



Press Release

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ANALYSIS OF HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP-FREE MARKETING AND NEW CONSUMER RESEARCH SUGGESTS SOME FOOD COMPANIES ADDING TO SWEETENER CONFUSION

Nutrition Expert Warns Of False 'Health Halo' For Foods Touted As High Fructose Corn Syrup-Free

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Leading medical and nutrition groups, as well as some of the nation's harshest food industry critics agree that high fructose corn syrup, a natural sweetener made from corn, is nutritionally the same as sugar. However, new research by the Corn Refiners Association (CRA) shows that marketing tactics used by many food companies to promote their products may confuse and mislead consumers.

Results of a new consumer research study and first-of-its kind marketing analysis of high fructose corn syrup-free marketing claims examined the attitudes, behaviors and beliefs of more than 1,000 consumers* and nearly 175 food companies. Despite very few consumers (3.6%) reporting they have concerns about high fructose corn syrup (down from 8.3% in 2008), 44.3% of grocery shoppers indicate they have heard or read about food products marketed as high fructose corn syrup-free, according to the CRA's new data.

"It's easy to see how some consumers could be led astray into thinking foods without high fructose corn syrup are somehow more healthful, but that isn't the case," according to nutrition expert Christine Rosenbloom, Ph.D., R.D., professor of nutrition, Georgia State University, Atlanta. Rosenbloom, who contributed to the CRA's consumer survey design, added: "Products labeled as high fructose corn syrup-free are clearly trying to project a 'health halo' that doesn't exist."

When consumers, particularly women and parents, are armed with facts about high fructose corn syrup, they often view food companies that market products as "high fructose corn syrup-free" more negatively. According to CRA's research findings:

- Nearly half (46.9%) of consumers surveyed feel misled by food companies making high fructose corn syrup-free claims
- Women (29.2%) and parents (34.2%) are most likely to feel strongly misled by food companies making high fructose corn syrup-free claims

The CRA survey revealed that while the majority of consumers (54.4%) indicate they always or usually read food labels, women (60%) are more likely than men (45.5%) to examine food labels. According to those surveyed, fat (59.3%), followed by calories (52.3%), sugar (36.8%), and salt (30.9%) topped the list of nutrients shoppers were most likely to be concerned about in making food choices. Concern over calories made a significant jump from earlier research by the CRA, up from 31.8% in 2008.

"The overall nutrition message that 'calories count' is coming through," said Audrae Erickson, president of the Corn Refiners Association. "When it comes to calories from sugar or high fructose corn syrup, they're exactly the same. Food shoppers are increasingly aware of that fact, and seeing through marketing tactics that might suggest otherwise."

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High Fructose Corn Syrup-Free Marketing Claims Widespread, Often Misleading

CRA reviewed publicly available news releases and/or Web sites of nearly 175 food products and companies — ranging from small food manufacturers to multi-national food manufacturers — which made claims or statements regarding products being “high fructose corn syrup-free” from February 2007 until present.

CRA’s analysis showed that while nearly half (44%) made simple statements without health judgments in calling out products as “high fructose corn syrup-free,” a significant number mischaracterized this caloric sweetener in their materials. For example:

- 33% used negative language to characterize high fructose corn syrup, including nearly 4% that made extreme and blatantly false misrepresentations about the sweetener;
- 5% touted sugar as “healthier”;
- 18% claimed high fructose corn syrup is not natural; and,
- 19.5% used qualifiers to imply that products are more healthful without high fructose corn syrup.

“It’s ironic that food companies often trumpet products as “high fructose corn syrup-free,” said Rosenbloom, “Can you imagine if a product made with high fructose corn syrup noted it was ‘sugar free’? Thankfully, when the facts are shared, consumers quickly get wise to marketing tactics that paint a misleading picture on health,” she added.

More information is available via www.SweetSurprise.com.

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The Corn Refiners Association (CRA) is the national trade association representing the corn refining (wet milling) industry of the United States. CRA and its predecessors have served this important segment of American agribusiness since 1913. Corn refiners manufacture sweeteners, ethanol, starch, bioproducts, corn oil, and feed products from corn components such as starch, oil, protein, and fiber.

*Nationally representative and customized telephone survey of 1,012 consumers, 18+ years old, self-identified primary or secondary grocery shoppers, +/- 3.08 at 95% confidence level. Conducted October 2-7, 2009 by The MSR Group, with question design input and review from Chris Rosenbloom, Ph.D., R.D., Georgia State University. Sample screened out those affiliated with marketing/advertising/research employment, food or beverage processing employees as well as those with diabetes or diabetes in their household. Comparative attitude and knowledge information of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) drawn from identical questions asked of 1,000+ households in telephone survey for Corn Refiners Association in May 2008.

www.SweetSurprise.com



SHOPPERS UNDERSTANDING OF HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP AND HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP-FREE MARKETING NOVEMBER 2009

MSR Group and Christine Rosenbloom, Ph.D., R.D., Georgia State University, Atlanta, for the Corn Refiners Association

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Survey Methodology:

A nationally representative and customized telephone survey of 1,012 consumers, 18+ years old, self-identified primary or secondary grocery shoppers, +/- 3.08 at 95% confidence level was conducted October 2-7, 2009 by The MSR Group, with question design input and review from Chris Rosenbloom, Ph.D., R.D., Georgia State University, Atlanta, and contributing nutrition columnist to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

The survey screened out those affiliated with marketing/advertising/research employment, food or beverage processing employees, as well as those with diabetes or diabetes in their household. Comparative attitude and knowledge information of high fructose corn syrup drawn from identical questions asked of 1,000+ households in telephone survey for Corn Refiners Association in May 2008, also by The MSR Group.

Awareness of high fructose corn syrup-free marketing efforts:

- 44.3% of all shoppers were aware of high fructose corn syrup-free labeling or promotions
- That number increases to 51.6%, for those self-identified as their household's primary grocery shopper

Knowledge and understanding of high fructose corn syrup:

When asked how knowledgeable they were of high fructose corn syrup:

- 13.9% of shoppers said they're very knowledgeable
- 49.7% somewhat knowledgeable
- College-educated shoppers were more likely to claim to be very knowledgeable (18.7 % very, 53.8% somewhat), compared to those without college educations (7.8% very, 46.5% somewhat).

What shoppers look for on food labels?

	2008	2009
Fat	70.2%	59.3%
Calories	31.8%	52.3%
Sugar	34.3%	36.8%
Salt/Sodium	30.7%	30.9%
Carbohydrates	11.7%	23.1%
Cholesterol	10.6%	9.0%
Protein	7.1%	5.5%
Vitamins/Minerals	5.8%	4.9%
High Fructose Corn Syrup	8.3%	3.6%

After learning the facts about high fructose corn syrup, shoppers were asked how they feel about food companies touting products as high fructose corn syrup-free:

- 46.9% of shoppers feel misled by food companies making high fructose corn syrup-free claims
- Parents (34.2) and women (29.2%) are more likely to feel strongly misled by food companies making high fructose corn syrup-free claims

Analysis of “High Fructose Corn Syrup-Free” Marketing

The Corn Refiners Association (CRA), Washington, D.C., reviewed publicly available news releases and/or Web sites of nearly 175 food products and companies from February 2007 through October 1, 2009. CRA’s analysis examined claims or statements regarding foods being “high fructose corn syrup-free” for factual content. The companies and products reviewed ranged from multi-national food companies to regional food products available in the United States.

CRA’s analysis showed the while nearly half (44%) made simple statements without health judgments in calling out products as “high fructose corn syrup free,” a significant number mischaracterized this caloric sweetener in their materials, including:

- 33% used negative language to characterize high fructose corn syrup, including nearly 4% which made extreme and blatantly false misrepresentations about the sweetener;
- 5% touted sugar as “healthier”;
- 18% claimed high fructose corn syrup wasn’t natural; and,
- 19.5% used qualifiers to imply that their products are more healthful without high fructose corn syrup.