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Kraft Mac & Cheese and Jell-O Among Products to Drop Artificial Dyes by 2027 Amid Kennedy's Health Campaign

Driven by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again initiative, General Mills and Kraft Heinz pledge to eliminate artificial dyes by 2027, marking a major shift toward cleaner foods amid mounting regulatory, consumer, and health advocacy pressure

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Two of America's largest food manufacturers, General Mills and Kraft Heinz, have pledged to eliminate artificial colors from all their U.S. product lines by the end of 2027, amid a push by Health & Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. for sweeping change.

Also pressuring the companies is growing concern over petroleum-based food dyes linked to potential health risks. The move will impact an extensive range of products, from iconic cereals and boxed dinners to gelatin desserts and powdered drink mixes. At the center of the push is Kennedy's "Make America Healthy Again" initiative, which has taken aim at synthetic additives long permitted in the U.S. but increasingly restricted elsewhere.

General Mills, which produces Cheerios, Lucky Charms, and Betty Crocker baking products, plans to phase out certified artificial colors from its school foods by summer 2026 and from its entire U.S. retail portfolio by the end of 2027. "It really comes back to listening to what consumers are interested in and then giving it to them," said Jeff Harmening, CEO of General Mills. "Consumers have a high bar, and we're confident we can meet that bar consumers have for our brands."

About 85% of General Mills products are already free of synthetic dyes, but brightly colored cereals like Trix remain on the list of products requiring reformulation.

Kraft Heinz, known for brands like Kraft Mac & Cheese, Jell-O, Kool-Aid, and Crystal Light, announced a similar timeline. It has already prohibited new products containing artificial colors effective immediately and aims to eliminate FD&C dyes—including Red No. 40 and Yellow No. 5—from existing offerings by 2027. "The vast majority of our products use natural or no colors, and we've been on a journey to reduce our use of (artificial) colors across the remainder of our portfolio," said Pedro Navio, Kraft Heinz's North America president.

The announcements are a direct response to Secretary Kennedy's aggressive campaign against synthetic food dyes. Earlier this year, he met with executives from General Mills, Kraft Heinz, PepsiCo, and others to demand voluntary removal or risk federal intervention. "For too long, some food producers have been feeding Americans petroleum-based chemicals without their knowledge or consent," Kennedy said in April. "These poisonous compounds offer no nutritional benefit and pose real, measurable dangers to our children's health and development."

Backing Kennedy's stance is a 2021 report from California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, which linked several synthetic dyes—such as Red No. 40 and Yellow No. 5—to potential neurobehavioral effects in children. Dr. Lauren Zeise, director of the agency, stated, "Evidence shows that synthetic food dyes are associated with adverse neurobehavioral outcomes in some children."

The European Union's stricter labeling requirements, as well as international ingredient disparities—such as Froot Loops being made with natural colors in Canada but artificial dyes in the U.S.—have also fueled public pressure for reform.

The Food and Drug Administration has begun aligning with Kennedy's priorities. [In April](#), FDA Commissioner Marty Makary unveiled a plan to phase out six synthetic dyes—including Blue No. 1 and Green No. 3—by the end of 2026. A separate ban on Red No. 3, associated with cancer in animal studies, is scheduled to take effect on January 15, 2027. "Let's start in a friendly way and see if we can do this without any statutory or regulatory changes, but we are exploring every tool in the toolbox," Makary said.

Despite regulatory alignment, reformulating products poses technical challenges. Natural colorants—like beet juice, spirulina, and turmeric—can be more expensive, unstable over time, and difficult to match with the vibrancy consumers expect. General Mills had previously removed synthetic colors from Trix but reinstated them in some SKUs after feedback on color dullness.

Kraft Heinz faces similar hurdles with Jell-O and Kool-Aid, where bright visuals are integral to brand identity. Nevertheless, the companies believe the shift is necessary to maintain trust and relevance.

While General Mills and Kraft Heinz reported 2024 revenues of \$19 billion and \$26.6 billion respectively, smaller food producers may find reformulation financially burdensome. “The food industry is at a turning point,” said Sarah Gallo, vice president of product policy at the Consumer Brands Association. “Companies are balancing consumer expectations, regulatory pressure, and operational realities.”

State-level regulations are also accelerating industry change. California’s 2024 law banning Red No. 40 in school foods by 2028, and similar legislation in Virginia and West Virginia, are prompting national brands to preemptively adapt their formulas to avoid a patchwork of compliance issues.

Advocacy groups like the Center for Science in the Public Interest have hailed the companies’ actions but urged continued oversight of natural colorants.

“This is a big step forward for food safety, but it’s only part of the solution,” said Dr. Maria Gonzalez, a Washington, D.C.–based nutritionist. “Dyes are a piece of the puzzle, but we need a holistic approach that includes sugar, sodium, and ultraprocessed ingredients.”