

Campaign for Sweetener Transparency

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What exactly are you asking the FDA to do?

A: We are asking the FDA to use its enforcement discretion to extend labeling transparency to low- and no- calorie sweeteners, increasing consumer awareness of the presence of these ingredients on food and beverage packages, with extra measures taken on children's products. The changes we are asking for will enable consumers to clearly see what sweeteners are used in products they consume and help ensure that any sugar content claims made on food packages are truthful and non-misleading.

Q: Why is this being done now?

A: We view the requests in this Petition as items that should have been included by FDA when updating the Nutrition Facts label in 2016 – action that corrects an oversight. The request we have laid out are a natural extension of the labeling reform, which focuses on transparency and improving consumer access to information.

Additionally, given FDA's new requirement to label added sugars on the Nutrition Facts label, there has been a sharp increase in the use of alternative sweeteners in packaged food, unbeknownst to many consumers. There has also been an increase in the use of sugar content claims to market products containing sugar substitutes as more attractive options, despite the fact that the labeling claims may not be associated with improved nutritional value.

As it stands, we have an alternative sweetener labeling scheme that is incomplete, lacks transparency and is misleading and confusing to consumers. Our proposed changes will provide consumers with clear and accurate information about the use of low- and no- calories sweeteners in consumer products and help them make more informed decisions for themselves and their families, particularly for children.

Q: How long will it take?

A: The FDA has 180 days to respond to our Citizen Petition. During that time, consumers, food companies and other interested parties will have a chance to provide comments to FDA in support of our request. Comments can be submitted to the docket, [FDA-2020-P-1478](https://www.fda.gov/oc/2020/p-1478). Following its approval, the FDA will set a date when food and beverage manufacturers must comply with the new labeling changes.

Q: What does this mean for consumers?

A: This is great news for consumers! Once the changes take effect, they can easily find accurate information about all the nutritive and non-nutritive sweeteners used in their favorite products and make informed decisions when they shop. For parents, not only will the presence of sweeteners be disclosed on children's products, but the quantity will be as well – something the American Academy of Pediatrics called for in November 2019.