

# Too much extra sugar in our foods?

By Tribune Washington Bureau, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.19.15

Word Count **556**



The cranberry industry is ringing the loudest alarm about the forced disclosure of the added sugar in cranberries. In this photo provided by the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, Yukiko Yasunari (left) and Izumi Amano, both of Japan, use the soft edge of a rake to push cranberries toward a conveyor lift. The two are learning about the industry to help market cranberries in Japan. Photo: AP Photo/Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, Andy Manis

WASHINGTON — Extra sugar is added to many foods we eat.

The government would like people to know how much.

It wants to add a line to labels on food products. The new information would say how many teaspoons of sugar were added. President Obama's wife, Michelle, announced the plan last year.

Many people are not happy with the plan. Candy companies and soft-drink makers do not like it.

The governor of Massachusetts begged the government to rethink the idea. The governor of Wisconsin protested too. Far away in Australia, they warned that the new labeling could break promises with foreign countries.

## **Adding Up Extra Sugar**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering the label plan. The FDA is part of the government. It is responsible for food safety. The FDA has received thousands of comments on the extra-sugar label idea. Many of the comments are from large food companies and food groups.

Groups that want the labeling say companies should put less sugar in food. They hope people will stop buying foods if they know how much sugar is in them.

Food makers know this will change "how people choose their products, and that terrifies them," said Renee Sharp. She works for the Environmental Working Group. It is one of several groups trying to get the added sugar on food labels.

The plan has become very important for the government. Healthy eating is important to the president and first lady.

## **What About The Cranberries?**

Food industry officials say the plan is not needed. Right now, food labels give the total amount of sugar in an item. The number includes the sugars already in a food and the amount that is added. Sugar is sugar, they say. There is no proof that one type of sugar should be labeled by itself.

Andrew Briscoe is the president of the Sugar Association. He wrote that science does not show a reason for the extra sugar labeling. He said it sets a bad example.

Dozens of food makers are mad about the label change.

The cranberry companies are the most upset. Over the summer, the governors of Wisconsin and Massachusetts wrote to the FDA. They said that the plan was unfair to companies making cranberry products. Cranberries are very bitter fruits. They would taste bad without extra sugar.

## **Sugar Equals Fat**

The Campbell Soup Company made a different kind of argument. It said that the added information could make Americans fatter.

The sugar details could confuse people, it wrote to the FDA. People would stop thinking about eating fewer calories. Foods with too many calories make people gain weight, but so does sugar.

Supporters say that companies secretly add unhealthy amounts of sugar to foods.

“That one line on a label seems like a small thing,” said Deborah Bailin. She is with the Union of Concerned Scientists. “Not having it covers up a very big fact” that there is too much sugar in food. Food companies do not want people to know about that.

“Things they want you to think are healthy are full of sugar,” she said.

The Environmental Working Group studied 80,000 food products. It found nearly 3 out of 5 had extra sugar added. That included most deli meats in supermarkets.

“I was shocked,” Sharp said. “I mean, it’s turkey. Why is there sugar in it?”