

## The Food Labeling Modernization Act of 2026

Food labels can play an important role in promoting healthy eating and preventing diet-related diseases. Yet federal labeling rules have not kept up with the changing marketplace, and today's food labels do not always provide the simple, straightforward information that consumers need to make healthy choices.

The United States is long overdue for a food labeling overhaul.

The Food Labeling Modernization Act (FLMA) of 2026 would align labeling regulations with the latest nutrition science and promote public health through updates to food labels aimed at:

- Promoting transparency
- Encouraging reformulation
- Countering misleading claims
- Providing information online

### *Front-of-Package Labeling*

The FLMA's signature initiative establishes a front-of-package nutrition labeling system that identifies products with high levels of sodium, added sugar, or saturated fat (nutrients that are overconsumed,<sup>1,2</sup> linked to chronic disease,<sup>3,4</sup> and recommended to be limited in the diet<sup>5</sup>).

The labels will include the words "High In" and a conspicuous exclamation point icon.



*Images  
created by  
CSPI*

Similar labels are already required in more than a dozen countries, including Canada and Mexico.<sup>6</sup> Polling shows that Americans want front-of-package labels too, with 75% responding that they would support a policy requiring labels like these in the United States, including majorities of Democrats (83%), Republicans (68%), and Independents (73%).<sup>7</sup>

Countries that require front-of-package nutrient warnings have seen significant declines in daily per capita purchases of calories, sodium, sugar, and saturated fat.<sup>8</sup> But they have also seen an increase in the use of non-nutritive sweeteners,<sup>9</sup> which are not recommended for children.<sup>10,11,12</sup>

To address this, the FLMA also requires front-of-package disclosures stating:

**WARNING: Contains non-nutritive sweeteners.  
Not recommended for children.**

Front-of-package labeling leads to healthy reformulations and better choices!

Chile saw a significant reduction in the proportion of products that were high in calories, sugar, sodium, or saturated fat across the country's food supply (from 51% to 44% of products) after implementing mandatory "High in" labels.<sup>13</sup> A 2025 modeling study estimated that dietary improvements resulting from "High In"-style front-of-package labeling would prevent between 96,926 and 137,261 deaths from diet-related chronic disease in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

The FLMA would allow the U.S. to catch up with other nations by adopting a simple, standardized front-of-package nutrition labeling system!

## Addressing Misleading Claims

The food industry uses marketing claims to create the illusion of healthfulness for packaged foods, regardless of how healthy they truly are. This is among the reasons most Americans overconsume unhealthy ultra-processed foods (UPF) and underconsume fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fiber.

The FLMA includes several provisions aimed at addressing misleading claims that undermine health:

### Non-UPF Claims

The term “healthy” has an official regulatory definition. It can only be used on foods that meet specific nutritional criteria,<sup>15</sup> and the Food and Drug Administration is currently developing a “FDA Healthy” icon for food labels.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, there are no official regulatory definitions of the terms “UPF” or “non-UPF.” But that hasn’t stopped food companies from starting to use non-UPF claims.

There are various “non-UPF” certifications already on the market, each with different standards for what processing methods, ingredients, and nutrients they take into account when assessing a product’s eligibility for certification.<sup>17</sup> This lack of consistency could incentivize companies who want to position their products as healthful, even if they do not qualify for the “FDA Healthy” claim, to opt for a non-UPF claim instead.



Images from  
nonupfprogram.org,  
wisecode.ai,  
nonultraprocessed.org

The FLMA would direct FDA to create an official definition of “non-UPF” for food labeling, and would prevent foods that don’t meet the FDA’s definition of “healthy” from using “non-UPF” claims to create a misleading health halo.

### Whole Grain Claims

Did you know that terms like ‘wheat,’ ‘multigrain,’ and ‘made with whole grain’ tell us nothing about the amount of whole grain in a food?

A survey of 1,030 U.S. adults found that 43-51% of respondents overestimated the amount of whole grain in “multigrain” crackers, “honey wheat” bread, and “12-grain” bread, even after viewing the nutrition and ingredients labels.<sup>18</sup>

The FLMA would end the confusion by requiring products with whole grain claims to declare the percent of total grains that are whole grains in their products.



Image from researchers  
at Tufts University

### Fruit & Vegetable Claims



Image: amazon.com

Processed foods like “fruit snacks” and “veggie straws” are marketed with images of juicy strawberries and fresh spinach leaves, but these highly processed ingredients do not provide the same health benefits as fresh, frozen, or canned produce.

Worse yet, products called “fruit drinks” look just like real fruit juice but are often primarily sugar water,<sup>19</sup> and many parents confuse the two.<sup>20</sup>

The FLMA would let consumers know if they’re getting any real servings of fruits or veggies by requiring foods using fruit and veggie claims and imagery to declare the amount of real fruit or vegetables they contain.

## Online Grocery Labeling

Nearly one in five U.S. consumers buys groceries online at least once per month.<sup>21</sup>

Online grocery shoppers face an onslaught of marketing messages, often aimed at luring them to purchase less healthy products.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, basic product information can be difficult or impossible to find.<sup>23</sup>



Image: Kwangmoozaa – stock.adobe.com

The FLMA would update the labeling laws to require that the same Nutrition Facts, ingredient, and allergen information now on packages must be available for online grocery items.

## Increasing Transparency

Current labels do not provide enough information about the presence or amount of potentially harmful ingredients in our food. For example:

### Hidden Ingredients

Have you ever noticed vague catchall terms like “artificial flavor,” “natural flavor,” or “spices” in a food’s ingredients list? These terms represent a transparency loophole wherein companies are not required to tell consumers what specific substances are in a food.<sup>24</sup> And because of additional loopholes in our federal food additive safety policies, unvetted (and sometimes unsafe) substances can make their way into the food supply.<sup>25</sup>

The FLMA would close the loophole provided by catchall terms and require transparent disclosure of all flavors and spices added to foods.



Image: target.com

### Caffeine

Too much caffeine can cause restlessness, insomnia, and other health problems. And people who are pregnant, have certain health conditions, or take certain medications or supplements need to limit or avoid caffeine.<sup>26</sup> But caffeine content isn’t currently disclosed on the label for many foods and drinks.

The FLMA would require disclosure of caffeine content in foods with more than 10 milligrams of caffeine per serving.

### Gluten-Containing Grains

Approximately two million Americans have celiac disease, which means they need to avoid gluten-containing grains.<sup>27</sup> These common ingredients can be easily overlooked in crowded ingredients lists where they appear under more than a dozen different names.

The FLMA would require disclosure of gluten-containing grains in the “Contains” statement to protect people with celiac disease.



Image: Elenathewise – stock.adobe.com

**The FLMA includes all of these improvements to food labels, and more!**

*For more information, please contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at [policy@cspi.org](mailto:policy@cspi.org).*

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