



New York Farm Bureau • 159 Wolf Road P.O. Box 5330 • Albany, New York 12205 • (518) 436-8495 Fax: (518) 431-5656 • www.nyfb.org

April 30, 2018

Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Rm. 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Docket ID: FDA-2018-D-0075, The Declaration of Added Sugars on Honey, Maple Syrup, and Certain Cranberry Products; Draft Guidance for Industry

To Whom It May Concern:

The New York Farm Bureau (NYFB), New York State's largest general farm organization, appreciates the opportunity to comment the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Nutrition's draft guidance on the, "The Declaration of Added Sugars on Honey, Maple Syrup, and Certain Cranberry Products: Guidance for Industry." NYFB has serious concerns with the current proposal, and we believe it will negatively affect the consumer's perception of maple syrup and honey as pure products and ultimately reduce sales due to this misconception. New York State boasts robust honey and maple industries. In 2015, New York honey producers were ranked tenth in the nation, with a \$10.6 million economic impact. In 2017, New York State was ranked second for maple production and generated an estimated economic impact of \$141 million.

When consumers add pure honey or maple syrup to the foods they are eating, they recognize that they are adding sugar to their diets. What consumers are concerned about in adding honey or maple syrup to their diets is whether or not the product they choose is pure and free from added sugars/adulteration. NYFB has strong concerns regarding the FDA's Nutrition Facts Label "Added Sugar" requirement for single-ingredient products like pure 100 percent honey or maple syrup. The FDA proposed solution is for the Nutrition Facts label to have a voluntary footnote to the required Added Sugar line in the form of "†". The standard of identity for pure maple syrup found in 21 CFR 168.140 states that "Maple syrup is the liquid food derived by concentration and heat treatment of the sap of the maple tree (*Acer*) or by solution in water of maple sugar made from such sap. It contains not less than 66 percent by weight of soluble solids derived solely from such sap..." FDA uses the following definition of honey as "a thick, sweet, syrupy substance that bees make as food from the nectar of plants or secretions of living parts of plants and store in honeycombs," as detailed in the "Proper Labeling of Honey and Honey Products: Guidance for Industry." Each definition points to the fact that both honey and maple syrup on single-ingredient products and contain no added sugar, which makes an "Added Sugar Footnote" redundant. It causes both additional regulation on producers as well as added confusion for the consumer.

We believe the FDA's definition of added sugars as it relates to the new label is misleading. FDA's definition of added sugars (21 CFR Part 101) states: "Added sugars are either added during the processing of foods, or are packaged as such, and include sugars (free, mono and disaccharides, sugars from syrups and honey..." Since pure honey and maple syrup do not have added sugars, it remains to be seen why they would need to have an "added sugar" label on the packaging.

Ad-hoc surveys, conducted by the maple industry, show that consumers overwhelmingly interpret "added sugar" as an extra ingredient in the product. It is alarming that consumers believe other types of sugars such as high fructose corn syrup or cane sugar would be in their pure honey or maple syrup.

NYFB offers the following options to the FDA's guideline proposal, which would address our concerns regarding the FDA's Nutrition Facts label Added Sugar requirement. Option 2 would be an acceptable compromise if the FDA rejects option 1:

- 1) Provide a full exemption from the Nutrition Facts label Added Sugar line requirement for single-ingredient pure 100 percent products such as honey or maple syrup when these products are sold in retail packaging.
- 2) The Added Sugar line in the Nutrition Facts label be left blank or a zero and have the symbol proposed by FDA included, which would guide consumers to a more detailed level of information below the label. The more detailed information would say, "Consuming one serving adds 17g of sugar to one's diet representing 34% of the DV".

We believe that when a mutually acceptable solution is found to the Nutrition Facts label Added Sugar statement that its application across the honey and maple industries within the U.S. should be mandatory. Consistency will be essential and the application of the FDA Nutrition Facts label requirements will be important to ensuring consumer understanding and industry compliance in the U.S. marketplace.

NYFB thanks you for the opportunity to share these comments and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

David Fisher
President, New York Farm Bureau