



# News Release

2107 Wilson Blvd., Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22201  
703.243.6111 | [www.nmpf.org](http://www.nmpf.org)

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, July 26, 2018

Christopher Galen  
(703) 243-6111 ext. 356  
[CGalen@nmpf.org](mailto:CGalen@nmpf.org)

## **NMPF Tells FDA: Review of Food Standards Should Start with Enforcement**

ARLINGTON, VA – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must enforce standards of identity for dairy products because these federal definitions are critical to safeguarding consumers from making purchases of products whose labels are false and misleading, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) said today.

At an FDA hearing Thursday focused on modernizing food standards of identity, [NMPF argued](#) that the agency should first start enforcing the existing standards for dairy foods like milk, cheese and yogurt. Consumers use these standards to make informed purchasing decisions and expect a certain level of product performance in return, said Tom Balmer, NMPF's executive vice president.

"It seems inconsistent to talk about modernizing standards to improve nutrition and assure accurate information to consumers when FDA has been allowing nutritionally inferior products to use standardized terms like 'milk' for so long," Balmer testified. "Instead of continuing to look the other way, let's start by enforcing current standards of identity and then talk about potential improvements."

Food standards help guarantee that consumer expectations are met both in terms of levels of key ingredients and consistency sensory attributes like taste and mouthfeel, said Balmer. While standards weren't initially developed for nutritional reasons, there is a direct link between the ingredients found in a standardized food and the nutrient package that results from their consumption.

Such is the case with dairy imitation foods like "almond milk," "soy cheese" and "rice yogurt." For too long, these products have used dairy terms to associate themselves with the positive traits of milk-based foods, including the significant levels of nine essential nutrients found in real milk. Because of this marketing tactic, consumers don't realize they're being tricked into thinking these products are suitable replacements for the real thing.

"This is a marketing gimmick, and a clever one," Balmer said. "Such products not only lack ingredients specified by the standards, they frequently fall short in expected characteristics like mouthfeel, taste and texture, and are nearly always less nutritious."

FDA acknowledged the public health consequences when it [released a statement](#) before the hearing announcing it would prioritize taking a closer look at the standards of identity for dairy products (NMPF [published its response](#) to this earlier today).

Over the last 20 years, NMPF and its members have made repeated requests for FDA to take enforcement action on misbranded imitation dairy products, with FDA continually claiming the issue is not an agency priority. The public, however, feels differently. A recent independent poll found that American consumers, by a 2-to-1 margin, oppose the use of “milk” as a designation for non-dairy beverages.

Balmer insisted that FDA start enforcing the labeling laws already on the books and rein in the “marketplace chaos,” adding that that the process “doesn’t need to take a year or more.” NMPF also plans to file written comments as part of the FDA’s review of this issue.

###

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](http://www.nmpf.org).