

## USDA Helps Launch Free, Portable Nutrient Database

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PHILADELPHIA, Pa., Oct. 21, 2002--Owners of handheld personal digital assistants, or PDAs, with a mind for healthy eating are pulling out their styluses today and pointing their way to nutritious food choices.

A portable version of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) flagship National Nutrient Database listing more than 6,000 food items is now available for download free of charge onto handheld PDAs. This user-friendly searchable nutrient database program will soon be available for download onto personal computers as well.

"Consumer information and education about healthy lifestyles and diets will help advance President Bush's Healthier US initiative," said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. "Easy access to nutrient information on thousands of foods provides a new tool to help consumers follow a healthy diet."

USDA's Agricultural Research Service and HealthTech, Inc., of Golden, Colo., announced the new capability today at the American Dietetic Association's annual conference here. The software package has been made available for download from the Internet to users through a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement between the ARS Nutrient Data Laboratory, Beltsville, Md., and HealthTech.

The unique product blends a custom-made searchable software application with the nutrient database. "Consumers, health professionals and educators seeking user-friendly nutrient data will no longer be limited to using the USDA's premier nutrient database only while online," said Phyllis Johnson, director of the ARS Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, which manages the nutrient database.

Owners of PDAs running the Palm operating system (Palm OS(r)) can download the searchable database by going to: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp>. The download takes about 30 seconds and requires about two megabytes of available memory on PDAs.

"This package is available at no cost as a free 'e-government' service," said Johnson. "Consumers making decisions in restaurants or supermarkets and healthcare practitioners in clinical settings will be greatly assisted by this new level of access." Whether recommending low-sodium foods for cardiac clients or creating weight-reduction diets for customers, both physicians and dietitians will be able to access easy-to-use key data.

Assembled by food groupings, the searchable program will allow users to browse a given category by scrolling through foods listed alphabetically. If the doctor suggests eating more high-calcium foods, the user can remain in a buffet line and scroll through the dairy and egg food

group and point to options. Within seconds, the user has the information he or she needs so that final food selections can be made easily.

Another friendly option of the program is the “portion modifier” feature. If the portion size listed isn’t what the consumer tends to eat, by adjusting the portion size up or down, the modified portion’s nutrient content is easily accessible.

The searchable software program and database-in-one provides information on about 30 nutrients for each food listed in a highly portable and easy-to-access format. “This package literally puts current nutrient data at the user’s fingertips. It’s nutrition in your pocket, at home or at work,” said Johnson.