendations and guidance to policy makers and the public about the application of nutrition and food sciences to improve human health. Established in 1940 by the U.S. National Defense Advisory Commission, the FNB has provided science-based direction on nutrition issues of national and global importance. One example is the advancement of Nutrient Reference Values (NRVs), evidence-based nutrient intake recommendations that provide the science necessary to develop food and nutrition guidelines, set food and nutrition policies, and assess nutrient intake for the entire American population.

In 1941, the FNB released the first Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) to define daily nutrient intakes for most healthy individuals during World War II. These later evolved into the DRIs, which underpin nearly all nutrition policies such as Nutrition Facts and other nutrition labeling, dietary guidelines, food and supplement standards, infant formula composition, federal food and nutrition programs including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), among many others. The DRIs are the basis for estimating the American population's nutrient intakes and, by extension, the nutritional health of Americans. It is not an over-statement to say that the DRIs represent the gold standard approach modeled by global NRVs. NAS nutrition-related reports have been revolutionary within the field of nutrition and ASN hopes this tradition of excellence and independence will be maintained.

The FNB has also led important work on issues of contemporary relevance, including work by the Committee on Military Nutrition Research and reviews such as "Challenges in Supply, Market Competition, and Regulation of Infant Formula in the United States" and "Complementary Feeding Interventions for Infants and Young Children under Age 2" showing its relevance as more than a legacy board.

ASN offers strong support for ongoing and future nutrition-related efforts conducted by NAS. ASN respectfully requests more details regarding:

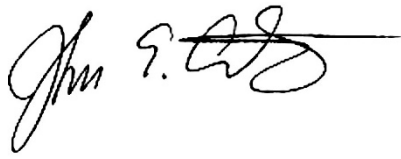
- the status of the FNB's endowment,
- whether or how the FNB membership will be included and highlighted within the new program,
- how the Board on Nutrition, Food, and Agriculture will be organized in relation to the activities typically undertaken by the FNB, and,
- the Board on Nutrition, Food, and Agriculture's strategic plan to continue to emphasize nutrition.

ASN welcomes the opportunity to discuss these topics in more detail and be a partner in developing solutions and a path forward.

NASEM is a trusted authoritative body that provides expert advice on some of the most pressing challenges facing the nation and the world. Within this framework, the FNB has played a central role in developing many evidence-based statements considered by many in the field of nutrition to be the gold standard.

Thank you for considering ASN's concerns. Our members rely heavily on FNB's evidence-based recommendations, NRVs, and other nutrition-related outcomes that support research, policy, and practice. FNB workshops provide current information on nutrition, food science, food safety, and more, which guide nutrition research efforts. NRVs are essential to food and nutrition guidelines, policies, and dietary intake assessment. Without these critical research tools long produced by the FNB, the work of nutrition scientists and researchers will be hindered, and the progress of nutrition science will be delayed, potentially slowing important discoveries and advances that lead to health improvements for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Courtney", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John E. Courtney, PhD
Chief Executive Officer
American Society for Nutrition