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## **PA Department of Agriculture Adopts Temporary FDA Food Labeling Policy, New Products Debut in Grocers, Restaurant Delivery**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture today reviewed the Food and Drug Administration’s [temporary policy regarding nutrition labeling](#) during the COVID-19 public health crisis, and provided clarity behind new items for sale in Pennsylvania’s grocery stores and restaurants.

“As restaurants comply with orders to offer carry-out services only, many find themselves with excess prepared food and ingredients,” said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “In an effort to curb food waste, state food safety inspectors will allow restaurants and food manufacturers the flexibility to sell bulk foods and ingredients to their customers without the usual labeling requirements.”

This temporary policy by the FDA allows restaurants to sell ingredients and bulk prepared foods direct to consumers, and allows food manufacturers to distribute foods intended for restaurant-use to grocery stores for purchase by consumers. This means grocery shoppers may see industrial sized bags of soup or other prepared items, with non-traditional nutrition information labels. Eggs by the flat, instead of by the dozen, have also been approved by a separate [guidance document](#) from the FDA. This temporary flexibility also allows restaurants to sell meal kits or raw ingredients in addition to their regular menu of takeout items.

"We appreciate all the great work being done by our industry partners to ensure the food supply remains safe and strong for Americans during these challenging times," said Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association President & CEO Alex Baloga. "We value and support the flexibility of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to temporarily allow restaurants to sell bulk foods and ingredients to consumers, as well as thousands of our member grocery stores, to make sure the shelves continue to be stocked for millions of Pennsylvanians. We also understand and appreciate the flexibility in menu-labeling requirements through the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency."

Similar to recognizing a need for decreased food labeling requirements, the FDA issued guidance offering restaurants and retail food establishments [flexibility for menu labeling](#). Under normal circumstances, restaurants and retail food establishments that are a part

of a chain of 20 or more locations must provide nutrition information (calorie declarations) for standard menu items. Recognizing that business practices have been required to change as a result of COVID-19 – including modified menus, printed takeout menus, or online portals – the FDA will not object to restaurants that do not meet requirements.

"Restaurants are a vital component of our communities' food supply. As such, the PRLA is grateful for the temporary lifting of restrictions by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture so restaurants can enhance take out offerings to include a larger array of grocery items. The loosening of FDA restrictions will not only reduce food waste but will provide a revenue stream for struggling small businesses and provide greater access to food in communities across the commonwealth," said John Longstreet, PRLA president & CEO. "The PRLA encourages restaurants and small markets across the state to work with suppliers to increase meal kit and grocery options to enhance their traditional menus and continue to serve a critical role within our communities."

These federal policies will remain in effect, and enforced as such by Pennsylvania's food safety inspectors, for the duration of the public health emergency related to COVID-19.

"The FDA's proactive action to modify labeling requirements for the restaurant and food industry is instrumental in ensuring food is always accessible and never wasted during the COVID-19 pandemic," added Redding. "Enjoy the new selections from local restaurants and don't be afraid to pick up restaurant-sized options from your grocery store to feed your family. Keeping these products moving is essential to supporting Pennsylvania's hard-working food supply chain."

Pennsylvanians are encouraged to support local restaurants visiting [CarryoutPA](#), a website with a comprehensive list restaurants offering takeout, curbside, or delivery services during the state's Stay at Home order. CarryoutPA was developed by the [Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association](#) to serve as a go-to resource for dine-out options in support of the commonwealth's restaurant industry, which accounts for 10 percent of jobs statewide.

For a complete list of guidance documents and information as it relates to agriculture during COVID-19 mitigation in Pennsylvania visit [agriculture.pa.gov/COVID](https://agriculture.pa.gov/COVID). For the most accurate, timely information related to Health in Pennsylvania, visit [on.pa.gov/coronavirus](https://on.pa.gov/coronavirus).