



News Release

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"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, May 16, 2018

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NMPF Calls on Sweden's Oatly to Respect U.S. Food Labeling Laws *Swedish Company Uses 'Oat Drink' Label in Europe, Objects to Term in United States*

ARLINGTON, VA – Swedish food company Oatly, whose powdered, grass-based beverage is sold both in Europe and across the United States, should respect U.S. food labeling standards that restrict the use of the term “milk” to real dairy products, according to the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF).

NMPF said today that Oatly is just the latest fake “milk” that is exploiting a lax regulatory environment in the United States to mislabel its imitation dairy product. NMPF criticized Oatly for complaining to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last month that it would be placed at a disadvantage if it could not call its product “oat milk,” even though it is not called “oat milk” anywhere except in the United States – not even in its native Sweden.

In the U.S. market, Oatly labels its product as “oat milk.” But in its home market of Sweden, where the product originated more than 25 years ago, Oatly is labeled as “havre dryck,” or “oat drink” in Swedish. European Union (EU) regulations – similar to existing U.S. government standards – define milk as an animal product and do not allow plant-based milk copycats to use dairy terms.

“It takes a lot of gall to complain to FDA that your company would be harmed by calling its product exactly what its already been labeled for years in its home market,” said NMPF President and CEO Jim Mulhern. “It’s been sold as an oat drink – which is exactly what it is – since it was first introduced in Sweden. Given that the EU and United States have similar food labeling regulations governing dairy terms, Oatly should label their product as an oat drink here, just as they do in Sweden.”

Oatly’s complaint was contained in an April 11 letter sent to FDA regarding a petition by the Good Food Institute (GFI), a group promoting vegan foods. Oatly wrote in support of GFI’s petition, which called



for FDA to modify existing food standards to sanction the current marketplace abuse of marketers using dairy terms on products made from plants, not milk.

In a letter to FDA, Oatly U.S. General Manager Mike Messersmith said “budding and innovative companies like Oatly would be placed at a serious disadvantage if we were no longer allowed to use terms that instantly and accurately convey what's inside the carton. ‘Oat liquid,’ ‘oat beverage,’ or ‘oat juice’ fail to explain what our products actually are and would almost certainly result in decreased sales.”

Mulhern said that using any of those three terms much more accurately conveys what’s inside the carton than falsely labeling it “oat milk.”

“They are not allowed to call it ‘oat milk’ in Sweden and it’s been sold there for years,” he said. “The reality is that Oatly wants to use the word ‘milk’ because the word brings a healthy halo of consistent, reliable nutrition and other benefits. They are clearly riding on milk’s nutritional coattails to boost their own profits. It’s unfair to America’s dairy farmers, who follow strict regulations to ensure their real dairy products are safe and nutritious. And it’s unfair to consumers because this product does not match milk’s superior nutritional package,” Mulhern said.

In promoting its cereal-derived beverage as oat “milk,” Oatly is blatantly skirting U.S. food labeling regulations, which dictate that any product using dairy terms including “milk,” “cheese” or “yogurt” must have originated from an animal. NMPF has long insisted that FDA take enforcement action against similarly misbranded products.

To highlight Oatly’s doublespeak to the FDA, NMPF has created a graphic that illustrates the difference between Oatly’s U.S. and Swedish packaging. This image will join others in NMPF’s “[Dairy Imitators: Exposed](#)” campaign, which calls out non-dairy imitation brands for ignoring federal standards and failing to live up to real milk’s complete nutrient package.

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The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well-being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF’s cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. For more on NMPF’s activities, visit our website at www.nmpf.org.