

Foodmakers Pledge to Fight Obesity With Clear Package Labels

By Molly Peterson - Oct 28, 2010

Clear nutritional labels aimed at helping consumers combat obesity will appear next year on the products of some of the biggest U.S. food makers, two trade groups said.

Calorie content and health information will go on the front of packages in a “fact-based, simple and easy-to-use format,” the [Food Marketing Institute](#) and the [Grocery Manufacturers Association](#) said yesterday in a joint [statement](#) announcing the voluntary labeling system. The new labels will appear early next year, they said.

The Food and Drug Administration has been pushing for uniform labels on food and beverage containers as part of a push to reduce the nation’s obesity rate. The number of people in the U.S. who are obese has more than [doubled](#) in the past 30 years to 72 million, according to the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. People who are overweight or obese have a greater risk of diabetes, heart attacks and strokes.

“As the details get worked through, our hope is that the industry will develop a label that aids in consumer understanding and helps parents and other shoppers easily identify and select products that contribute to a healthy diet,” [Siobhan DeLancey](#), an FDA spokeswoman, said yesterday in an e-mail.

The new system will be the biggest change to U.S. food labels in almost 20 years, [David Mackay](#), president and chief executive officer of [Kellogg Co.](#) in Battle Creek, Michigan, said in the trade groups’ statement.

‘Industry Commitment’

“This is a landmark step forward in the industry’s commitment to help address the obesity challenge,” Mackay said.

The groups said they will complete details of the plan, including technical and design elements, in the coming months.

The Washington-based Grocery Manufacturers Association represents more than 300 companies including [Nestle SA](#) of Vevey, Switzerland, and Northfield, Illinois-based [Kraft Foods Inc.](#), the world’s two biggest food companies, as well as Atlanta-based [Coca-Cola Co.](#) and Purchase, New York-based [PepsiCo Inc.](#), the two largest soft-drink makers. [Kroger Co.](#), the largest U.S. supermarket chain based in Cincinnati, is among the Arlington, Virginia-based Food Marketing Institute’s 1,500 members.

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