

Effort to ban dyes meets obstacles

Health secretary has sought changes to candy

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USA TODAY

President Donald Trump once received a handpicked selection of his favorite red and pink Starburst candy from former House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

However, if his Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has a say, the days of his artificially dyed technicolor candy would be numbered.

But Trump needn't fret. Yet.

Mars Wrigley, the manufacturer of M&Ms, Starburst and Skittles, has resisted Kennedy's artificial food dye-eschewing Make America Healthy Again agenda. But the company told USA TODAY it's "exploring" alternatives.

To the chagrin of food advocates and Kennedy's HHS, though, it's not making any promises with timelines, as other big food companies have in recent months.

A Mars Wrigley spokesperson told USA TODAY that the conglomerate had not yet identified "fully effective solutions" and believes it is "premature to make commitments" until it is certain they can be fulfilled. The spokesperson said the company would continue its efforts and anticipates being able to offer consumers more artificial dye-free choice in the "near future." An internal study conducted by the company five years ago also found that consumers across the globe – except Europe – did not mind artificial dyes in their candy.

Kennedy's boss may be one of them.

During a Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day event organized by the White House in May, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told children of reporters that Trump eats a "good amount" of candy and said he likes pink Starburst and Tootsie Rolls.

Kennedy, who has long blamed America's chronic health problems, including obesity and heart disease, on the food industry, announced in April that eight artificial dyes will be phased out from medications and the nation's food supply by the end of 2026,



While no formal agreement or legislation has been passed officially banning the food dyes, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. says HHS and FDA have a "mutual understanding" with the food industry that they will be removed. CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

including those found in candy, ice cream, soft drinks and jams.

A study by the California's Environmental Protection Agency in 2021 linked consumption of synthetic food dyes to hyperactivity and other neurobehavioral problems in some children. Similar studies also led the European Union to restrict food coloring. Last year, California banned six dyes from use in public schools. This year, West Virginia followed suit, with others like Virginia and Utah banning them in public school lunches.

While no formal agreement or legislation has been passed officially banning the food dyes, HHS and FDA have a "mutual understanding" with the food industry that they will be removed, Kennedy said.

At the time, a statement from the watchdog group Center for Science in the Public Interest called the agreement's voluntary nature "disappointing."

Kennedy, despite being hammered over his controversial views and policy moves regarding vaccines, has generally received support across party lines when it comes to blaming the food industry for the nation's chronic health problems, according to results of a June NBC News Decision Desk Poll.

Since Kennedy's appointment, several food companies such as Kraft

Heinz, General Mills, Nestle, Tyson Foods and Mars rival Hershey's have committed to removing all artificial food dyes from their food within the next couple of years.

Mars takes a second look at artificial food dyes in its candies

Christopher Gindlesperger, senior vice president for public affairs and communications for the National Confectioners Association, a trade group for the U.S. confectionary industry, told USA TODAY that some of the challenges for the industry include a long reformulation process and significant costs associated with sourcing natural colors.

"The companies that make natural colors simply don't make enough to meet demand," said Gindlesperger.

Back in 2016, Mars voluntarily announced that it would remove all artificial colors from its "human food portfolio globally."

But after an internal team dove into developing "new ingredients, secure regulatory approvals, address manufacturing readiness and figure out the needs and expectations of our consumers," it shifted gears in 2020.

The company found that consumer expectations about colors in food differed widely across markets and categories. For dinnertime meals, they pre-

ferred natural ingredients but when it came to candy, it was not a concern.

"For that reason, we will continue to prioritize our efforts to remove artificial colors in Europe – where consumers have expressed this preference – but will not be removing all artificial colors from our Mars Snacking portfolio in other markets," it said in a statement, which is currently on its website. The statement dates back to 2020, the company confirmed.

Kennedy and many food advocates have repeatedly bemoaned the disproportionately large list of additives in the United States compared to Europe.

An estimated 10,000 food additives are approved for use in the United States, as opposed to 411 in the European Union, according to the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School.

Andrew Nixon, a spokesman for HHS, said it is "disappointing that this company will prioritize removing artificial dyes in Europe but will not do the same in America."

Vani Hari, a food advocate who has aligned herself with Kennedy's MAHA agenda, said she was not sure what the company's business strategy was, given that states such as West Virginia have begun banning them. Texas is implementing new warning label requirements for foods and beverages containing certain artificial dyes and additives.

"I find it hard to see Mars being the only major candy company that will be left on the shelf with artificial dyes after Hershey declared the removal of them," she said. "What's their long-term plan? Stop selling in West Virginia and other states banning dyes? Put warning labels on their products just in Texas?"

Kennedy and his associates have said states, rather than lengthy federal regulations, may hold the key to forcing companies to change their ways.

As for consumer sentiment on artificial dyes, Mars' 5-year old data may no longer reflect the reality, Hari said.

The self-described MAHA Mom said Kennedy's "leadership" on the issue educating all Americans has changed things. "More moms than ever are becoming aware of the dangers of artificial dyes," she said.

NOTICE TO HENDERSON COUNTY TAXPAYERS

Renesa Abner, Henderson County Clerk pursuant to KRS. 424.130 announces that the delinquent **2024** REAL PROPERTY Tax bills, **2024** TANGIBLE Tax bills, **2023** OIL Tax bills, and the **2021** UNMINED COAL Tax bills will be published in the Henderson Gleaner on Tuesday, July 22, 2025. The list of Certificates of Delinquency is also available for public inspection during the hours of 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday thru Thursday and 8 am to 6 pm on Fridays at the County Clerk's Office located at 20 North Main Street, Suite 206, Henderson, KY 42420. The list may also be viewed on the Henderson County Clerk's website at <https://www.hendersoncountyky.gov/taxsale>.

The tax sale will be held on Thursday, **August 28, 2025** beginning at 9:00 am.

All interested participants must register with the County Clerk's Office by the close of business on Monday, August 18, 2025. Please contact the County Clerk's Office if you need additional information about the tax sale registration process, the required registration fee and the deposit amounts that will be needed to participate in the sale. Purchased bills may be paid by cash, check, credit or debit card (convenience fee applies). Taxpayers may continue to pay their delinquent tax bills to the County Clerk's office any time before August 28, 2025. Payments may be made in the form of cash, check, credit or debit card (convenience fee applies).

Please Note: All payments must be received in the County Clerk's office prior to the tax sale date listed in this advertisement. Payments received after the tax sale has been conducted will be returned without exception.

Some delinquencies – although they have been advertised - will be excluded from the tax sale in accordance with the provisions of KRS 134.504(10)(b). **If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the County Clerk's Office at 270-826-3906.**

Attention: Due to Gleaner printing deadlines, any payments made on or after July 14, 2025, may still appear as a delinquent bill in the list of delinquent taxpayers printed on July 22, 2025.