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Grain Foods Foundation Asks USDA to Withdraw Checkoff Order from Further Consideration

GFF Board Votes to Move in Other Directions to Marshal Resources to Support GFF's Mission and Work

May 12, 2022 – Washington, DC – The Grain Foods Foundation (GFF) has petitioned the US Department of Agriculture to withdraw the Wheat Flour Foods Promotion, Research, and Information Order (the “Order”) from further consideration. If approved by USDA, the withdrawal would cancel the pending publication of the order in The Federal Register, a subsequent public comment period, and following that, an industry referendum. The order, which came out of an industry checkoff feasibility study initiated in 2016, would have established a mandatory funding mechanism for promoting the wheat-based grain foods category.

The petition to the USDA followed a May 10 vote by the GFF Board of Trustees, expressing strong support for withdrawal of the order from USDA consideration.

“The challenges facing our industry today are perhaps even more intense than those faced in 2004, when GFF was formed,” said Debo Mukherjee, GFF co-chair and chief marketing officer, Flowers Foods. “Our Board is committed to continuing to push against anti-carb and anti-grain messages through the strong work of GFF in research and science-based messaging initiatives.”

Kirk Stehr, GFF co-chair and senior vice president of Grain Craft, said industry disagreement over the checkoff program was undermining the promotion of grain-based foods.

“As vested stakeholders in this industry GFF supports, the Board agreed that the checkoff conversation has become a distraction to the work GFF needs to do on behalf of the whole industry,” he said. “GFF has enjoyed unprecedented success year after year, even during the COVID pandemic, and the GFF Board wants to do everything in our power to share this success with our industry and to make sure resources are available to continue to grow this work.”

The 2016 checkoff feasibility study, undertaken by GFF at the request of members common to both the American Bakers Association and GFF, kicked-off with stakeholder assessments executed the following year. The work included a review of potential creative assets to be utilized in a consumer campaign promoting wheat-based foods. Additionally, the feasibility study proposed a framework for efforts such as scientific research, undertaken to protect the market for the industry's products.

“No one in our industry has been untouched by the realities of the COVID pandemic, labor shortages, supply chain challenges, and commodity market volatility,” stated Vince Melchiorre, GFF Board member and senior vice president and general manager, Bimbo Bakeries USA. “The baking and milling industries are known for being a family of great companies. The way forward for our industry is to understand that the checkoff opportunity is not a fit for us and to move forward with strength, belief in the incredible story around the products we make, and a vision for GFF that delivers research leadership and thought advocacy.”

GFF anticipates USDA will confirm withdrawal of the order in coming days.

For more information about the Foundation, research findings, and the grain foods' role in a healthful diet, visit www.GrainFoodsFoundation.org.

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About Grain Foods Foundation

Formed in 2004, Grain Foods Foundation (GFF) is a group of thought leaders and advocates for all grain foods and believes everybody needs grain food to enjoy a happy and healthy life. Committed to nutrition education programming that is firmly rooted in science, GFF is a strong advocate for our members and a resource for consumers and the media who want to learn more about the role of grains in a well-balanced eating pattern. GFF offers research-based information and resources to members, partners, influencers, policymakers and consumers through a comprehensive communications campaign, conferences, webinars, research tools, social media and more. GFF is committed to bringing fact-based information and common sense to the consumer. For more information, visit www.GrainFoodsFoundation.org.