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Groundbreaking Industry Agreements Help Increase Availability of Healthy School Meals

*Thirteen Leading School Meals Manufacturers, Group Purchasing Organizations
and Technology Companies Team Up with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation
to Make Healthier School Lunches Possible for more than 30 Million Students*

(MIAMI) January 21, 2011 – A new multi-industry voluntary agreement announced today by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation brings together leading food manufacturers, group purchasing organizations and technology companies to help America’s schools serve healthier meals at more affordable prices. As a result of these agreements, more than 30 million students across the country will have access to healthier school meals – including at least 14 million students who currently participate in the free and reduced lunch program.

AdvancePierre Foods, Domino’s Pizza, JTM Food Group, McCain Foods USA, Rich Products Corporation, Schwan’s Food Service, Trident Seafoods, HPS, Premier healthcare alliance, Summa/Provista, Interflex, Dole Food Company, Inc., and the National Turkey Federation have joined the effort to combat childhood obesity by agreeing to increase the availability of products that can lead to healthy schools meals. Signatories to these first of their kind agreements brokered by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, founded by the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, have agreed to develop, market and competitively price products that will lead to healthier school meal options; streamline the ordering process; and make identifying healthy options easier.

“With students consuming up to half of their daily calories at school, healthy school meals are key to winning the fight against childhood obesity,” said President Bill Clinton, founder of the William J. Clinton Foundation. “Building on our agreements that have reduced the number of calories in beverages shipped to schools by 88 percent, the Alliance is now focusing on helping provide more nutritious meal options to more than 30 million school children nationwide.”

Manufacturers including AdvancePierre Foods, Domino’s Pizza, JTM Food Group, McCain Foods USA, Rich Products Corporation, Schwan’s Food Service and Trident Seafoods pledge not to price healthy options out of reach of school cafeterias. Signatories will set prices for healthier items that meet the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s science-based standards for nutrition at prices no higher than less healthy comparable products. Participating manufacturers have also pledged to increase the sales of compliant products by to least 50 percent of their entire school sales within five years.

Manufacturers have committed to aggressively promote products that align with the Alliance’s Healthy Schools Program standards and will help schools meet or exceed the requirements currently being finalized by the USDA. Product commitments fall in at least one of the following categories within the Alliance’s science-based guidelines for school foods:

- Lean protein products, such as lean red meat, skinless poultry, lean deli meats, fat-free or low-fat cheese, beans, and tofu.
- Low-fat lunch entrées with reduced total fat, saturated fat and sodium levels.
- Whole-grain products, such as bread, pasta and pizza crust.

- Fresh, canned or frozen fruit.
- Non-fried vegetables.
- Zero trans fat cooking oils.

“Increased access and lower prices to purchase healthy meal components makes it easier for schools to offer healthier school meals—a key strategy to help combat childhood obesity and to move students and staff toward ideal cardiovascular health,” said Ralph Sacco, M.D., president of the American Heart Association and chairman, department of neurology Miller School of Medicine University of Miami.

Schools can also save time and gain buying power by joining a group purchasing organization (GPO). With today’s agreement three of the largest GPOs in the U.S. with more than \$70 billion in combined buying power, HPS, Premier healthcare alliance and Summa/Provista, have agreed to offer products that meet the Alliance’s nutritional guidelines. GPOs have been successful at consolidating buying power in other institutional food service settings including hospitals, healthcare facilities and universities. By applying this same model to America’s schools, schools will see a savings of 10 to 20 percent in their food and beverage purchases.

In order to help schools take the first step in changing their purchasing process, the Alliance is collaborating with the technology firm Interflex to create an online tool that streamlines the procurement process by assisting schools with planning, bidding and purchasing healthier products. Dole Food Company, Inc. and the National Turkey Federation have also agreed to leverage their tools and resources to support schools in their implementation of this new approach to school meals.

“Today is just the beginning. The food manufacturer, group purchasing and technology agreements are just three components of the Alliance’s larger healthier school meals strategy with the goal of impacting more than 30 million students within a five year period,” said Ginny Ehrlich, executive director of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Additional components in the Alliance’s school meals strategy to support food service professionals being launched over the next year will include in-person and online training programs, menu planning and cooking techniques and recipes from celebrity chefs to school food service staff.

Last week, the USDA released the proposed rule for the nutrition standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program. To help schools more easily navigate the Alliance and USDA standards, the Alliance will update their guidelines to meet or exceed the final rule. The Alliance agreement announced today helps alleviate barriers districts will face in serving healthier school meals, and will enhance schools’ ability to meet those updated standards.

Parents, school administrators and food service directors can help the Alliance fight childhood obesity and bring healthier meals to schools across the country by joining the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools Program online at www.healthiergeneration.org. There is no cost to join the Healthy Schools Program, and members have access to hundreds of resources, including a variety of free technical tools that enable anyone who makes purchasing decisions about school meals to implement and promote healthier options for students.

About the Alliance for a Healthier Generation

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation works to address one of the nation’s leading public health threats – childhood obesity. The goal of the Alliance is to reduce the nationwide prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015, and to empower kids to make healthy lifestyle choices. Founded in 2005 by the American Heart Association and William J. Clinton Foundation, the Alliance works to positively affect the places that can make a difference to a child’s health: homes, schools, doctor’s offices and communities. To learn more about the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, visit www.HealthierGeneration.org

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