

Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative: reacts to FDA guidance on milk alternatives

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative said today that the Food and Drug Administration's release of the long-awaited draft guidance on labeling plant-based milk alternatives is a step forward. This step moves closer to accurately labeling imitation dairy products, a priority issue for the co-op.

Edge President Brody Stapel said, "The co-op is looking forward to working with the FDA and Administrator Dr. Robert Califf by providing comments to express the importance of accurate labeling of plant-based milk alternatives for consumers and farmers."

"Accurate labeling of imitation dairy products, especially milk, has frustrated dairy farmers for far too long. The nutritional benefits of dairy products are superior to imitation products, and consumers should be well-informed using proper labeling and terms. Dairy foods, including milk, are part of a healthy eating pattern and provide consumers with healthy and nutritious food options."

Edge appreciates the acknowledgment from FDA that consumers generally do not understand that imitation milk products lack the same nutritional benefits as dairy milk. Due to this misconception, consumers can often miss out on critical nutrients essential to a healthy diet. FDA's guidance recommends voluntary nutrient statements for labeling plant-based milk alternatives. The declaration must convey how the product nutritionally compares with dairy milk.

However, Edge is disappointed to see the FDA continue to allow the dairy term 'milk' when labeling imitation products, violating the agency's existing standard of

identity for 'milk.'

“Dairy farmers reinvest in the dairy brand through our checkoff dollars to provide research, marketing and advertising the numerous health benefits of their dairy products,” said Stapel. “Dairy farmers work tirelessly to provide safe, nutritious milk for Americans, and inferior products have capitalized off dairy’s good name for far too long.”

The FDA regulates the labeling of food products, and this guidance should inform the plant-based milk alternative industry on the appropriate labeling of their beverages. However, this guidance only covers the ‘milk’ category, not other dairy product alternatives.

The guidance released today is the first draft that opens a 60-day comment period. Edge will examine additional details within the draft guidance and provide FDA with further feedback during the comment period.