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Group Calls for Ban on Food Coloring

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The Center for Science in the Public Interest, a prominent advocacy group, has requested the Food and Drug Administration ban artificial coloring in food.

According to Michael F. Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, his group made the request because of potential harm to children.

"Our 2008 petition highlighted the evidence demonstrating that food dyes impair the behavior of some children," Jacobson said. "In response to that petition, the FDA held an advisory committee meeting, which narrowly voted against requiring a warning label. That, of course, is only advisory, and the FDA could do whatever it likes."

The FDA advisory panel found that there is no evidence the food dyes create behavioral problems for most children. They decided that proper labeling was ample warning for the small number of children who may be prone to adverse reactions to dyes.

Colorless Cheetos, Gray Pickles

Although no other nations have banned dyes in food, Jacobson wants the United States to move away from synthetic coloring as he says Europe is doing.

"The European Union requires a warning label on most dyed foods. Europe is surviving well with little use of artificial dyes. Numerous natural colorings are available," Jacobson said. "The public would benefit from eliminating these toxic substances from the food supply."

According to Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University, an important question is whether anyone would want to purchase a colorless Cheeto or a gray pickle.

"Companies started doing this in the first place because nobody will buy colorless junk food," she acknowledges. "If there was a ban on coloring, people would not buy the products."

Food Police Alert

Gene Healy, vice president of the Cato Institute, disagrees strongly with the push for a ban. He says it's one more example of diktats by so-called "food police."

"One of the most appalling examples was the *Washington Post* report last year that the Obama FDA may 'gradually over a period of years,' lower the level of sodium allowed in American food, to adjust the American palate to a less salty diet," Healy said.

As Healy notes, the FDA has held for some time that there is simply no definitive link between artificial food colorings and behavioral or health problems in children.

"This is part of a pattern where the Obama administration is using its regulatory powers to shape Americans' food choices, a federal role never envisioned in the Constitution," Healy said.

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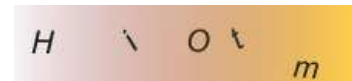
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