

December 11, 2003

Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF COMMENT PERIOD

Docket No. 2003N-0496 Food Labeling: Health Claims; Dietary Guidance.
68 FR 66040, November 25, 2003.

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Health Claims Coalition, chaired by the Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA)¹, requests an extension of 30 days for the comment period on the above referenced Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

The Coalition has commented to FDA on the issue of health claims and qualified health claims. In this notice, the Agency has reopened, for public comment and FDA reconsideration, virtually all aspects of current FDA regulations and policy regarding the use of health and disease food labeling claims and general dietary guidance. The ANPR reflects a genuine openness to the development of new FDA policy. Accordingly, it deserves intense study and thoughtful response.

The food industry wants to work with FDA to meet the information needs of consumers concerning health claims and dietary guidance. The ANPR currently provides only sixty days for public comment. This period includes Thanksgiving and the year-end holidays. Given the importance of health claims and dietary guidance in food labeling, the Coalition is requesting an extension of the comment period of the November 2003 ANPR to February 25th, 2004.

Thank-you for your consideration of this critical issue to our industry.

Sincerely,

Grocery Manufacturers of America
American Bakers Association
American Frozen Food Institute
Association for Dressings and Sauces
Calorie Control Council
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
International Dairy Foods Association
International Food Additives Council
Juice Products Association
National Association of Margarine Manufacturers
Snack Food Association
Vinegar Institute

¹ GMA is the world's largest association of food, beverage and consumer product companies. With U.S. sales of more than \$500 billion, GMA members employ more than 2.5 million workers in all 50 states. The organization applies legal, scientific and political expertise from its member companies to vital food, nutrition and public policy issues affecting the industry. Led by a board of 42 Chief Executive Officers, GMA speaks for food and consumer product manufacturers and sales agencies at the state, federal and international levels on legislative and regulatory issues. The association also leads efforts to increase productivity, efficiency and growth in the food, beverage and consumer products industry.