

Food Industry Responses to the Make America Healthy Again Initiative

Report, March 2026

Introduction

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) initiative seeks to transform food, health, and scientific systems in the United States to address the childhood chronic disease crisis (MAHA, 2025a). As part of this effort, MAHA released an assessment report in May 2025 followed by a strategy report in September 2025. The assessment report described causes of increased chronic disease in children, including those driven by changes in the U.S. food system, increased consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), and inadequate consumption of healthy foods, like fruits and vegetables (MAHA, 2025a). The strategy report included numerous strategies focused on the food system, such as simplifying and modifying the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs), reforming the ingredient notification program called Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS), and defining UPFs to support future research and policy (MAHA, 2025b). The MAHA priorities include some strategies that are known to improve the food system, while others lack supporting evidence.

The purpose of this report is to assess how the food industry may or may not be changing its food offerings in response to the MAHA initiative. To do this, food and dietary priorities were identified in the MAHA reports and food company announcements related to those priorities were systematically searched and the findings were categorized. The goal was to characterize the types of companies, types of changes, and reasons noted for the changes, and to assess how those changes might affect the healthfulness of the food supply.

Background

Food and dietary priorities in the MAHA assessment and strategy reports

The MAHA assessment and strategy reports highlight several food and dietary priorities, with an emphasis on UPFs. **Table 1** outlines key priorities from the reports, along with a summary of the related scientific evidence for each. Scientific evidence was derived from authoritative sources, such as U.S. government agencies, the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, and leading health and nutrition professional organizations.

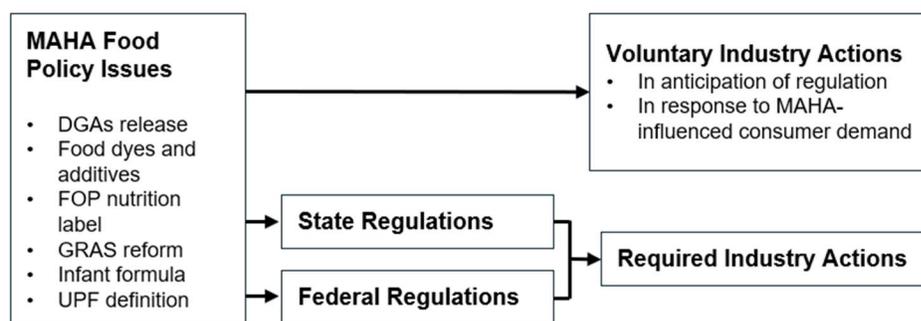


Table 1. Scientific Evidence for Food and Dietary Priorities in the MAHA Assessment and Strategy Reports

Key Priority	Summary of Scientific Evidence
Consume whole foods over UPFs	Scientific evidence strongly supports eating more whole foods relative to UPFs—particularly UPFs that are high in added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium—and also acknowledges that not all UPFs are harmful (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2025a; Vadiveloo et al., 2025; Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2024; Corliss, 2024).
Reduce consumption of added sugars	Scientific evidence strongly supports reducing consumption of added sugars (Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2024; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020; World Health Organization, 2015). Children and adolescents, in particular, consume amounts of added sugars exceeding recommendations.
Reduce consumption of refined grains	Scientific evidence strongly supports reducing consumption of refined grains and incorporating more whole grains in the diet (Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2024; U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).
Reduce or remove food additives (e.g., synthetic food dyes, preservatives, artificial flavors, artificial sweeteners)	<p>Scientific evidence is mixed around the potential benefits of reducing or removing food additives; however, there are arguments that greater transparency about what is in our food is an important benefit for consumers (Trasande et al., 2018; Galligan et al., 2024; Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2025).</p> <p><u>Food dyes</u>: Scientific evidence suggests that some synthetic dyes may be associated with behavioral issues and health risks particularly in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2025b; Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2021), yet limited evidence supports that removal of synthetic dyes will improve nutritional quality of food.</p> <p><u>Artificial sweeteners</u>: Scientific evidence indicates that artificial sweeteners will not raise blood sugar levels and offer a low-calorie substitute for sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), which may be useful in reducing intake of added sugars (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2025a; Johnson et al., 2018). However, some reports (WHO, 2023; HER, 2025) have raised concerns with the current evidence surrounding artificial sweeteners, particularly variations in study quality and duration. The World Health Organization (2023) released a conditional recommendation that non-sugar (artificial) sweeteners should not be used as a means to achieve weight control or reduce the risk of noncommunicable diseases. Further, beverages with artificial sweeteners are not recommended as part of a healthy diet for children and adolescents (HER, 2025).</p>
Replace refined seed oils with minimally processed animal-based fats (e.g., butter, lard)	Scientific evidence does not support replacing seed oil with animal-based fats. Research indicates seed oils are preferred because they are lower in saturated fats (and higher in unsaturated fats) relative to animal-based fats and therefore better for heart health (U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020; 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2024; Corliss, 2025; Harris et al., 2009).
Promote consumption of full-fat milk and dairy products	Scientific evidence is mixed regarding whether full-fat or reduced-fat dairy products are preferred. Reduced-fat options are lower in saturated fats and calories than full-fat options, which has been the primary driver for recommendations to consume reduced-fat options (Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2024; U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). However, questions have been raised about the quality of existing evidence driving these recommendations, and some evidence suggests that consumption of full-fat milk compared with low-fat milk is associated with lower odds of overweight and obesity in children (Lamarche et al., 2025).

In response to the MAHA initiative, many food companies across the supply chain have announced changes in their product offerings. **Figure 1** shows the pathways to industry response. Food companies might change food offerings in anticipation of future regulation or because information circulating in the media affects consumer demand for foods with specific attributes. These changes may include introducing new products, reformulating existing products, relabeling products, or potentially discontinuing products. In contrast, food companies might be required to make these types of changes if MAHA-aligned regulations are issued at the state or federal level. Thus far, FDA has initiated the process to revoke authorization for two synthetic food dyes—Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B (FDA, 2025b)—and announced proposed rulemaking to amend the GRAS process, but no other federal regulations have moved forward. However, the MAHA initiative has induced many states to implement regulations requiring industry actions.¹

Figure 1. Pathways for industry responses to the MAHA Initiative



In response to the MAHA initiative, many states have proposed or passed legislation in relation to some of the priorities listed in **Table 1**.² The most common state-level policy responses include:

- Placing bans on certain food additives, primarily synthetic food dyes, in schools. For example, Louisiana [SB 14](#) prohibits the use of 15 ingredients, including 7 synthetic food dyes, in public schools. Further, [SB 69](#) in Delaware and [HB 134](#) in Tennessee specifically ban the use of Red Dye 40 in schools.
- Placing bans on certain food additives across all food products. For example, Arkansas [SB 9](#) bans the manufacture, sale, and distribution of food products containing two chemical additives—potassium bromate used as a dough conditioner in breads and propylparaben used as a preservative in packaged baked goods.
- Requesting waivers to prohibit the purchase of products such as sodas and candy using SNAP benefits. Texas ([SB 379](#)) and Arkansas ([SB 217](#)), for example, requested SNAP waivers to prohibit the purchase of candy and sweetened drinks, while Utah ([HB 403](#)) prohibits the purchase of soda and other sweetened soft drinks.

The bans on food additives in specific states will force food manufacturers and retailers to reformulate all their affected products because most foods are marketed across multiple states or nationwide (van Laack and Snow, 2025). Typically, it is not feasible for companies to produce and market products tailored for one state (van Laack and Snow, 2025).

¹ Some states independently began issuing regulations that appeared to be aligned with the MAHA initiative prior to the change in administration.

² State policy trackers are available from three organizations: [MAHA in Action page](#) on the HHS website, [Environmental Working Group](#) website, and the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#) website.

Methodology

To conduct this study, we identified announcements made by ingredient manufacturers, food manufacturers, restaurant chains, and retail chains that appear to align with the MAHA initiative, including those that appeared to be driven by misinformation. We developed the search strategy to prioritize information about changes in food product offerings that came directly from company sources, such as press releases and company websites. In some cases, we obtained information from media reports about earnings calls with chief executive officers when we were unable to find written communications. We also conducted Google searches for better sources when we found mention of an announcement, but not from a direct company source. In addition, we added some product details related to dyes from the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration's list of companies](#) that have made announcements regarding food dyes. A recent retailer announcement (Target) regarding food dyes was added just prior to publication of this report.

We conducted LexisNexis searches on October 16, 2025 and February 15, 2026 with the following Boolean operators and truncations created based on our review of the MAHA assessment report released in May 2025:

Lard OR tallow OR "whole fat" OR "full fat" OR ultra-processed OR "ultra-processed grain*" OR "high fructose corn syrup" OR "ultra-processed sugar*" OR "soybean oil" OR "corn oil" OR "safflower oil" OR "sunflower oil" OR "cottonseed oil" OR "canola oil" OR "seed oil" OR "ultra-processed fat*" OR "food additive*" OR emulsifier* OR "artificial color*" OR "artificial dye*" OR "food dye*" OR "titanium dioxide" OR propylparaben* OR "butylated hydroxytoluene" OR bht OR "artificial sweetener*" OR aspartame OR sucralose OR saccharin

We narrowed the search by the following:

- **Timeline:** January 1, 2025 to October 16, 2025 (subsequently extended to February 15, 2026)
- **Source Location:** United States
- **Source Type:** Newswires & Press Releases
- **Subject:** Business News OR Company Activities & Management Industry: Food & Beverage
- **Exclusions:** Exclude Non-Business News

We then searched within the results for the following terms:

remov* OR reduc* OR reformulat* OR replac* OR "phase out" OR "stop using" OR substitut*

The search conducted in October 2025 yielded 876 records, and the search conducted in February 2026 yielded 533 records. Records were reviewed for relevance to ensure they related to a food company announcement regarding product offerings. We then used the relevant findings to record information for each company, including links to the source material, the type of company (e.g., food manufacturer, retailer), the types of products affected, the types of changes announced, and the noted reasons for the change.

Key Findings

Despite substantial media attention indicating the food industry is making changes in response to MAHA, relatively few companies have made public announcements. **Table 2** shows the types of changes that have been announced by food manufacturers, restaurant chains, and retail chains with links to the announcements. Most of the announcements have been made by food manufacturers. Only four restaurant chains and four retail chains (two owned by one company) have made announcements. In some cases, the changes affect some, but not all, products supplied by the company, or the company will produce another version of a product while continuing to produce and market the existing version. Key findings are the following:

- **Synthetic dyes.** Changes to remove synthetic dyes and replace them with natural dyes comprise the largest number of changes. Only five of the company-specific announcements do not include synthetic dyes. In addition to the company-specific announcements, three trade associations have made announcements related to removal of synthetic dyes on behalf of their members: International Dairy Foods Association for retail ice cream products and school milk, cheese, and yogurt products and American Bakers Association and Consumer Brands Association for retail and school foods.
- **Other artificial ingredients.** Four food manufacturers and two retail chains have announced removal of artificial flavors, artificial sweeteners, or other additives. For the two retail chains owned by the same company, a long list of artificial ingredients, including synthetic dyes, will be removed from all private label products sold in their stores.
- **High fructose corn syrup (HFCS).** Three food manufacturers and one restaurant chain have announced they are removing HFCS and replacing it with sugar.
- **Seed oils.** Two food manufacturers and three restaurant chains have announced they are removing seed oils and replacing them with butter or beef tallow.

In addition to the companies shown in **Table 2**, a few ingredient manufacturers have announced new product introductions, including four new natural dyes, a new natural sweetener, and a new natural emulsifier for use by food manufacturers.

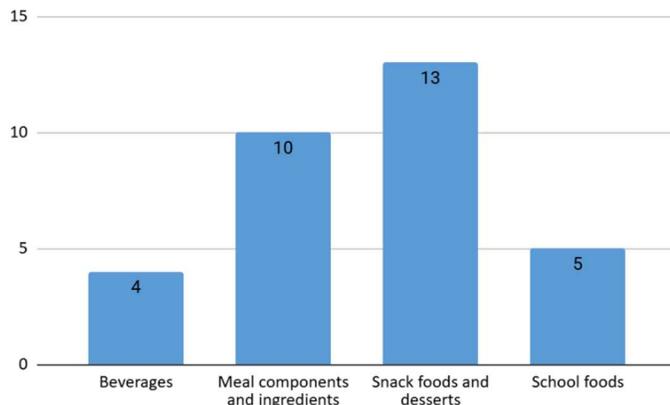


Table 2. Announced changes in food offerings by food manufacturers, restaurant chains, and retail chains during the first year of MAHA

Date	Company	Remove synthetic dyes	Remove artificial flavors	Remove artificial sweeteners	Remove other additives	Remove HFCS	Remove seed oils
Food manufacturers							
4/1/2025	Unnamed ice cream manufacturers	•					
9/3/2025	Campbell's Company	•					
6/25/2025	ConAgra Brands	•					
5/2/2025	Danone	•					
6/17/2025	General Mills	•					
7/29/2025	Grupo Bimbo	•					
8/21/2025	Hershey	•					
6/26/2025	J.M. Smucker	•					
7/22/2025	Kellanova	•					
8/14/2025	WK Kellogg Co	•					
6/17/2025	Kraft Heinz	•					
7/24/2025	Mars	•					
3/26/2025	McCormick & Company	•					
5/1/2025	Nature's Own	•	•		•	•	
6/25/2025	Nestlé USA	•					
7/17/2025	PepsiCo	•	•				•
7/14/2025	PIM Brands, Inc.	•	•				
2/18/2025	Positive Beverage			•			
7/30/2025	Real Good Foods						•
9/23/2025	Stauffer's Fudge Stars	•	•			•	
9/15/2025	Tyson Foods	•			•	•	
9/23/2025	Utz Brands	•					
Restaurant chains							
8/19/2025	BOA Steakhouse						•
5/14/2025	In-N-Out Burger	•				•	
3/1/2025	Steak 'n Shake						•
1/2025	Sweetgreen						•
Retail chains							
6/5/2025	Sam's Club	•	•	•	•		
1/7/2026	Save A Lot	•					
2/27/2026	Target	•					
10/1/2025	Walmart	•	•	•	•		
Total company counts		24	6	3	4	4	5

Figure 2a shows the **product categories** affected by the announced changes by food manufacturers. Most of the changes are occurring for snack foods and desserts, followed by meal components and ingredients, such as processed meat and poultry products and condiments. A large number of companies are making changes in school foods, but it is not possible to determine an accurate total count because their announcements are through their respective trade associations.

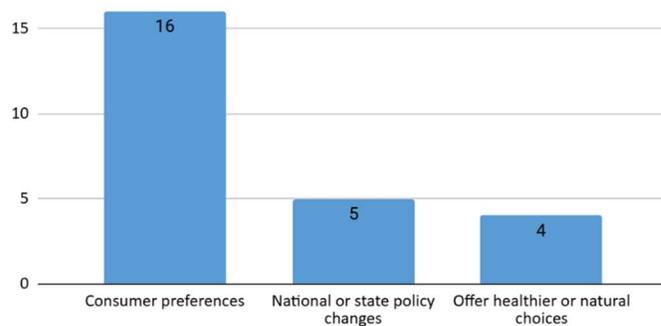
Figure 2a. Product categories affected by announced food manufacturer changes (n=21)^a



Note: Some companies appear in more than one category.

^a Counts do not include the unknown number of IDFA, ABA, and CBA member companies removing synthetic dyes in their products.

Figure 2b. Stated reasons for food manufacturer changes (n=21)^a



Note: Some companies appear in more than one category.

^a Counts do not include the unknown number of IDFA, ABA, and CBA member companies removing synthetic dyes in their products.

Figure 2b shows the **stated reasons** for announced changes by food manufacturers. Most of the reasons relate to consumer preferences for product attributes, though a few mention national or state policy changes. Only two companies explicitly mention in their announcements that MAHA is a reason for making the change (Hershey’s and Danone). None of the restaurants or retail chain announcements mention national or state policy changes as a driver.

Implications for Policy and Research

The MAHA Initiative is still in its early stages, and future changes could cause more industry responses than observed so far. The results of this study document changes in the first year of MAHA. Additional changes across more companies and products could be driven by:

- changes in dietary recommendations in the DGAs released on January 7, 2026,
- changes in the school lunch program based on the DGAs,

- requirements for mandatory submission of GRAS notices for all foods,³ and
- policies stemming from a federal definition of UPFs, which is forthcoming (U.S. FDA, 2025).

In the meantime, the public health community must play a role in discouraging voluntary changes that are not based on science and advocating for changes that could improve diet quality.

An additional consideration is the impact on food accessibility. If the food industry undertakes costly reformulations or uses higher cost ingredients in response to MAHA priorities, it is possible that these costs will be passed along to consumers. Differences in MAHA-aligned policies at the state level could also impact costs of production. Future studies should assess how food prices change as companies adjust, especially in an era of historically high food price inflation, and explore ways to support families with limited means for purchasing foods.

Conclusions

Thus far, the announced changes by the food industry in response to MAHA priorities will likely have minimal effect on diet quality. While it is beneficial to remove unnecessary chemicals from the food supply, particularly in foods typically consumed by children, the industry announcements do not focus on reducing intake of added sugars, sodium, saturated fat, or other nutrients of concern for diet quality. Our review of company announcements found the following:

- Many, mostly large, companies have announced changes in response to the MAHA initiative that are primarily focused on eliminating synthetic food dyes, but the vast majority of food suppliers have made no public statements.
- Many companies have relied on their trade associations to make blanket announcements regarding changes in their products, particularly as they relate to school foods, rather than calling attention to their specific changes.
- In some cases, companies are continuing to produce existing products but adding a version of the product with artificial ingredients removed, thus dampening the benefits of the change.
- No announcements have yet mentioned specific changes to address concerns about UPFs, aside from removal of artificial ingredients that are typically found in UPFs. In addition, no announcements have addressed decreasing consumption of refined grains or added sugars, both of which are frequently associated with UPFs.
- Only a few companies have announced changes that appear to be based on misinformation, such as replacing seed oils with beef tallow.

Most announcements cite changing consumer preferences as the reason driving changes and do not attribute changes to MAHA. In cases where companies attribute changes to policy, their statements refer broadly to changes (actual or anticipated) in state or federal policy.

³ FDA issued a notice of proposed rule making for amending the GRAS process (<https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaViewRule?pubId=202504&RIN=0910-AJ02>).

Author Names and Affiliations

Mary K. Muth, BS, MS, PhD is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University and Senior Fellow at the National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy.

Brenna Ellison, BS, MS, PhD is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University and Director of the USDA-funded Center for Food Conservation and Waste Reduction.

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