

# What the Label Doesn't Tell You

It has been more than 30 years since the government overhauled food labels with the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990. Since then, the food system has evolved and companies have come up with new schemes to influence and manipulate consumers through food labeling. Meanwhile, rates of obesity and diet-related disease have continued to soar.

Clear and honest food labeling can guide consumers towards healthy choices and informed decisions. Here are some ways present food label falls short, and how the Food Labeling Modernization Act (FLMA) would improve food labels and promote health.

A food with seven grams of saturated fat per serving shouldn't be allowed to boast that it has zero grams of trans fat.

Any food that contains high-fructose corn syrup is not all natural.

Unsubstantiated claims that foods "support" or "maintain" your bones, brain, immunity, etc., can be made without strong scientific evidence.

Nutrient content claims such as "low sodium" or "high fiber" can create health halos on otherwise unhealthy foods, and "See nutrition information" does not prevent these claims from misleading consumers.

"Whole Grain" claims are often deceptive.

Voluntary front-of-package nutrition information can be hard to find and difficult to interpret.

Products may boast "natural flavors" up front, while hiding artificial colors or sweeteners on the back of the package.

Mentions and depictions of fruits and vegetables can make unhealthy foods appear healthy. Foods boasting these ingredients may contain very little, or only fruit flavorings.

FDA has very few requirements for formatting the ingredients list, and some lists can be very hard to read.

It can be difficult to follow advice from health professionals to limit caffeine intake since this drug may be added to foods in undisclosed amounts.

Gluten-containing grains other than wheat (i.e. barley and rye) are not clearly disclosed, despite posing a risk to 3 million Americans with Celiac disease.



## Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container  
Serving size 1/4 cake (69g/2.5oz)

Amount per serving  
**Calories 240**

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat** 13g **17%**

Saturated Fat 7g **35%**

Trans Fat 0g

**Cholesterol** 20mg **7%**

**Sodium** 140mg **6%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 32g **12%**

Dietary Fiber 1g **4%**

Total Sugars 22g

Includes 22g Added Sugars **44%**

**Protein** 2g

Vitamin D 0mcg **0%**

Calcium 20mg **2%**

Iron 1.4mg **8%**

Potassium 100mg **2%**

\*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**Ingredients:** Sugar, Water, Vegetable Oils (Soybean, Palm, Palm Kernel, Hydrogenated Cottonseed And/or Canola), Bleached Wheat Flour, Eggs, Cocoa Processed With Alkali, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Contains 2 Percent Or Less Of: Whole Wheat Flour, Corn Syrup, Chocolate, Sweet Chocolate (Sugar, Chocolate Liquor, Cocoa Powder Processed With Alkali, Milkfat, Soy Lecithin, Natural Vanilla Flavor), Dextrose, Modified Cornstarch, Polyglycerol Esters Of Fatty Acids, Baking Powder (Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate, Sodium Bicarbonate, Cornstarch, Monocalcium Phosphate), Maltodextrin, Salt, Natural Flavor, Green Tea Extract, Baking Soda, Glycerol-lactate Esters Of Fatty Acids, Mono And Diglycerides, Guar Gum, Gelatin, Sodium Caseinate, Polysorbate 60, Xanthan Gum, Soy Lecithin, Colored With Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1, Whey.

**CONTAINS: ALMONDS, EGG, WHEAT, MILK, SOY**

**150mg Caffeine Per Serving**

# How the FLMA Would Fix It

The bill would require FDA to develop a consistent front-of-package label to assist consumers in selecting healthy choices (here's one option).

The bill would require FDA approval for claims saying that a product can keep you healthy, and bogus claims would be eliminated.

The bill would require high saturated fat levels to be declared for products boasting zero trans fat.

The bill would require percentage labeling of whole grains.

The bill would require the disclosure "High in [added sugars/sodium/saturated fat]" alongside nutrient content claims connoting healthfulness on products with unhealthy levels of these nutrients.

The bill would require natural or artificial flavors, colors, and low-calorie sweeteners to be stated on the front of the package.

The bill would require FDA to define "natural" so that products with artificial flavorings could no longer bear "All Natural" labels

FLMA includes many other improvements to food labels, including provisions that will require nutrition, ingredient, and allergen information be available where food is sold online; make label claims and ingredient lists more legible; better define the term "healthy"; protect child health with new requirements for infant and toddler beverages; elevate transparency in the food supply by creating an online database of all food and beverage labels; and more.



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Includes 22g Added Sugars		<b>44%</b>
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**CONTAINS: ALMONDS, EGG, WHEAT, MILK, SOY, BARLEY, RYE**  
**150mg Caffeine Per Serving**

The bill would require gluten-containing grains to be declared on the ingredients label

The bill would require labeling of milligrams caffeine per serving.

The bill would require labels to disclose the amount and form of fruit or vegetable in common household measures, counting only the nutrient-dense form. Under a certain amount, labels would need to state "No servings of fruit."