

August 16, 2005
Docket No.2005N-0279
RE: FDA to Define "**Gluten-Free**" for food labels

To Whom It May Concern:

I am living with Celiac Disease and as such am writing to stress the importance of defining "**Gluten-Free**" for all food labels. There is not a cure for Celiac Disease. The only treatment is to maintain a life long "**gluten free**" diet. I cannot tell you what a challenge it is to go to the grocery store and try to decide what is safe to eat and what is not. Eating the wrong foods is harmful to anyone with Celiac Disease. I waiting for the day when I can go into any grocery store pick up a package and know what is truly inside. Gluten sources may be masked in almost all foods, and because of no current objective labeling requirements, I am forced to make a decision whether to eat this and suffer the consequences or to pass it by. Having "**gluten free**" on a food label will mean that finally I will be able to shop without the fear of purchasing a product that may have hidden traces of gluten. What a great advancement this would be to pick a package and truly know from where the ingredients come. If they come from ingredients that I can have, then I will have more choices of things in the grocery store.

To identify foods that do not contain gluten is neither an easy process nor a short process. I have to read and re-read each ingredient trying to determine if it is safe for me to eat. For example the natural flavorings which can come from many sources; like wheat, oats, gluten, are not identified. It would be so easy if the source was identified and then I would be able to purchase the product and be able to eat the product without worry. Most of the time I just pass it by because I know it is not worth the consequences. They can be painful bloating, diarrhea, cramps, weight loss and long term eating of gluten in the diet has been traced to lymphoma. These consequences play a serious role on the health body. Imagine having a craving for something to eat and passing it by because you are not sure if the ingredients are safe for you to eat. Put yourself in that position, which is not easy. Do I eat it and get sick; do I pass it by and still be hungry? Is that any way to live in the land of opportunity? To me, having safe choices of things I can eat represents an incredible advancement and is the right thing to do. A manufacture wants the consumer to purchase their product, so why shouldn't they put better labeling on the product? This will not happen until the government steps in and helps. Sadly, our government helps every other cause, but has provided very little for those of us with Celiac Disease...

In most of the stores that I shop, only ten-percent of the food I purchase is labeled as gluten free. In most instances I have to go from store to store trying to find the foods that are listed as gluten-free. If the product is not properly labeled then I must call the manufacturer and try to find out if the product was made with safe ingredients and if they were made on gluten free lines.

If the product does have "gluten-free" printed on the label and I compare the label to another without, then I will pass by the one without. I pass it by every time. What guarantee do I have? I want to know for sure that what I eat will not make me sick.

What I need is to be able to have the choices of foods that are truly safe for me to eat. I think this is true of any person buying food.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this matter,

Frank J. Rich Jr.