

Nestlé Vs. General Mills Over FDA Added Sugar Guidelines



By Hank Campbell — November 4, 2015



The United States Food and Drug Administration has proposed that

manufacturers should separately list "added sugar" on food labels and companies are at odds over whether or not it makes sense. Lined up against the proposal are groups such as General Mills, which makes cereal like Cheerios, and Unilever, which makes Ben & Jerry's ice cream, and all for it are candy companies like Nestlé and Mars.

The issue that separates them is not science. The FDA does not claim added sugar is causative in cardiovascular disease and even the European Union has rejected calls to break out added sugars - though they usually love to ban and label everything - because there is no way to test if sugar is added or existing sugars. *Sugar is sugar.*

Thus, the undercurrent in the food debate is a test of wills between the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC), a political body that advises the government, and the Institute of Medicine (IOM). The Institute of Medicine wants to limit calories from all sugary stuff while the DGAC favors adding a separate item for added sugar on labels.

The concern about adding a separate line is that the public might think one sugar is different from another when they are not - the same reason anti-GMO advocates want labels on foods that are not organic while the pro-science side does not. General Mills's Cheerios portrays itself as healthy cereal and Ben & Jerry's is the go-to brand for wealthy organic elites so it may seem odd they don't want labels and limits for added sugars while candy companies do. But General Mills believes an additional item on a label adds more confusion. In the data they cite, only 66 percent of shoppers were able to figure out how much total sugar was on a new label compared with 92 percent of shoppers who were able to figure out total sugar on existing labels, writes [Elaine Watson at Food Navigator](#) ^[1]. Consumers educated to think "added sugars" are somehow worse could be misled into ingesting more calories while avoiding a particular product with "added sugars" in it.

So why, then, would candy companies like Nestlé and Mars [be for the new label](#) ^[2]? Candy has not (yet) been implicated in the latest 'sugar is toxic' craze, but surely they know the time is

coming, just as it did for soda. Under the new labeling guidelines, the candies will be exempt from the added sugar line item if lactose (which is the sugar in milk) and mono- and disaccharides from pure fruits do not count as *added* sugars provided that these ingredients are not added for sweetening purposes. Naturally, it makes sense that both Nestl © and Mars would be sweet on the deal, and positioning themselves on the side of the 'consumers right to know' is smart, and will no doubt make their products more marketable.

And what will *that* mean for parents who have been told to care about added sugars but not 'natural' ones? A lot of confusion. The only difference between 100% orange juice that is not-from-concentrate and 100% orange juice made from concentrate would be in the label: one could boast "0 grams of sugar" while the other would have to list its sugar as "added."

And yet they have the same amount of sugar. Sugar is sugar.

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Links

[1] <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Regulation/General-Mills-blasts-unprecedented-FDA-added-sugars-proposal?source=acsh.org>

[2] <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=FDA-2012-N-1210-0797>