

March 5, 2025

Docket Clerk
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Inspection Service
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Mailstop 3758
Washington, DC 20250-3700

Submitted electronically via www.regulations.gov

RE: Food Date Labeling, Docket FSIS-2024-0021

On behalf of the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA), which represents the \$34.9 billion U.S. convenience services industry—including vending, micro markets, and office coffee services—I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on efforts to improve food date labeling consistency.

NAMA's members are deeply committed to ensuring consumers have access to safe, high-quality food and beverages. A clear and consistent approach to date labeling benefits consumers, retailers, and regulators alike, while also reducing unnecessary food waste and improving supply chain efficiency.

For convenience services operators, accurate and meaningful food labeling is critical. In an unattended retail environment, product packaging is the sole source of information for consumers. As such, they rely on date labels to assess freshness, quality, and safety. However, inconsistencies and misunderstandings surrounding date labeling often lead to unnecessary disposal of products that remain safe for consumption.

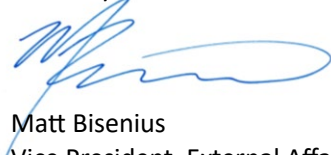
If date labels are misinterpreted as strict expiration dates rather than indicators of peak freshness, perfectly good food is discarded prematurely. This not only contributes to food waste but also impacts business operations and consumer confidence. Clear definitions on food date label meaning enables consumers and retailers alike to know what information is being conveyed, helping to reduce unnecessarily discarded food and beverage products.

Additionally, concerns over food date labeling significantly impact donations to food banks, shelters, and other charitable organizations. Many organizations, out of caution, refuse to accept products past their labeled date, even when they remain safe and nutritious. A standardized approach to date labeling could help mitigate these concerns and expand access to food donations for those in need.

We urge a thoughtful, collaborative approach to food date labeling. NAMA and its members stand ready to support efforts that promote clarity for consumers, reduce food waste, and strengthen the efficiency of the convenience services industry.

We look forward to continued engagement on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Matt Bisenius
Vice President, External Affairs
HEADQUARTERS

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