



News Release

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

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NMPF Urges FDA as Labeling Docket Closes: Stop Milk Imitators' Abuse of Dairy Terms

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration must enforce its existing rules against mislabeling plant-based products with dairy terms to address widespread consumer confusion over the nutritional content of dairy-product imitators, the National Milk Producers Federation said today.

"Clear, accurate labeling is a fundamental matter of truth and transparency for consumers," NMPF said in comments filed with the agency today. The comments present evidence of rampant marketplace confusion regarding the relative nutritional merits of milk versus its imitators. According to surveys from the past six months:

- 77 percent of buyers of dairy and plant-based beverages think almond-based drinks have as much or more protein than dairy, when in fact real milk has as much as eight times more protein;
- 78 percent thought plant-based beverages had at least as many vitamins and minerals as dairy, again incorrect;
- 68 percent thought such beverages had at least as many "key nutrients" such as calcium and potassium, which they do not; and
- While consumer confusion over nutrition is a key NMPF concern, research funded by plant-based beverage supporters found more basic confusion: Roughly 25 percent of consumers were unsure whether plant-based beverages contained cow's milk.

Reliance on non-dairy imitators for dairy-quality nutrition in products including milk, cheese, yogurt and butter has an effect on public health, as FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said last year when he pledged to address the issue. Medical reports of protein malnutrition and Vitamin D deficiency in children have been linked to plant-based beverage consumption. Meanwhile, surveys show that only 20 percent of all consumers believe plant-based drinks should be labeled milk.

"The science is clear. The consumer need is clear. And consumer sentiment is clear: FDA needs to step up and enforce its standard of identity for dairy terms on food labels," said Jim Mulhern, president and CEO of NMPF. "We urge FDA to do what's right for public health and marketplace integrity."

NMPF will remain vigilant in spotlighting this issue, working with lawmakers, allied groups and public-health professionals to inform and educate. For more information and links to recent surveys, visit www.nmpf.org.

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