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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLOR MANUFACTURERS FINDS NO PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFIT TO FRONT OF PACKAGE LABELING OF COLORS

In response to a petition by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, IACM finds that there is no public health benefit to listing the presence of color additives on the front of the label of a manufactured food product. There are already regulations in place requiring food products to clearly label colors contained in product marketed in the United States. This allows consumers to make informed choices.

Like CSPI, IACM supports the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Margaret A. Hamburg's goal of "improving the scientific accuracy and usefulness of food labeling." However, we respectfully disagree that there is any scientific inaccuracy in the current method of listing colors in the food's ingredient label. If, as CSPI states, consumers are unaware of the presence of color additives in the foods that they buy, then IACM would encourage CSPI to focus its efforts on educating consumers as to better read and understand current food labels rather than create additional labeling requirements that would likely only create further confusion for consumers. By focusing its petition specifically on the labeling of food colors, CSPI is asking the FDA to make a judgment that food colors are less safe than other ingredients. This is simply untrue.

Consumers have repeatedly shown that they have strong preferences for foods that have an expected or anticipated color, and they will not purchase products or consume them if the color is in any way unexpected. Therefore, added color is one of the principal contributors to the palatability of foods. Color additives ensure that a food maintains an even, consistent appearance, despite seasonal variation in other ingredients. In many cases, during food processing or pasteurization the inherent color in foods fades, changes, or is entirely lost. This can have the effect of making otherwise nutritious foods appear unappealing. Therefore, color additives are used to replace color that is lost.

IACM members are vigilant about the safety of their products and will continue to work closely with regulatory authorities around the world to ensure that food colors are safe and appropriately labeled.

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The International Association of Color Manufacturers (IACM) is the trade association that represents the manufacturers and end-users of coloring substances that are used in foods, including natural and artificial colors.