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USDA Joins National Dairy Council and NFL in a Public - Private Partnership to Improve Health and Wellness in America's Schools

Fuel Up to Play 60 Campaign Unites Government, Health Professionals, Industry and Educators to Defeat Childhood Obesity

NEW YORK, Jan. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has joined a campaign to fight and defeat childhood obesity in cooperation with the NFL, National Dairy Council, multiple health organizations and several major corporations. The campaign, known as Fuel Up to Play 60, is funded with an initial private sector financial commitment of \$250 million over five years by America's Dairy Farmers. Funding is expected to grow as government, business, communities and families join this effort to improve nutrient-rich food choices and achieve 60 minutes of physical activity each day among children. More than 58,000, or 60 percent, of the nation's 96,000 private and public schools are currently enrolled in Fuel Up to Play 60.

It is possible that today's children could become the first American generation with a shorter life expectancy than their parents.(1) One-third of American children are overweight or obese. The obesity prevalence is about three to four times that of just one generation ago, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.(2)(3)

"Today is a significant milestone in the fight against childhood obesity because this unprecedented partnership will help educate our youth about steps they can and should take to lead healthy lives," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Increasing access to more nutrient-rich foods and physical activity in America's schools is no simple task, and will require the combined effort of private and public interests. Partnerships like these, combined with a strong reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Programs, can make a significant difference in our battle against childhood obesity."

Vilsack joined Roger Goodell, NFL Commissioner, and Tom Gallagher, CEO of Dairy Management Inc., the managing organization for National Dairy Council, at a New York City public school to support and promote the initiative. Other speakers included: Eric Goldstein, Chief Executive Officer, Nutrition and Transportation, New York City Department of Education; Dr. David Satcher, Action for Healthy Kids founding chair and 16th U.S. Surgeon General; and Maurice Jones-Drew, #32 running back for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Also attending the event were leaders from Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition Association, and hundreds of students from Central Park East Middle School in New York City.

As an initial step, these partners will work together to promote and expand Fuel Up to Play 60. Based on the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the program empowers students in grades 4 through 10 to engage their peers to "fuel up" with nutrient-rich foods they often lack – particularly low-fat and fat-free milk and milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains – and "get up and play" with 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Components, developed for and by youth – such as program curriculum, in-school promotional materials, a Web site and youth social media partnerships – are customizable and non-prescriptive. The program's design allows youth and schools to determine which tools and resources best help schools meet local youth wellness goals and school wellness policies. Partner-supported school grants will help schools make long-term healthy changes.

Fuel Up to Play 60 also gives leaders in health, business, government and communities nationwide the opportunity to be a part of a movement that relies on participation, collaboration and action by youth and adults to help develop and maintain healthy habits to last a lifetime.

The program taps the power of the NFL and its teams, players and physical activity programming to add recognition and value for students. National Dairy Council's trusted school relationships are crucial in sustaining the program. All 32 NFL teams are participating in the program through local dairy councils and schools in their respective markets.

"The National Football League is strongly committed to helping the next generation of youth achieve healthier lifestyles. In 2007, we

launched NFL PLAY 60 to encourage kids to get active and play 60 minutes a day. We are excited that Fuel Up to Play 60 extends that message to include healthy eating," said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "Through Fuel Up to Play 60, we want young people to discover that healthy habits can be both fun and empowering."

"For nearly 100 years, child nutrition research and education has been a major commitment for dairy farm families and a cornerstone of National Dairy Council," Gallagher said. "Fuel Up to Play 60 realizes our commitment to child health and sustaining the future. It will continue to expand in the coming years through bold leadership and new partnerships with organizations and industry leaders that no single organization could achieve alone."

By giving students both a voice and a valuable role in shaping the future of their generation, National Dairy Council, the NFL and USDA are providing concrete opportunities for children to lead real change in the fight against childhood obesity.

Player participation for the event was scheduled by NFL Players. More information about Fuel Up to Play 60 is available at FuelUpToPlay60.com.

About Fuel Up to Play 60

Fuel Up to Play 60 is a youth-led social marketing initiative designed to help prevent childhood obesity and help youth develop life-long healthy eating and daily physical activity habits. As part of the program, student teams work with adult leaders in each school to make kid-appealing, good-tasting, nutrient-rich foods more available. They also create opportunities for daily physical activity, such as noon walking clubs and after-school sports and dance clubs. Fuel Up to Play 60 encourages kids to get involved and make changes that will help make their schools healthier places. The program reaches youth directly and engages their help in leading and inspiring their friends. The United States Department of Agriculture, NFL and National Dairy Council are partners in the program, and it is further supported by several health and nutrition organizations: Action for Healthy Kids, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Medical Association and School Nutrition Association. Visit www.FuelUpToPlay60.com to learn more.

About National Dairy Council

National Dairy Council® (NDC) is the nutrition research, education and communications arm of Dairy Management Inc™. On behalf of U.S. dairy farmers, NDC provides science-based nutrition information to, and in collaboration with, a variety of stakeholders committed to fostering a healthier society, including health professionals, educators, school nutrition directors, academia, industry, consumers and media. Established in 1915, NDC is dedicated to educating the public on the health benefits of consuming milk and milk products throughout a person's lifespan. For more information, visit www.nationaldairycouncil.org.

About NFL PLAY 60

Designed to help tackle childhood obesity, NFL PLAY 60 brings together the NFL's long-standing commitment to health and fitness with partner organizations like the National Dairy Council. NFL's PLAY 60 is also implemented locally, as part of the NFL's in-school, after-school and team-based programs. For more information, visit www.NFLRush.com. © 2009 NFL Properties LLC. All NFL-related trademarks are trademarks of the National Football League.

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For More Information:

NDC Media Hotline

312-240-2880

ndc@dairyinfo.com

<http://www.fueluptoplay60mediaresources.com>

(1) Kluger, J. How America's children packed on the pounds. TIME, June 23, 2008; 68.

(2) Ogden, CL, Carroll, MD, Flegal, KM. High body mass index for age among US children and adolescents, 2003-2006. Journal of the American Medical Association. 2008; 299 (20): 2401-2405.

(3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, 2006, Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 2003-2004.

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