



**JAMES L. MADARA, MD**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

ama-assn.org  
t (312) 464-5000

May 14, 2019

The Honorable Norman E. Sharpless, MD  
Acting Commissioner  
U.S. Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Acting Commissioner Sharpless:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to recommend that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearly standardize the date labeling practices on foods and other products to ensure safe consumption and minimize overall waste.

The AMA has previously commended the FDA for revisions to the Nutrition Facts label. The changes allowed for customers to more easily understand and use the Nutrition Facts label, provided critical information needed to make more healthy food choices, and required disclosures of nutrients of public health concern. The inclusion of this information, in combination with nutritional counseling administered by physicians in clinical practice, will aid in the prevention and management of expensive and debilitating chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

However, the lack of standardization for applicable date labels continues to cause consumer confusion around when a food product or other relevant item may be perishable, and contributes to the 30 percent of food that is either lost or wasted at both the retail and consumer level. In response to these growing concerns, in December 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Safety and Inspection Service changed its guidance to recommend the use of "Best if Used By" for date labels, as the phrase is consistently understood by consumers as a measure of quality.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the AMA urges the FDA to release additional regulations outlining federal requirements to standardize date labels on foods and other products.

Thank you for considering the AMA's views. If you have any questions, please contact Shannon Curtis, Assistant Director, Federal Affairs, at shannon.curtis@ama-assn.org or 202-789-8510.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/newsroom/news-releases-statements-and-transcripts/news-release-archives-by-year/archive/2016/nr-121416-01>