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“Milk” and “Meat” Labels: The New Identity Crisis Research IDs confused consumer segment

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Wed., Sept. 4, 2019 – As legal battles are waged across the country regarding new laws prohibiting the use of words like “milk,” “meat” and “burger” for alternatives versions, new research from The Center for Food Integrity (CFI) shows that a significant and growing group of health-conscious consumers is confused by the mixed messages they’re receiving about the “real deal” and the substitutes entering the market.

“Consumers who are actively engaging online about this topic are very independent and highly driven to provide for and protect their families,” said Terry Fleck, executive director of CFI. “With the influx of new labels, they feel they are being duped by ‘big corporations’ into buying unhealthy products.”

While nutritional science tells these consumers that “healthy” includes lean meats and dairy products in moderation, they’re not sure the alternatives offer better health outcomes and are better for people, animals and the planet, said Fleck.

According to CFI’s Illuminate digital cultural insights tool, which can analyze millions of interactions online in real time, there is a core market of 53 million consumers, nearly one-third of the addressable market, actively engaged in conversations around the standards of identity issue.

This market is predicted to increase by 3.6 percent for the alternative meat topic and by 13.1 percent for the milk alternative topic in the next one to two years.

The biggest fears and motivators from this segment include:

- Letting science guide their approaches to food and health.
- Fear that the focus on health and wellness isn’t enough to protect themselves and that they will unwittingly consume products that are unhealthy.
- Believing that their health is completely in their control.
- Fear the food they eat is harming the planet and negatively impacting their health.
- Fear that despite efforts to live a life guided by ethics, that they’re not making a difference in the world.

“They also want to be seen as putting others’ interests before their own interests and to receive acknowledgement of their sacrifices,” said Fleck. “While they innately want to do the ‘right thing,’ they are often unsure of the best course of action due to confusing or mixed messages around these alternative products.”



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It's a challenging situation for these highly engaged consumers to find themselves in. And the confusion is likely to continue as rules for labeling – the standards of identity – evolve.

In the meantime, Fleck said the food system can take steps to alleviate some of the confusion by not only supporting legislation to more clearly define the rules but by communicating the definitions to consumers in easy-to-understand language.

To help this segment make more confident decisions, provide them with facts on the nutritional pros and cons so they feel equipped to make balanced decisions. And touch on sustainability. How food production impacts the environment is an increasing concern, particularly among younger consumers.

And finally, communicate in a way that illustrates regardless of how food is produced, it's safe and provides consumers additional choices that align with their values and lifestyles.

For more information on CFI's Illuminate research, visit www.foodintegrity.org.

The Center for Food Integrity is a not-for-profit organization that helps today's food system earn consumer trust. Our members and project partners, who represent the diversity of the food system, are committed to providing accurate information and working together to address important issues in food and agriculture. The Center does not lobby or advocate for individual companies or brands. For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org.



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