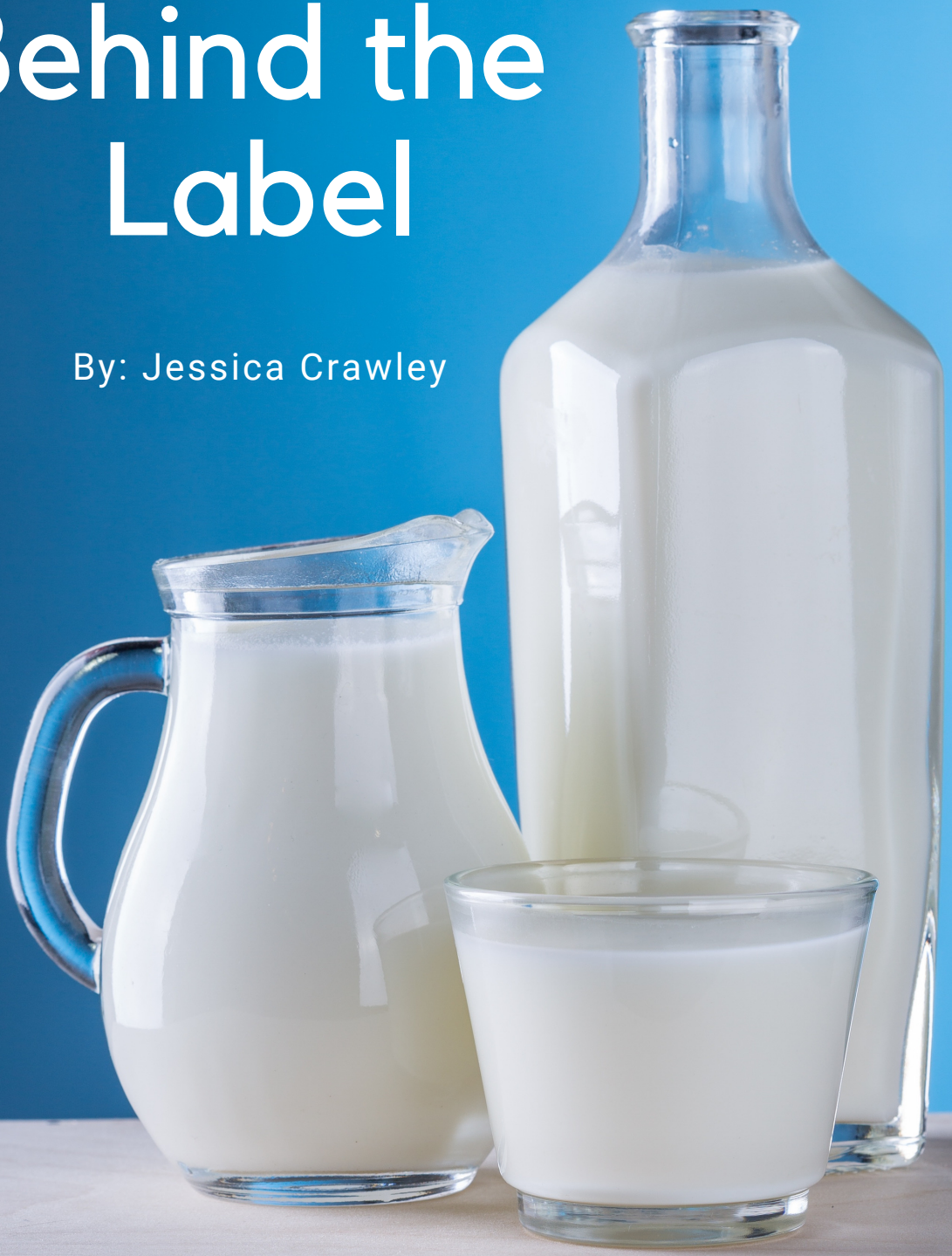
MILK: the Truth Behind the Label

By: Jessica Crawley



The Current Situation

Currently in the United States, there are many different labels that use the word “milk”. Almond, cashew, coconut, hazelnut, rice, oat, hemp, and soy products are all considered various types of milk. Many of these are plant based and do not contain the same amount of nutrients as dairy cow milk. You might not know it, but these can be harmful to your health later down the road. When a person does not consume the required vitamins and nutrients, they are putting their body at risk for major health issues. Milk alternatives should not include the word "milk" because it often gives the illusion that the product is equally nutritious to cow's milk. If you are concerned about your health, you should be equally concerned about the labels on the products you are frequently consuming.

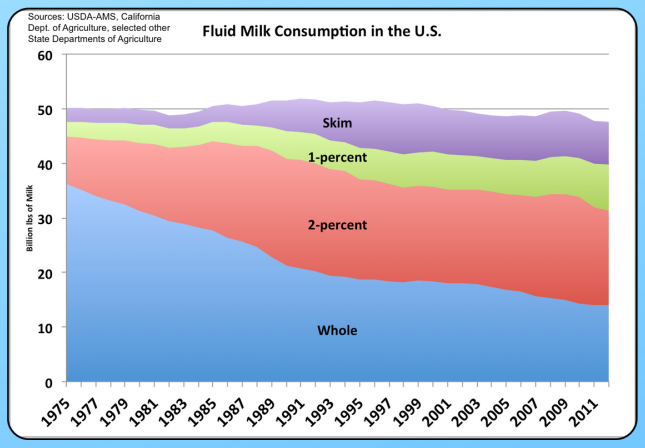
"Cow’s milk is the real deal – the original milk"
- Midwest Dairy

The Federal Drug Administration is seriously looking into changing the requirements for the label “milk”, primarily because the agency’s current standards for milk refer to products from lactating animals. U.S. Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb discussed the issue at a POLITICO Pro Summit in Washington, DC. Gottlieb stated, "You see the proliferation of products like soy milk and almond milk calling themselves milk, but if you look at our standard of identity, there is a reference somewhere in the standard of identity to a lactating animal, and you know an almond doesn't lactate, I will confess" (Nieves). Midwest Dairy strongly believes that "cow's milk is the real deal - the original milk." Derived from lactating animals, cow milk fits the standard identity for FDA standards.

Dairy farmers and politicians across the U.S. want this standard of identity to be clear to all Americans. The bill was originally proposed in early 2017 by Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin. Since then, progress has been minimal; therefore, it needs support from Americans across the country in order to be a success (Nieves).

America's Trend

Milk alternatives are growing in popularity for several reasons. The chart below shows the drop in consumption of fluid milk from 1975-2011. Three main reasons will be discussed in further detail.



Assumption of Animal Abuse

Many consumers believe that farmers abuse their animals and thus do not want to purchase products from the dairy industry. Unfortunately, there are a few cases of this treatment that do occur, these are the ones that are sought out and plastered all over social media by PETA activists. What people do not see is the videos of the farmers who truly care about their cows and want the best for their health and happiness. "Every cow has a name, and every cow is personally handled by the family," said Aaron McAfee, COO of Organic Pastures Dairy Company in Fresno, California. "That pretty much sums up how we feel about the animals on our farm" (Gottle). This holds true to almost every dairy farmer across the United States; unfortunately, animal rights activists seek out the few who fall short of these standards to record and post on social media.

Focusing on Health

Americans are increasing focus on thier health and weight. Almond milk contains 50 less calories when compared to an 8 oz serving of cow's milk; however, its fat content remains the same at 2.5 grams. Almond milk can be a good choice for someone who wishes to lower their calorie intake. Consumers should keep in mind that it will not provide the body with the same amount of naturally occurring nutrients and vitamins as dairy cow milk (Master).

Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance levels are at an all-time high. Almost 1 in 6 Americans are lactose intolerant during some point in their life. Young children often show symptoms of lactose intolerance but grow out of it in their teen years. The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse believes this is primarily due to overfeeding calcium early on in a child's life.
The recommended calcium intake for children 1-3 years old is 700mg and then increases to 1,300mg during ages 9-18. Soy, almond, rice, and coconut products contain 30-45% of the daily value for calcium due to additives, while cow milk contains 30% of the daily value and is naturally occurring. Lactaid is a brand that specializes in lactose free dairy products. They promote cow's milk through products that will not affect a person who has lactose intolerance. (Fredricks)

Comparing the Alternatives

Types

Almond, cashew, coconut, hazelnut, rice, oat, hemp, and soy products are all popular milk alternatives. Each of these products have their benefits; however, none of them are from lactating animals. They are all labeled as milk products even though the standard of identity is not being met.

Processing

Low amounts of processing are becoming increasingly important in a healthy lifestyle. The provided chart depicts how five out of the seven vitamins and minerals in cow's milk occur naturally. Thiel, Ph.D., N.M.D found that "vitamins in any real food are chemically and structurally different from those commonly found in 'natural vitamin' formulas" (Thiel).

Price

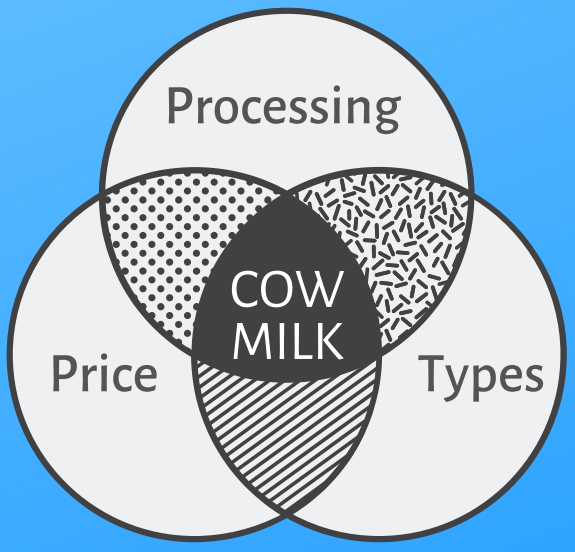
Price is also an important variable when comparing the differences between milk and milk alternatives. The average American consumes approximately 46 half gallons of milk each year. This is equal to $94.30 for cow's milk, while soy, almond, coconut, and rice products cost between $155.02 and $229.54 annually (Bentley).

	(Low-Fat) COW'S MILK[1]	SOY[2]	ALMOND[2]	COCONUT[2]	RICE[3]
CALORIES AND NUTRIENTS					
Calories	110	110	60	80	120
Protein	8g	8g	1g	<1g	1g
Fat	2.5g	4.5g	2.5g	5g	2.5g
Carbohydrates	12g	9g	8g	7g	23g
VITAMINS AND MINERALS** *(% Daily Value*)*					
Calcium	30%	45%	45%	45%	30%
Phosphorus	25%	25%	N/A***	N/A	15%
Potassium	10%	10%	1%	1%	15%
Riboflavin	25%	30%	30%	N/A	N/A
Vitamin B-12	20%	50%	50%	50%	25%
Vitamin A	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Vitamin D	25%	30%	25%	25%	25%
PRICE[4]					
Per ½ Gallon	$2.05	$3.37	$3.28	$4.99	$3.46
Per 8oz. Serving	$0.26	$0.42	$0.41	$0.62	$0.43

Naturally Occurring — *Good Source = 10%–19% DV* — *Excellent Source = 20%+ DV*

1. Cow's Milk levels are per the USDA National Nutrition Database (NDB No.01083 SR-27): available at: http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/
2. Silk Original Soy Milk, Original Almond Milk, and Original Coconut Milk. Nutritional information per Silk® website www.silk.com
3. Rice Dream Enriched Refrigerated Original. Nutritional information per Rice Dream® website www.tastethedream.com
4. Based on gallon volume equivalents per IRI DMI Custom Database Data for 2014 (Jan–Dec) – National Average (Cow's milk based on conventional white milk)
** The percent Daily Value (DV) provides nutrient information based on a caloric intake of 2,000 calories for adults and children four or more years of age.*
***Nutrient information not listed here can be found on the product website*
****Nutrient not listed on product website*

NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL



Why Support the Label Change?

Products are Different

Cow's milk and milk alternatives are clearly different products, despite the labels, which refer to all of the products as milk. When a food product does not contain the same standard of nutrients as another, they should not be allowed to share a label. This gives consumers the illusion that they are getting their daily requirement of vitamins and nutrients when in fact they are not. This poses major health concerns later in life and especially to young children as they are growing up.

> The 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee "identified low- and fat-free dairy as part of a healthy dietary pattern... the same cannot be said for milk alternatives"

Health Consequences

Many people choose to purchase nondairy products, assuming the word "milk" on the label means that it will meet the nutritional needs of their body. Several parents encountered a rude awakening when their children were diagnosed with kwashiorkor and rickets due to malnutrition. Kwashiorkor is a disease resulting from severe protein malnutrition, the direct result of feeding alternatives to milk. In the second case, a toddler was diagnosed with rickets due to the lack of vitamin D when his parents chose to feed soy-based alternatives rather than cow milk. Neither parents knew what these products were doing to their children, and their kids suffered from this choice (Office of the Commissioner). Effects of replacing cow's milk with milk alternatives can be affecting your health without obvious signs.

Standard of Identity

As stated in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 21, "Milk is the lacteal secretion, practically free from colostrum, obtained by the complete milking of one or more healthy cows" (CFR). Almond, cashew, coconut, hazelnut, rice, oat, hemp, and soy products do not comply by these standards and therefore should not be allowed to label themselves as milk. "Standards of Identity were created to maintain the integrity of food products and ensure that foods meet the expectation of the buyer" (Grant).

Conclusion & Call to Action

The concerns over a healthy diet are rising every day. Almost every household in America has milk or milk products in the refrigerator. After reading this document, I hope you choose to be in favor of the Milk Labeling Bill and purchase real milk rather than milk alternatives. Being in favor of the Milk Labeling Bill will encourage healthy choices and your body will thank you. When you see the label "milk" on a grocery store shelf, you can be confident in knowing that the product complies with FDA standards and will provide your body with naturally occurring proteins, vitamins, and minerals.

Three key points to remember:

1. "Milk" is defined as the lacteal secretion of a healthy cow.
2. The price and health benefits of milk are unbeatable.
3. Changing the labels on milk alternatives will decrease chances of sickness due to malnutrition.

ACT NOW!

I encourage you to voice your opinion on the Milk Labeling Bill by calling 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332). They will be happy to answer any further questions you have about the bill and how it will work. Let your friends on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram know your opinions by using the hashtag #milklabelingbill. Support dairy farmers and their hard work by sharing your opinions. The cows thank you!

Reference List

Bentley, Jeanine. “Trends in U.S. Per Capita Consumption of Dairy Products, 1970-2012.” USDA ERS - Food Environment Atlas, 2 June 2014, www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2014/june/trends- in-us-per-capita-consumption-of-dairy-products-1970-2012/.

CFR "CFR - Code of Federal Regulations Title 21.” Accessdata.fda.gov, www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?fr=131.110.

Fredricks, Donn. “Lactose Intolerance .” National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse , 10 May 2014, www.niddk.nih.gov/-/media/Files/Digestive-Diseases/Lactose_Intolerance_508.pdf.

Gottle, Jane. “Organic Pastures Dairy Company.” Certified Humane, certifiedhumane.org/mcafee-farms-organic-pastures-dairy-company/.

Grant, Thomas. “Imitation Dairy Products FAQ.” Nmpf.org, www.nmpf.org/imitation-dairy-products-faq.

Master, Web. “Milk Alternatives.” Midwest Dairy, www.midwestdairy.com/nutrition-and-health/milk-alternatives/.

Nieves, Alexander, et al. “Gottlieb: FDA to Crack down on Labeling Nondairy Products as 'Milk'.” POLITICO, POLITICO, 17 July 2018, www.politico.com/story/2018/07/17/almond-lactate-nondairy-milk-scott-gottlieb-725974.

Office of the Commissioner. “Press Announcements - Statement from FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D., on the Process FDA Is Undertaking for Reviewing and Modernizing the Agency's Standards of Identity for Dairy Products.” U S Food and Drug Administration Home Page, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, www.fda.gov/newsevents/newsroom/pressannouncements/ucm614851.htm.

“Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee.” Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-scientific-report/.

Thiel, R. “The Truth About Vitamins in Supplements”. ANMA Monitor, 2003, 6(2) Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1ae0/608396d55120efcb6923c3d1dfa970f64bbb.pdf

Photo Sources

Page 1 - https://www.canva.com

Page 2 - https://www.muscleandfitness.com/nutrition/gain-mass/healthy-non-dairy-options-regular-milk

Page 3 - https://www.dairyreporter.com/Article/2013/11/26/Why-does-the-US-continue-to-drink-less-milk

Page 4 - http://www.midwestdairy.com/nutrition-and-health/milk-alternatives/

Page 4 - https://www.canva.com

Page 6 - https://www.offthegridnews.com/how-to-2/cow-manure-a-breaking-new-natural-gas-resource/