

# Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative: Hopes for labeling crackdown by FDA

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative said today mislabeling of imitation dairy products remains an important issue for customers and farmers, and the co-op looks forward to working with President Biden's newly nominated commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to halt the practice.

Biden nominated Dr. Robert Califf today for the post, which has been vacant since the president took office.

Edge President Brody Stapel said the co-op is pleased to see Biden move to fill such an important position. Califf, a cardiologist and researcher, led the FDA for nearly a year under President Obama. The agency oversees everything from food and drugs to tobacco, dietary supplements and cosmetics, and thus regulates dairy labeling. "It's been frustrating to see dairy labeling be pushed aside by prior administrations. It's time the FDA gets serious about correctly labeling food," said Stapel, whose co-op represents farmers throughout the Upper Midwest and is the third largest in the country based on milk volume.

"While the agency uses its enforcement discretion, dairy farmers lose out and customers are misled with products that use dairy's good name to sell nutritionally inferior products," he said.

Stopping the use of untruthful labels on imitation dairy foods has long been a top policy priority for Edge. Current law creates a clear definition of milk as "the lacteal secretion, practically free from colostrum, obtained by the complete milking of one

or more healthy cows.” Regulations state that terms such as milk, cheese, ice cream and yogurt apply to products made from the milk of cows. Yet, the FDA allows the makers of imitation products to use those terms freely.

One-quarter of customers mistakenly think plant-based products labeled as cheese contain milk. A national survey co-commissioned by Edge found that customers are confused about whether imitation cheese products are indeed dairy foods and whether they carry the same nutritional value. Some of the findings:

- One-third of customers believe that the products contain protein, and 21 percent think that it is of a higher quality than dairy even though the imitations have little to no protein. Real dairy cheese has 7 grams of protein.
- One-quarter of customers purchase imitation cheeses because they believe them to be low in calories and fat and without additives. In reality, these plant-based foods contain an equal or comparable amount of fat and calories and substantially more additives than dairy cheeses.

“Edge looks forward to the opportunity to work with Dr. Califf and urges his swift Senate confirmation so he can begin addressing this issue,” Stapel said.

### **Customer survey:**

[Study background and executive summary](#)

[A graphic of key findings](#)

### **Images:**

[Brody Stapel photo](#)

[Edge logo](#)

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### **About Edge:**

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative provides dairy farmers throughout the Midwest with a powerful voice — the voice of milk — in Congress, with customers and within their

communities. Edge, based in Green Bay, Wis., is one of the top cooperatives in the country based on milk volume. Member farms are located in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. More information: [www.voiceofmilk.com](http://www.voiceofmilk.com).