

2025 POLICY GUIDES

Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Movement

Issue

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement emerged as a sweeping public health initiative aimed at addressing chronic disease, obesity, and mental health challenges in the United States. Launched during the 2024 election cycle, MAHA quickly gained traction by linking national health outcomes to the American food system.

Background

Central to the MAHA movement is a critique of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), food additives, and the industrialization of agriculture. The movement argues that the prevalence of UPFs — defined as foods made with multiple industrial ingredients like emulsifiers, colorings, and preservatives — has contributed to rising rates of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mental illness.

The recently released MAHA Report, published by the White House in May 2025, outlines the movement's findings and recommendations. It emphasizes a return to whole foods — such as leafy greens, beef, dairy, legumes, and nuts — as a cornerstone of national health. The report praises American farmers for their productivity and innovation but criticizes the widespread use of crop protection chemicals, food additives, and sugar-laden products. It also raises concerns about the long-term health effects of food additives and the role of consumer preferences in shaping unhealthy food environments.

However, the report has sparked significant backlash from agricultural leaders and industry groups. Critics argue that the MAHA movement lacks a science-based approach and risks undermining food security and economic stability. For instance, the report's stance on banning or restricting key crop protection tools like glyphosate and atrazine has alarmed many in the farming community. These tools are considered essential for weed management and crop yields.

The MAHA Commission, which authored the report, includes high-ranking officials such as the secretaries of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Education, and Housing and Urban Development, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency administrator. Among the most prominent figures are Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. These individuals have played key roles in shaping the report's direction and are now central to the ongoing policy debates.

As the MAHA movement continues to evolve, it is poised to influence national food and agriculture policy significantly. With the commission expected to announce formal policy recommendations by August 2025, stakeholders across the food system — from farmers to public health advocates — are mobilizing to shape the future of American agriculture and nutrition policy.

It is important to note the MAHA movement crosses political boundaries and has support from both sides of the political aisle. Support for the movement has also trickled into state legislatures this year:

- Texas SB 25, signed in June 2025, mandates warning labels on food products containing any of 44 specific additives — such as artificial dyes, titanium dioxide, and partially hydrogenated oils — stating that “this product contains an ingredient that is not recommended for human consumption” by regulatory bodies abroad. The law also requires nutrition education in K-12 classes, undergraduate medical/nutrition courses, physical education minutes in schools, and nutrition training for health professionals.
- West Virginia passed a ban on seven artificial dyes starting in 2028.
- New York’s Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act (SB 1239/AB 1556) seeks to ban select additives — such as potassium bromate, propylparaben, and various colorants — and mandate transparency from companies self-certifying ingredients.
- Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, Arkansas, Idaho, and Utah submitted and received approval for waivers from the USDA to restrict use of SNAP benefits for candy and soda, echoing MAHA’s push to limit junk food in food-assistance programs.

Farm Bureau Policy

STATE POLICY:

Local Food Programs (2023): We support a Farm Bureau program to help County Farm Bureau boards work with school districts and other supportive partners to implement local meat and/or local produce into school lunch programs. NEFB, along with other organizations, should adopt, promote, and expand programs that support locally raised food products in the schools. Dietary guidelines shall rest with the Nebraska Department of Health, not in Washington, D.C.

FEDERAL POLICY:

111 / School and Government Food Purchasing Programs, Page 16

160 / Nutrition, Page 49

336 / Agricultural Chemicals, Pages 136-140

337 / Biotechnology, Page 140-142

339 / Fertilizer, Pages 143-144

340 / Food Access, Page 144

341 / Food Quality and Safety, Pages 144-148

342 / Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), Pages 148-150

345 / Labeling, Pages 150-153

348 / Synthetic Food Production Pages 154-155

Questions

- Some of the key ingredients included in processed food are produced by farmers and ranchers, including potatoes, sugar, dairy, and high-fructose corn syrup. Should we support new rules and regulations on processed food/food ingredients?
- Should we support bans on processed food being included in the federal school lunch program or SNAP?
- Historically, Farm Bureau has only supported food labels that include information on nutrition, basic ingredients, and potentially the country of origin. Should we support state or federal laws mirroring efforts that provide a warning label due to the inclusion of dyes, artificial flavors, oils, etc.?
- Should we support efforts to boost and prioritize public research vs. private research when it comes to food ingredients and crop protection product safety?