

Attachment 2

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Grocery Industry Launches New Initiative to Reduce Consumer Confusion on Product Date Labels

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Retailers and Manufacturers Align on Standard Wording to Help Consumers Cut Food Waste

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) In a new industry-wide effort to reduce consumer confusion about product date labels, grocery manufacturers and retailers have joined together to adopt standard wording on packaging about the quality and safety of products.

Currently, more than 10 different date labels on packages – such as Sell By, Use By, Expires On, Best Before, Better if Used By or Best By – can result in confused consumers discarding a safe or usable product after the date on the package.

The new voluntary initiative streamlines the myriad date labels on consumer products packaging down to just two standard phrases. **“BEST If Used By”** describes product quality, where the product may not taste or perform as expected but is safe to use or consume. **“USE By”** applies to the few products that are highly perishable and/or have a food safety concern over time; these products should be consumed by the date listed on the package – and disposed of after that date.

The new initiative for common phrasing is led by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), the two major trade associations for retailers and consumer products manufacturing.

Retailers and manufacturers are encouraged to immediately begin phasing in the common wording with widespread adoption urged by the summer of 2018. Broad industry adoption of this new voluntary standard will occur over time so companies have flexibility to make the changes in a way that ensures consistency across their product categories.

“Our product code dating initiative is the latest example of how retailers and manufacturers are stepping up to help consumers and to reduce food waste,” said Pamela G. Bailey, GMA president and CEO.

“The shopper remains the most critical audience in our industry, and as the associations representing major food brands and retailers, we want to encourage a consistent vocabulary so that our customers clearly understand they are purchasing products that are of the highest quality and safety possible,” said Leslie G. Sarasin, FMI president and CEO. “While we all need nourishment, both retailers and manufacturers also want consumers to have the best experience possible in their stores and consuming their products.”

"The customer comes first in our business, and this voluntary industry initiative provides shoppers with clear, easily understood date label information, so our customers can be confident in the product's quality and safety," said Joe Colalillo, president of ShopRite of Hunterdon County, Inc. and chairman and CEO of Wakefern Food Corp. "Food retailers and manufacturers are working towards the common goal of bringing consistency and greater clarity in product date label messaging. We want to ensure our customers have meaningful information that helps them make the best decisions for their families, both in the store when they shop and when they enjoy foods at home."

"Eliminating confusion for consumers by using common product date wording is a win-win because it means more products will be used instead of thrown away in error," said Jack Jeffers, Vice President of Quality at Dean Foods, which led GMA's work on this issue. "It's much better that these products stay in the kitchen – and out of landfills."

Product date labeling changes may result in reduced consumer food waste, but clearing up this confusion is just one of several ways to combat the issue moving forward. About 44 percent of food waste sent to landfills comes from consumers, and statistics show that addressing consumer confusion around product date labeling could reduce total national food waste by just 8 percent.

The food industry has stepped up and made considerable progress in reducing food waste. GMA and FMI joined with the National Restaurant Association in 2011 to create the Food Waste Reduction Alliance, which is helping companies find ways to cut food waste. GMA member companies recycled 97 percent of food waste from operations and donated 156 million pounds of food to food banks in 2015. FMI member companies reported 1.5 billion pounds in diverted food waste, including 390 million pounds of food donated to food banks.

Today's announcement was praised by a range of companies and groups:

"Research shows that the multitude of date labels that appear on foods today are a source of confusion for many consumers," said Frank Yiannas, Vice President of Food Safety & Health for Walmart. "As advocates for the customer, we're delighted with this industry-wide, collaborative initiative that will provide consistency, simplify consumers' lives, and reduce food waste in homes across America."

"Clarifying and standardizing date label language is one of the most cost effective ways that we can reduce the 40 percent of food that goes to waste each year in the United States," said Emily Broad Leib, Director, Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic (FLPC). "Having worked for several years on this issue, I am thrilled to see GMA and FMI incorporate FLPC's recommendations and take this critical step towards making date labels clearer, so that consumers can make better decisions and reduce needless waste of food and money."

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Food Marketing Institute proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. FMI's U.S. members operate nearly 40,000 retail food stores and 25,000 pharmacies, representing a combined annual sales volume of almost \$770 billion. Through programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations, FMI offers resources and provides valuable benefits to more than 1,225 food retail and wholesale member companies in the United States and around the world. FMI membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large multi-store supermarket chains and mixed retail stores. For more information, visit www.fmi.org (<http://www.fmi.org>) and for information regarding the FMI foundation, visit www.fmifoundation.org (<http://www.fmifoundation.org>).

The Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) is the trade organization representing the world's leading food, beverage and consumer products companies and associated partners. The U.S. food, beverage and consumer packaged goods industry plays a unique role as the single largest U.S. manufacturing employment sector, with 2.1 million jobs in 30,000 communities across the country that deliver products vital to the wellbeing of people in our nation and around world.

Founded in 1908, GMA has a primary focus on product safety, science-based public policies and industry initiatives that seek to empower people with the tools and information they need to make informed choices and lead healthier lives. For more information, visit [gmaonline.org](https://www.gmaonline.org) (<https://www.gmaonline.org/>).

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