



## GEORGIA MILK PRODUCERS, INC.

1641 New High Shoals Road, Suite 5, Watkinsville, Georgia 30677  
Office Phone: 706-310-0020

Dockets Management Staff  
Food and Drug Administration  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
5630 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852

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RE: Docket No. FDA-2023-D-0451

On behalf of the Georgia Milk Producers, Inc. Board of Directors and the dairy farmers of Georgia, these comments are being submitted on the proposed Guidance for Industry titled "Labeling of Plant-Based Milk Alternatives and Voluntary Nutrient Statements" published in the Federal Register on February 2, 2023.

The Georgia Milk Producers, Inc. is the trade association for dairy farmers in Georgia representing 89 dairy farms and the families that make up our dairy industry. While we support the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) efforts to effectively communicate the nutritional value of milk as compared to plant-based beverages, it is our opinion that the current confusion over the deficient nutrient value of plant-based alternatives has resulted from regulatory inaction. Furthermore, we believe that appropriate enforcement of current regulations regarding the Standards of Identity (SOI) for milk and dairy products would lead to a greater public understanding of the nutritional value of all products currently sold as milk and milk alternatives.

In the draft guidance document composed by FDA, the agency writes: consumers "believe that plant-based milk alternatives are healthier than milk and expect that products labeled with the term 'milk' in the name are comparable in nutrition to milk." FDA and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) both acknowledge that plant-based alternatives do not provide adequate amounts of nine key nutrients when compared to milk. This consumer confusion becomes even more concerning when considering USDA FNS's statement from [myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov): "about 90% of Americans do not get enough dairy [in their diet]." Dairy is a vital component to a healthy diet as it is a key source of thirteen essential nutrients including three of the nutrients listed as dietary components of public health concern by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Conflating the benefits of real milk with plant-based alternatives will lead to poorer health outcomes for consumers.

FDA's proposal to include a voluntary nutrition statement highlighting the difference in real milk and plant-based imitators will help to alleviate some of the confusion surrounding nutritional values, but the root cause of this confusion would still be permitted. SOIs were created to protect consumers and promote honest representation of food products in the marketplace. These standards and past compliance with these standards have created consumer confidence in the terms "dairy" and "milk." However, inaction and a reluctance to enforce labeling regulations has necessitated this current proposal for an additional nutrition statement. Requiring nutritionally inferior products to highlight the difference between milk and plant-based alternatives on the principal display panel will serve to correct some of the consumer confusion that exists today, but the source of this confusion—allowing a plant-based product to incorporate the term "milk" on its packaging—remains. FDA could eliminate this concern altogether by simply enforcing its own rules and only allowing products which match the SOI for milk to use this designation.

As FDA's guidance document clearly outlines, the importance of labeling is not constrained to whether consumers understand that plant-based alternatives are not actually dairy products. The terms we use to categorize food carry important assumptions about the nutritional value of those products and the inherent benefit of consuming one product over another. We support the agency's decision to require an additional nutrition statement on the principal display panel of plant-based alternative beverages, and we urge FDA to take additional steps to solve this problem and adhere to its own long-established standards of identity.

Sincerely,



Bryce Trotter

Executive Director  
Georgia Milk Producers, Inc.