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Statement by the Almond Alliance of California on proposed legislation on the labeling of plant-based ‘milks’

Feb. 6, 2017 Modesto, CA - - Following the introduction of legislation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives that calls on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prohibit terms such as “almond milk” and “vegan cheese” and urges the FDA to enforce standards of identity for “milk”, the Almond Alliance of California (AAC) today issued the following statement:

“Legislative efforts to bar non-dairy companies from calling their products ‘milk’ are yet another example of regulatory overreach and overkill. Consumers are not confused by labels on plant-based beverages. Consumers are making a choice in the open marketplace when it comes to their health preferences and needs. What it comes down to at the end of the day is a question of a consumer’s choice. Consumers know what they are buying.

It is readily apparent that almond milk consumers are increasingly attracted to this product for a variety of reasons, such as the desire to consume more plant-based foods, or the desire to reduce calories or sugar. The taste and creamy texture are also appealing qualities of almond milk. Almond milk manufacturers are responding to that consumer demand.

According to the research firm Nielsen, sales of milk substitutes grew strongly in 2015 at 9.2%. Almond milk outpaced the rest of the milk substitutes category, with sales growing 13%. New product introductions are notable, too. According to Innova, almond milk product introductions in North America grew 71% from 2011 to 2015. Dairy milk still makes up the lion’s share of the market. The research firm Mintel puts it at \$17.8 billion in sales in 2015.

If the FDA forces plant-based dairy alternative manufacturers to take words like ‘milk’ and ‘cheese’ off product labels, it will create consumer confusion. The Almond Alliance supports efforts to open a dialogue between plant-based beverage manufacturers and the FDA to discuss the existing standards of identity for ‘milk,’ as well as how these standards are applied, would be in the best interest of the public.”

Here Are Some Basics About Almond Milk

Why do people choose almond milk?

Almond milk offers a dairy-free, soy-free, lactose-free alternative for individuals looking to avoid those in their diets. People may choose almond milk for a variety of reasons, such as the desire to consume more plant-based foods, or the desire to reduce calories or sugar. The taste and creamy texture are also appealing qualities of almond milk.

Is it high in protein?

Some products may be fortified with protein, so check labels. But generally speaking, almond milk is not high in protein. If you are looking for protein, you're better off eating a handful of almonds as a healthy snack. An ounce of almonds provides 6 grams of protein, 4 grams of fiber, and contains 14 grams of total fat, of which 9 grams are "good" monounsaturated fat and 3.5 grams are polyunsaturated fat (another "good" type of fat). Almonds are also high in vitamin E and magnesium, and contain several other valuable nutrients, too.

Is almond milk's nutrition the same as that of almonds?

No. Just like there are nutritional differences between eating a steak and drinking cow's milk, almonds and almond milk are different foods that come from the same source. Almond milk is an alternative choice people can make, which has these benefits:

- It contains no cholesterol or saturated fat
- Most varieties are fortified with calcium and vitamin D
- Many of the unsweetened almond milk products have as few as 30 or 35 calories per 8-ounce serving, so it's appealing to calorie-watchers
- As for those looking to watch their sugar intake, the unsweetened products have 0 grams of sugar.

The nutrition of different almond milk products varies, so check labels and taste test to find what works best for you.

The Almond Alliance of California is a trade association representing the interests of the California Almond industry including almond growers, hullers/shellers, and processors. For more information, visit almondalliance.org

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