



May 10, 2016

Submitted Electronically via Regulations.gov
Food and Drug Administration
Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305)
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Request for comment on Use of the Term "Natural" in the Labeling of Human Food Products (Docket ID: FDA-2014-N-1207)

Dear Sir or Madam:

The American Feed Industry Association, the National Grain and Feed Association and the Pet Food Institute appreciate the opportunity to respond to FDA's Request for Information and Comments regarding Use of the Term "Natural" in the Labeling of Human Food Products, published in the Federal Register on November 12, 2015 (79 Fed. Reg. 28779) and hereafter referred to as the "Request for Comment."

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) is the world's largest organization devoted exclusively to representing the business, legislative and regulatory interests of the US animal feed industry and its suppliers. Founded in 1909, AFIA membership includes more than 600 domestic and international companies and state, regional and national associations. Member companies are livestock feed and pet food manufacturers, integrators, pharmaceutical companies, ingredient suppliers, equipment manufacturers and companies which supply other products, services and supplies to feed manufacturers.

The National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), established in 1896, consists of more than 1,050 grain, feed, processing, exporting and other grain-related companies that operate more than 7,000 facilities and handle more than 70 percent of all US grains and oilseeds. Its membership includes grain elevators; feed and feed ingredient manufacturers; biofuels companies; grain and oilseed processors and millers; exporters; livestock and poultry integrators; and associated firms that provide goods and services to the nation's grain, feed and processing industry.

Established in 1958, the Pet Food Institute (PFI) is the voice of US cat and dog food manufacturers. PFI members account for approximately 98 percent of the cat and dog food produced in the United States. Among its members are twenty-four dog and cat food manufacturers and more than seventy affiliates

who supply ingredients, raw materials and services to dog and cat food producers. Our members sell more than \$22 billion in dog and cat food annually, and another \$1.3 billion in exports.

The members of AFIA, NGFA and PFI share FDA's commitment to animal food safety and quality, and we are proud of the strong safety record of our members' products. We are aware that FDA has been asked several times in the past twenty years to define the term "natural" for use on human food labels and, while we understand animal food is outside the scope of FDA's request for comments, we would like to share our experience with respect to the use of the term "natural" for animal food as defined by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO).

The AAFCO definition for the term "natural" that governs its use in animal food (for states that adopt AAFCO standards) is provided in AAFCO's Official Publication (OP), which is published annually. The AAFCO 2016 OP definition for the term "natural" is the following:

A feed or ingredient derived solely from plant, animal or mined sources, either in its unprocessed state or having been subject to physical processing, heat processing, rendering, purification, extraction, hydrolysis, enzymolysis or fermentation, but not having been produced by or subject to a chemically synthetic process and not containing any additives or processing aids that are chemically synthetic except in amounts that might occur unavoidably in good manufacturing practices. (Approved 2001)

This term and its definition was approved by AAFCO in 2001 following an extensive consultation process that included FDA officials. It recognizes that some forms of processing can be used – and indeed may be necessary – for foods to be appropriate for consumption by animals. It also acknowledges that the production of certain animal foods requires certain vitamins and minerals that can only be obtained in sufficient quantities if they are synthetically derived. This term and definition established by AAFCO have served animal food producers well for more than fifteen years.

The FDA, in its Request for Comment, asks *inter alia* whether the term should be allowed on labels for human food that contain the products of agricultural biotechnology (also referred to as genetically modified organisms, or GMOs). While we hold no opinion with respect to the role of GMOs vis-à-vis the term "natural" on human food labels, we note that the AAFCO definition of the term "natural" does not exclude animal foods made with or from GMOs from carrying the term "natural" on their labels. As with the AAFCO definition of "natural" generally, this approach on GMOs acknowledges the realities of animal food production, which in many ways differ from human food production and merit distinct regulatory treatment. When FDA reviews food ingredients produced by genetic engineering, it evaluates the GMO variety for material differences from its conventional counterpart. Just as new plant varieties (e.g. corn, wheat) can be developed using conventional breeding techniques and are considered natural, new plant traits or varieties created by genetic engineering that are substantially equivalent to their non-GMO counterparts should also be considered natural.

Consistent with this view, we would like to register our support for a position taken by the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) in its comment to FDA. Specifically, GMA posits that FDA's focus for the purpose of determining whether a product can be labeled as natural should be on any post-harvest processing to which it has been subjected. There already exist many pre-harvest certification schemes available for food producers seeking to differentiate their products in the marketplace.

Our three associations appreciate the opportunity to provide this brief comment and we will continue to monitor FDA's effort to address the use of the term "natural" on human food labels.

Sincerely,



Leah Wilkinson
Vice President, Legislative, Regulatory & State Affairs
American Feed Industry Association



David Fairfield
Senior Vice President, Feed Services
National Grain and Feed Association



Cathleen Enright
President & CEO
Pet Food Institute