

Feds may warn people against eating meat

By Maddie Oatman, Mother Jones

Every five years, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services get together to revise their recommendations about what Americans should eat. These guidelines influence doctors' health advice, food labels, the ever evolving food pyramid-turned-plate, and what goes into school lunches.

In 2010, a time when more than half of adults were overweight or obese, the agencies recommended things like drinking water instead of sugary beverages, filling half your plate with fruits and veggies, cutting sodium, and just eating less in general.

It's 2015, so time for some new advice. The guidelines draw on input from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans Committee, which will publish a report sometime this winter. So what are the hottest items under debate this year? Here's a run-down of what to look for in the upcoming Dietary Guidelines for Americans report:

The meat vs. plants showdown: It probably comes as no surprise that Americans eat a diet lacking in fruits and vegetables and full of too many solid fats. In fact, vegetable consumption was on the decline between 2001 and 2010 even as each of us now eat 202.3 pounds of meat a year; a bit less red meat than a few years ago but more poultry than ever before. In the past, the government has warned against overdoing it with red meat and urged people to chow down on lean meats like chicken and fish instead.

But this year, for the first time, the committee might caution against overconsumption of all kinds of meat – and not just

for health reasons, but also because of meat's environmental footprint. Livestock operations now produce 15 percent of the world's carbon emissions. Eating fewer animal-based foods "is more health promoting and is associated with a lesser environmental impact," the committee suggested in its draft report.

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