

A Call for Trans-Fat Labeling

The Bush administration urges the FDA to finalize regulations making trans-fat labeling mandatory on all foods.

After substantial evidence that *trans-fats* clog the arteries and increase the risk of heart disease, the Bush administration issued a letter to the FDA on September 18th urging them to “quickly finalize” regulations that would require labeling of *trans-fats* on food products. *Trans-fats* are found in oils, margarines and many processed foods that use *hydrogenated oils*, and many healthcare experts believe them even more damaging to the heart than saturated fats.

The FDA originally published a report in 1999 proposing this regulation, but had never finalized it into law. Currently, *trans-fat* labeling on the Nutrition Facts panel is voluntary. The final regulation would make *trans-fats* a mandatory part of the fat content listed on the food label.

The letter issued by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to the FDA was considered an unusual move in urging the FDA to act promptly on this matter. However, the FDA estimated in 1999 that labeling *trans-fats* on foods would avert between 2,500 to 5,600 deaths per year and prevent thousands of new cases of heart disease – while saving *billions of dollars* in healthcare costs.

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that *trans-fats* increase LDL (bad) cholesterol, which significantly increases the risk of heart disease – our #1 killer in the U.S. Labeling of *trans-fats* would be a cost-effect measure and provide significant benefits to Americans, the OMB argues.

An FDA spokesperson reports that the issue remains a priority, but no date has been set for issuing the final regulation on *trans-fat* labeling.

Reference:

Office of Management and Budget. Internet site:
www.whitehouse.gov/omb/pubpress/hhs_prompt_letter.html. (September 2001).