

Nutrition Incentives Roundtable



Convened December 16, 2025

1-3:30pm ET

Ahold Delhaize USA and H-E-B provided funding for this meeting.



Overview

The Reagan-Udall Foundation for the FDA convened a roundtable conversation with a small group of 14 industry stakeholders, consumer representatives, and FDA observers to explore private sector voluntary opportunities for collaboration in defining shared values that could strengthen consistency across nutrition and food rating systems, ultimately supporting consumer choice and health as well as business objectives.

This summary highlights the topline takeaways from the roundtable discussion. It also incorporates insights from a pre-meeting poll, which participants completed to identify key opportunities and challenges ahead of the session. Outlined here are the priority issues that guided the conversation, the poll results, and the main takeaways from the discussion.

Project Focus

To explore how the private sector can work together to identify shared values and voluntarily improve alignment across nutrition and food rating systems by examining issues such as:

- Assessing the potential benefits of aligning on shared values across private nutrition and food rating systems.
- Clarifying what alignment could mean in the context of private nutrition/food rating systems.
- Understanding what motivates different stakeholders to pursue alignment and what barriers may hold them back.
- Gauging the level of interest in moving toward shared values and identify additional voices needed in the conversation.
- Determining the key considerations, conditions, and steps required to make meaningful progress toward greater coherence in private systems.

Poll Results

(Presented During Roundtable)

Greatest Opportunities

- ***Unified Standards for Stakeholders*** - Align stars, numbers, and colors into one comparable framework
- ***Consistent Messaging for Consumers*** - One clear voice across industry to reduce confusion and build trust
- ***Nutrition Science-Based Simplicity*** – Evidence-based ratings calculations rooted in sound nutrition science, easy for consumers to understand
- ***Consumer Education & Engagement*** -Teach how products fit into overall diet quality, elevate healthier choices
- ***Collaboration*** - Retailers, manufacturers, scientists, and advocates working together to maximize impact

Poll Results

(Presented During Roundtable)

Greatest Challenges

- ***Multiple Systems*** - Stars, numbers, colors, and algorithms sending mixed signals
- ***Unclear Standards*** - Binary vs. spectrum vs. threshold; no shared definition of “good”
- ***Consumer Distrust*** - Conflicting food and nutrition advice and labeling inconsistencies eroding confidence
- ***Inconsistent Practices*** - Different priorities, terminology, and treatment of consumer preferences (e.g., clean labels, additives) across systems
- ***Incentive Barriers*** - Financial interests and governance gaps slowing alignment

Topline Roundtable Takeaways

General Agreement about Opportunity for Greater Alignment/Consistency Among Various Rating Systems

- Most participants suggested that consumers would benefit from a consistent standard to help them make more nutritious/better choices within the context of what they are already buying
- “Backend” alignment, with “front-end flexibility” could:
 - Help manufacturers target reformulation efforts more efficiently
 - Reduce the burden of tailoring products to multiple, conflicting retailer standards
 - Allow retailers to continue competing on *how* they communicate, incentivize, and personalize nutrition guidance for their consumers
- Many supported the concept of “nudging” consumers incrementally along a continuum toward healthier dietary patterns, rather than expecting radical shifts

Topline Roundtable Takeaways

Key Concepts For Consideration

- **Scope:** General agreement centered on the idea that criteria should be science-based, with most supporting starting with criteria grounded in nutrient density
 - Many cautioned that expanding into consumer preferences or trend-driven attributes (e.g., keto, low-carb, etc.) could introduce complexity, data gaps, and bias, making consensus more difficult
 - Participants also raised the need for the criteria to be relevant across income, access, and health needs.
- **Innovation:** Emphasis was placed on the need for the criteria to promote innovation by creating a shared foundation upon which retailers, manufacturers, healthcare partners and others can build more effective, consumer-centered solutions

Topline Roundtable Takeaways

Key Concepts For Consideration (continued)

- ***Criteria Establishment:*** There was wide recognition that criteria should be established by an independent advisory panel of nutrition and public health experts that do not have direct ties to industry
 - Support was also noted for clear processes to update the criteria as well as appeal decisions made by the independent advisory panel
- ***Transparency:*** Participants aligned on the need for transparent and open-sourced criteria and algorithms based on data that is publicly available
- ***Category-Based Solutions:*** Many suggested that developing consumer category-facing (e.g., pizza, breakfast cereals, salad dressings, etc.) solutions would better reflect how consumers shop and make tradeoffs

Topline Roundtable Takeaways

Key Concepts For Consideration (continued)

- ***Consistency with Government Regulations:*** Participants coalesced around the need for the criteria to follow government rules on labeling and claims to enhance consumer trust and confidence
- ***Governance:*** A major theme was the importance of independent governance, with many expressing the importance of credibility while avoiding perceived bias from retailers, manufacturers, or any third party seen to benefit from designated criteria
- ***Evaluation:*** Repeated emphasis was placed on the need for criteria evaluation to ensure it is clear to consumers and, if followed would result in better health outcomes

Topline Roundtable Takeaways

Future Considerations

- ***Additional Voices:*** There was broad recognition that bringing in additional voices could help to further inform future discussions, including input from groups such as:
 - Product developers
 - Food scientists
 - Additional independent, unbiased nutrition scientists
 - Third-party scoring system owners
 - Technology and data infrastructure experts
 - Public Health Professionals
- ***Guiding Principles:*** Establish clear principles to guide the alignment work