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FDA News

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FDA Provides Guidance on 'Whole Grain' for Manufacturers

The Food and Drug Administration has issued draft guidance on what the term "whole grain" may include. The guidance will assist manufacturers with what the FDA considers appropriate for food label statements related to "whole grain" content. Consumers will now be able to make dietary choices based on a term that is consistent and reliable.

"One of the most important decisions people can make about their health is the choice of foods they eat," said Dr. Scott Gottlieb, FDA's Deputy Commissioner for Medical and Scientific Affairs. "A top priority at FDA is finding additional ways to clearly communicate the health benefits found in food."

The FDA document clarifies that the agency considers "whole grain" to include cereal grains that consist of the intact, ground, cracked or flaked fruit of the grains whose principal components -- the starchy endosperm, germ and bran -- are present in the same relative proportions as they exist in the intact grain. Such grains may include barley, buckwheat, bulgur, corn, millet, rice, rye, oats, sorghum, wheat and wild rice.

In contrast, in the grain refining process some of the bran and germ is removed resulting in a loss of dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals.

The draft guidance states that although rolled and "quick oats" can be called "whole grains" because they contain all of their bran, germ and endosperm, other widely used food products may not meet the "whole grain" definition. For example, FDA does not consider products derived from legumes (soybeans), oilseeds (sunflower seeds) and roots (arrowroot) as "whole grains." The draft guidance specifically recommends that pizza only be labeled as "whole grain" or "whole wheat" when its crust is made entirely from whole grain flours or whole wheat flour, respectively.

"The food label is the best tool we have to help consumers choose a healthy diet, which includes whole grain products," said Dr. Robert E. Brackett, director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.

The draft guidance is part of the federal government's long-standing effort to advise consumers about healthy food choices. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that half of the grain that consumers eat should be whole grains. Eat at least 3 ounces of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice or pasta every day. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal or 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta. Consumers should also look to see that grains such as wheat, rice, oats or corn are referred to as "whole" in the list of ingredients.

Currently, manufacturers can also make factual statements about whole grains on food labels such as "10 grams of whole grains" or "1/2 ounce of whole grains."

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[Guidance for Industry and FDA Staff: Whole Grain Label Statements](#)

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