

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 2337

To establish requirements for quality and discard dates that are, at the option of food labelers, included in food packaging, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 30, 2019

Mr. BLUMENTHAL introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To establish requirements for quality and discard dates that are, at the option of food labelers, included in food packaging, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Food Date Labeling  
5 Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) ADMINISTERING SECRETARIES.—The term  
9 “administering Secretaries” means—

1 (A) the Secretary of Agriculture, with re-  
2 spect to any product that is—

3 (i) under the jurisdiction of the Sec-  
4 retary of Agriculture; and

5 (ii)(I) a poultry product (as defined in  
6 section 4 of the Poultry Products Inspec-  
7 tion Act (21 U.S.C. 453));

8 (II) a meat food product (as defined  
9 in section 1 of the Federal Meat Inspection  
10 Act (21 U.S.C. 601)); or

11 (III) an egg product (as defined in  
12 section 4 of the Egg Products Inspection  
13 Act (21 U.S.C. 1033)); and

14 (B) the Secretary of Health and Human  
15 Services, with respect to any product that is—

16 (i) under the jurisdiction of the Sec-  
17 retary of Health and Human Services; and

18 (ii) a food (as defined in section 201  
19 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic  
20 Act (21 U.S.C. 321)).

21 (2) DISCARD DATE.—The term “discard date”  
22 means a date voluntarily printed on food packaging  
23 that signifies the end of the estimated period of shelf  
24 life under any stated storage conditions, after which

1 the food labeler advises the product not be con-  
2 sumed.

3 (3) **FOOD LABELER.**—The term “food labeler”  
4 means the producer, manufacturer, distributor, or  
5 retailer that places a date label on food packaging  
6 of a product.

7 (4) **QUALITY DATE.**—The term “quality date”  
8 means a date voluntarily printed on food packaging  
9 that is intended to communicate to consumers the  
10 date after which—

11 (A) the quality of the product may begin  
12 to deteriorate; but

13 (B) the product remains apparently whole-  
14 some food (as defined in subsection (b) of the  
15 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation  
16 Act (42 U.S.C. 1791(b))).

17 **SEC. 3. QUALITY DATES AND DISCARD DATES.**

18 (a) **QUALITY DATES.**—

19 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—If a food labeler includes a  
20 quality date on food packaging, the label shall use  
21 the uniform quality date label phrase under para-  
22 graph (2).

23 (2) **UNIFORM PHRASE.**—The uniform quality  
24 date label phrase under this paragraph shall be  
25 “BEST If Used By” or, if permissible under sub-

1 section (c)(3), the standard abbreviation of “BB”,  
2 unless and until the administering Secretaries, act-  
3 ing jointly, specify through rulemaking another uni-  
4 form phrase to be used for purposes of complying  
5 with paragraph (1).

6 (3) OPTION OF THE LABELER.—The decisions  
7 on whether to include a quality date on food pack-  
8 aging and which foods should be so labeled shall be  
9 at the discretion of the food labeler.

10 (b) DISCARD DATES.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—If a food labeler includes a  
12 discard date on food packaging, the label shall use  
13 the uniform discard date label phrase under para-  
14 graph (2).

15 (2) UNIFORM PHRASE.—The uniform discard  
16 date label phrase under this paragraph shall be  
17 “USE By” or, if permissible under subsection  
18 (c)(3), the standard abbreviation of “UB”, unless  
19 and until the administering Secretaries, acting joint-  
20 ly, specify through rulemaking another uniform  
21 phrase to be used for purposes of complying with  
22 paragraph (1).

23 (3) OPTION OF THE LABELER.—The decisions  
24 on whether to include a discard date on food pack-

1 aging and which foods should be so labeled shall be  
2 at the discretion of the food labeler.

3 (c) QUALITY DATE AND DISCARD DATE LABEL-  
4 ING.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The quality date or discard  
6 date, as applicable, and immediately adjacent uni-  
7 form quality date label phrase or discard date label  
8 phrase—

9 (A) shall be—

10 (i) in single easy-to-read type style;

11 and

12 (ii) located in a conspicuous place on  
13 the package of the food; and

14 (B) may be on the label or, at the discre-  
15 tion of the food labeler, elsewhere on the pack-  
16 age.

17 (2) DATE FORMAT.—Each quality date and dis-  
18 card date shall be stated in terms of day and month  
19 and, as appropriate, year.

20 (3) ABBREVIATIONS.—A food labeler may use a  
21 standard abbreviation of “BB” and “UB” for the  
22 quality date and discard date, respectively, only if  
23 the food packaging is too small to include the uni-  
24 form phrase described in subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2),  
25 as applicable.

1           (4) FREEZE BY.—A food labeler may add “or  
2       Freeze By” following a quality date or discard date  
3       uniform phrase.

4           (d) EDUCATION.—Not later than 1 year after the  
5       date of enactment of this Act, the administering Secre-  
6       taries, acting jointly, shall provide consumer education  
7       and outreach on the meaning of quality date and discard  
8       date food labels.

9           (e) EFFECT; PREEMPTION.—

10           (1) EFFECT.—Nothing in this Act or an  
11       amendment made by this Act prohibits any State or  
12       political subdivision of a State from establishing or  
13       continuing in effect any requirement that prohibits  
14       the sale or donation of foods based on passage of the  
15       discard date.

16           (2) PREEMPTION.—No State or political sub-  
17       division of a State may establish or continue in ef-  
18       fect any requirement that—

19                   (A) relates to the inclusion in food labeling  
20       of a quality date or a discard date that is dif-  
21       ferent from or in addition to, or that is other-  
22       wise not identical with, the requirements of this  
23       Act and the amendments made by this Act; or

24                   (B) prohibits the sale or donation of foods  
25       based on passage of the quality date.

1           (3) ENFORCEMENT.—The administering Secre-  
2           taries, acting jointly and in coordination with the  
3           Federal Trade Commission, shall ensure that the  
4           uniform quality date label phrase and uniform dis-  
5           card date label phrase are standardized across all  
6           food products.

7           (4) SAVINGS.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2),  
8           nothing in this Act, any amendment made by this  
9           Act, or any standard or requirement imposed pursu-  
10          ant to this Act preempts, displaces, or supplants any  
11          State or Federal common law rights or any State or  
12          Federal statute creating a remedy for civil relief, in-  
13          cluding a remedy for civil damage, or a penalty for  
14          criminal conduct.

15          (5) TIME TEMPERATURE INDICATOR LABELS.—  
16          Nothing in this Act or an amendment made by this  
17          Act prohibits or restricts the use of time-tempera-  
18          ture indicator labels or similar technology that is in  
19          addition to or in lieu of any uniform quality date  
20          label phrase under subsection (a)(2) or uniform dis-  
21          card date label phrase under subsection (b)(2).

22 **SEC. 4. MISBRANDING.**

23          (a) FDA VIOLATIONS.—Section 403 of the Federal  
24          Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 343) is amend-  
25          ed by adding at the end the following:

1 “(z) If it is food and its labeling is in violation of  
2 section 3 of the Food Date Labeling Act of 2019.”.

3 (b) POULTRY PRODUCTS.—Section 4(h) of the Poul-  
4 try Products Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 453(h)) is amend-  
5 ed—

6 (1) in paragraph (11), by striking “or” at the  
7 end;

8 (2) in paragraph (12), by striking the period at  
9 the end and inserting “; or”; and

10 (3) by adding at the end the following:

11 “(13) if its labeling is in violation of section 3  
12 of the Food Date Labeling Act of 2019.”.

13 (c) MEAT PRODUCTS.—Section 1(n) of the Federal  
14 Meat Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 601(n)) is amended—

15 (1) in paragraph (11), by striking “or” at the  
16 end;

17 (2) in paragraph (12), by striking the period at  
18 the end and inserting “; or”; and

19 (3) by adding at the end the following:

20 “(13) if its labeling is in violation of section 3  
21 of the Food Date Labeling Act of 2019.”.

22 (d) EGG PRODUCTS.—Section 7(b) of the Egg Prod-  
23 ucts Inspection Act (21 U.S.C. 1036(b)) is amended in  
24 the first sentence by inserting “or if its labeling is in viola-



1 tion of section 3 of the Food Date Labeling Act of 2019”  
2 before the period at the end.

3 **SEC. 5. REGULATIONS.**

4 Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment  
5 of this Act, the administering Secretaries, acting jointly,  
6 shall promulgate final regulations for carrying out this Act  
7 and the amendments made by this Act.

8 **SEC. 6. DELAYED APPLICABILITY.**

9 This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall  
10 apply only with respect to food products that are labeled  
11 on or after the date that is 2 years after the date of pro-  
12 mulgation of final regulations under section 5.

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