

Living on WELL Street Blog: **"Don't Judge A Food By Its Label"**

By Michael White, Worksite Wellness Technical Assistant, We Choose Health

"When you see the Golden Arches you are probably on the road to the Pearly Gates." –

William Castelli, MD - Director, Framingham Heart Study

For the first time in 20 years, a change in food labeling is going to take place — that is, in about 3 years when everything is formally approved. I don't sense that this a big deal for most people, because the majority of us don't read food labels beyond the calorie count. A degree in nutritional science is required to make sense out of all the additional information provided. I believe that's just the way food manufacturers like it. As long as consumers don't know what they're consuming, e.g., all the sugar, salt, fat and chemical additives, food manufacturers can focus on marketing addictive, nutritionally challenged, food products that pose a serious threat to the health of our nation.

Pamela Bailey, president of the Grocery Manufacturers Association, which represents food, beverage and consumer product companies, greeted the announcement of new food labeling with the following statement. *"It is critical that any changes are based on the most current and reliable science. Equally as important is ensuring that any changes ultimately serve to inform, and not confuse, consumers."* My translation of that is: *"The new labeling better not affect sales of the unhealthy processed food that we disguise with our currently confusing and devious labeling system."*

There is a different approach to food labeling that is far less confusing. The European Union uses a color-coded traffic light approach. On the front of every food package, there appears a color-coded label with nutritional measures for: Energy, Salt, Sugar and Fat. A nutritional measurement that meets scientifically established standards receives a green label. A yellow label cautions of a nutritional level that falls below established standards. Finally, a red label warns of an unacceptable value. Such a simple and transparent system would certainly be the cause for a great deal of wailing and gnashing of teeth from those who profit from people's lack of awareness.

The FDA is entertaining public comments for 90 days on the new food labeling proposal. Please consider making your voice heard on the [US Food and Drug Administration website](#).

Choose Food WELL!

Michael