



**DEC 11 2014**

Dr. Urvashi Rangan  
Mr. Michael Crupain  
Food Safety & Sustainability Center  
Consumers Union / Consumer Reports  
101 Truman Avenue  
Yonkers, NY 10703

Dear Dr. Rangan and Mr. Crupain:

This is in response to your letter dated January 21, 2014 to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding use of the term “natural” in the labeling of foods and beverages containing caramel color. You requested clarification on FDA’s statement about “natural” labeling and requested specific changes to the way artificial colors are labeled on foods and beverages in general. You also asked that FDA ban the use of the term “natural” on food products that contain caramel color or any artificial color and requested that FDA amend 21 CFR 101.22(k)(2) to clarify the labeling of color additives not subject to certification.

You are correct in noting that FDA does not have any regulation or guidance specifically about the term “natural” for labeling purposes. However, FDA does have a longstanding policy stated in the preamble of the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act final rule, 58 FR 2407, published January 6, 1993. Our policy on the use of the term “natural” is that “natural” means that nothing artificial (including artificial flavors) or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in or has been added to a food that would not normally be expected to be in the food. FDA agrees that the use of the word “natural” on products that contain any artificial ingredients is inappropriate.

Regarding your request that 21 CFR 101.22 (k) be modified to require use of the term “artificial” in the ingredient statement when caramel color is used, we state in 21 CFR 101.22 (a)(4) that we consider all color additives as artificial. Also, Section 403(k) of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act states that a food is misbranded if it does not bear labeling stating a food contains an artificial color. The statute also states that a color not considered to be a certified color, such as caramel color, is not required to be labeled by its common or usual name, and that terms such as “color added” is allowed.

We appreciate you bringing to our attention the product labels attached to the end of your letter. We share your concern for the truthful labeling of food products. Letters such as yours help us to become aware of labeling issues that arise in the marketplace.

Moving forward, we are interested in pursuing a public process to consider our policy on “natural” and intend to seek public comment regarding this issue. As part of this process, we anticipate addressing how color additives fit into our regulatory position. We will certainly take the concerns raised in your letter into account.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Spiller', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Philip C. Spiller  
Acting Director  
Office of Nutrition, Labeling  
and Dietary Supplements  
Center for Food Safety  
and Applied Nutrition