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FDA warning letters for low-carb labels

Although the Food and Drug Association has not specified what constitutes a “low-carb” food, it has sent letters to some companies in the last few years warning that their low-carbohydrate claims are illegal.

Deputy FDA commissioner Dr. Lester Crawford says the agency is not going after foods that are naturally low in carbohydrates, such as meat and vegetables, but rather those firms that claim their products have low or no carbohydrates based on their own definitions.

These letters from the FDA have caused some companies to change their products and/or labels.

For example, Universal Nutrition Inc. changed its *Doctor's Diet Low-Carb* products to *Doctor's CarbRite Diet* products and added the tagline “for carb conscious dieters” after receiving a warning letter from the FDA. Kurtis Nielsen, president of Pure Delite Products Inc., says his company stopped describing its candy, cookies and other foods as low carb after it heard from the FDA in April.

Toffee Tec to begin production

The newly founded company Toffee Tec GmbH in Boizenburg, Germany, is to start production soon. Managing director and senior partner is Oliver Schindler, who will be running Toffee Tec in addition to heading distribution at Ragolds Süßwaren in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Other firms are still battling with the FDA. Carbolite Foods Inc., producer of chocolate bars, soft-serve ice cream mix and other products, specifies total carbs and net effective carbs on its label, but the FDA contends that the firm's name itself constitutes an illegal claim. The “nutrient content claim lite... does not extend to lite in carbohydrate,” the FDA told the company. Carbolite petitioned the agency for permission to keep using its name, which, it argues, is accurate because its foods have reduced sugar.

Seeking to clear up the confusion, the Grocery Manufacturers of America, an industry lobbying group, says it will ask the FDA to create guidelines for when foods can legally be promoted as low carb. Dr. Crawford said the agency is taking a closer look at the role of carbohydrates in diets and welcomes an industry petition to jumpstart the process. If it does not receive a petition, the FDA will consider creating guidelines that could come out early next year as part of the agency's anti-obesity initiative, he said.

Toffee Tec management expects to produce more than 4,000 metric tons of toffees in the coming year.

Over the next three years, production will be increased and the number of employees will rise from the current 28 to 50.