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Tyson Foods to Eliminate Synthetic Dyes by End of May Under Pressure From Trump's MAHA Initiative

Tyson Foods CEO Donnie King says the company will complete its reformulation to eliminate petroleum-based synthetic dyes from all products by the end of May 2025, supporting the Trump administration's MAHA initiative for a healthier food supply.

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Tyson Foods, one of the nation's largest meat processors, announced Monday that it will complete the reformulation of its food products to eliminate petroleum-based synthetic dyes by the end of May 2025. The move, led by CEO Donnie King, aligns with the Trump administration's "Make America Healthy Again" (MAHA) initiative, which seeks to address chronic health issues through reforms in the U.S. food supply. This announcement comes amid recent executive actions and growing pressure from health advocates to phase out artificial food additives.

During an earnings call on May 5, King stated that Tyson has been “proactively reformulating” products containing synthetic dyes, with most retail-branded items, including its popular chicken nuggets, already free of these additives. The company also confirmed that no products offered in school nutrition programs contain petroleum-based dyes. “Our commitment is to improve the quality of our products,” King said, noting that the reformulation process will be finalized this month.

Tyson’s decision follows a March 10, 2025, meeting between U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and executives from major food companies, including Tyson, PepsiCo, and General Mills. Kennedy emphasized the need for “radical transparency” and the removal of harmful chemicals from food to protect public health, particularly for children.

Commissioner Marty Makary, gained momentum after President Donald Trump signed an executive order in February 2025 establishing the MAHA Commission. The commission is tasked with addressing the “childhood chronic disease crisis” by exploring factors such as diet, environmental toxins, and food production techniques. It is expected to deliver an initial assessment by May 22, 2025, and a national strategy within 180 days.

On April 22, the FDA [announced plans](#) to phase out eight petroleum-based synthetic dyes—Red No. 40, Yellow No. 5, Yellow No. 6, Blue No. 1, Blue No. 2, Green No. 3, Citrus Red No. 2, and Orange B—by the end of 2026. The agency will revoke authorizations for Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B and work with industry to voluntarily eliminate the remaining six. Kennedy and Makary cited studies suggesting links between synthetic dyes and health issues like ADHD, obesity, and diabetes, though they acknowledged that scientific consensus on these connections remains inconclusive.

Health advocates, including the Center for Science in the Public Interest, have praised the initiative, arguing that synthetic dyes serve primarily cosmetic purposes and may pose risks to children. However, critics, such as Susan Mayne, a former FDA official and Yale University chronic disease expert, contend that focusing on dyes distracts from more pressing drivers of chronic disease, such as sugar and ultraprocessed foods. The International Association of Color Manufacturers has also warned that a rapid phase-out could disrupt food supply chains and limit access to affordable products.

President Trump’s executive order creating the MAHA Commission reflects a broader push to reform food safety regulations. While the order does not explicitly mention synthetic dyes, it directs federal agencies to prioritize policies that address preventable causes of chronic illness. This has spurred action at both federal and state levels.

States like California, Virginia, and West Virginia have passed laws banning synthetic dyes in school meals and, in some cases, all food products sold within their borders. West Virginia’s law, effective August 1, 2025, for school lunches and January 1, 2028, for all foods, also prohibits synthetic preservatives like propylparaben. These state-level bans have prompted industry groups to call for a consistent federal standard to avoid a patchwork of regulations.

Tyson’s swift action has been hailed by Kennedy, who posted on X on May 5, 2025: “Just 13 days after @HHSgov + @US_FDA announced plans to phase out petroleum-based synthetic dyes, Tyson Foods today reported it will eliminate these dyes by the end of May. I look forward to seeing more companies follow suit.”

Other companies, such as W.K. Kellogg, have also committed to reformulating products, with Kellogg announcing it will avoid artificial dyes in new cereal products starting in 2026.

However, reformulation poses challenges. Natural alternatives, such as dyes derived from beets or red cabbage, can be costlier and less stable, potentially affecting product appearance and shelf life. The International Association of Color Manufacturers estimates that reformulating thousands of products in under two years could strain supply chains and raise costs for consumers.

While the MAHA initiative and Tyson's announcement have garnered support from health advocates and "MAHA moms" who prioritize safer food for children, skeptics urge caution. The FDA has long maintained that approved synthetic dyes are safe, stating that "the totality of scientific evidence shows that most children have no adverse effects" from their consumption. Critics argue that the focus on dyes may oversimplify complex health issues and divert resources from addressing more significant dietary concerns.