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# The Future Goals of Make America Healthy Again

**From Subject Matter Expert, Wade Hanson, Senior Principal**

“Make America Healthy Again” (MAHA) is a movement that rapidly gained attention in 2023 before becoming a more formal political brand of Robert Kennedy Jr. during his presidential campaign in 2024. The movement was originally focused on several core themes including concern over highly processed foods, concern over a lack of transparency in healthcare, pharmaceuticals and agriculture, and concern that federal regulatory agencies did not have a primary focus on the well-being of individual Americans. The movement’s initial ground swell of support came from supporters of Kennedy, libertarians and some prominent social media influencers. There was some bipartisan support early in the movement

After Robert Kennedy Jr.'s exit from the presidential race and his subsequent endorsement of Donald Trump, MAHA became formalized into the policies of the Trump campaign and eventually led to the formation of a MAHA commission in the new administration.

Now 18 months into the current Trump presidency, what have we seen in the evolution of MAHA and what can foodservice expect in the years ahead?

## MAHA Objectives and Initiatives Impacting Foodservice

Robert Kennedy Jr. currently holds the cabinet position of Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS oversees key agencies in the U.S. government including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). MAHA is now considered an overarching policy initiative that is integrated into all HHS agencies.

The HHS has made clear the nine initiatives that it is pursuing to achieve its goal of making America healthy again. The nine are:

- Reversing the childhood chronic disease crisis
- Lowering prescription drug pricing
- Promoting a resurgence of physical fitness to the American culture
- Removal of artificial dyes from food, beverages and medicines
- Restoring the public policy identifying only two genders
- Pursuing global health partnerships outside of the World Health Organization (WHO)
- Cleaning public water sources and eliminating additives to the water supply
- Streamlining medical and administrative healthcare authorizations



- Overhauling nutrition guidelines and education

All of the above are complex issues and require significant resources to address. But not all have implications for the foodservice industry. There are, however, expected MAHA developments that will impact both commercial and noncommercial foodservice. And there is significant concern within foodservice because of high levels of uncertainty.

The MAHA initiative under the Trump administration has publicly released a number of goals and recommendations, but it remains unclear when or how these announcements will translate into actual regulations. Further, major staffing and strategic direction changes within the FDA, USDA and other agencies has slowed any policy implementation, leaving the foodservice industry in limbo about what compliance may actually require. A major concern of foodservice manufacturers and others is that policy changes will likely involve large cost increases, a development that requires significant advanced planning.

While specific regulations are still being developed by the HHS, many in the foodservice industry have indicated that the following are aspects of the business that may be most impacted.

Greater Regulation of Ultra-Processed Foods (UPFs)

Though expected in April 2026, the HHS is still finalizing its formal definition of ultra-processed foods (as of July 31, 2026). This definition is expected to play a key role in how the government determines standards for restaurants and noncommercial operations such as primary and secondary schools.

Future regulation of ultra-processed foods (e.g., sugary drinks, sweet and savory snacks, packaged breads, processed meats and ready-to-eat meals) may have a significant impact on foodservice operators that rely on premade foods and processed ingredients. Many operators are using processed foods so that they can operate efficiently (i.e., speed of service and convenience) and cost effectively, as processed foods are generally cheaper to produce than fresh foods.

Quick-service restaurants, schools, recreation venues and healthcare facilities are examples of operators that would need to radically change behaviors related to labor, menus, sourcing and cost control if rigid standards were to be implemented.

That said, a recent Technomic survey of 1,000 consumers shows that regulation of ultra-processed foods is deemed more important than the regulation of other widely discussed products/ ingredients (see Exhibit 1).

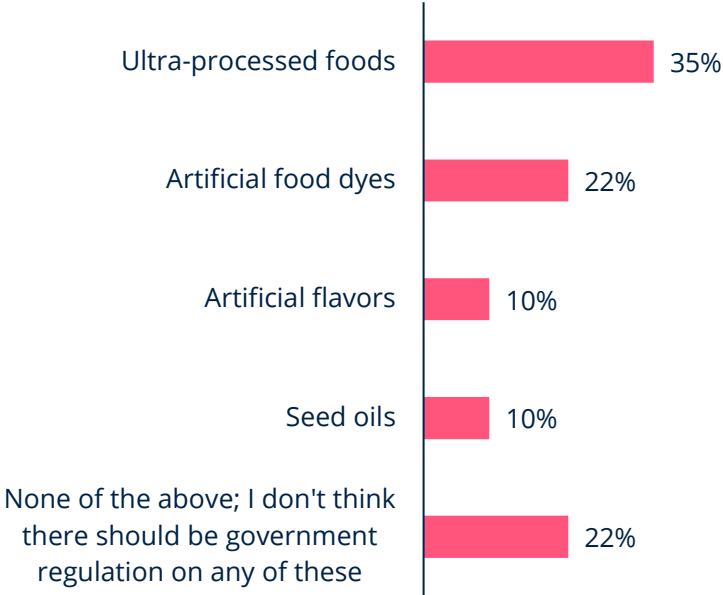
Any reformulations of recipes/menu items or required switching of ingredients (e.g., seed oils to beef tallow, a preference for Kennedy) could substantially increase food costs. This would have implications for manufacturers all the way through the supply chain to the consumer.

Changing the “Generally Recognized as Safe” (GRAS) Policies

Beginning in 1958, the government has adhered to the Generally Recognized as

Safe provision in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. This provision has allowed food manufacturers to use common ingredients thought to be safe (through research or manufacturer assertions) without having to go through an FDA-driven safety approval process. Over the years, though, not only have commonly used ingredients been identified as GRAS-compliant, but more than 1,000 additives have also been allowed into the food supply via this provision. The FDA is seeking to eliminate GRAS and force a review of all additives.

EXHIBIT 1: MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCTS TO REGULATE



Base: 1,000 consumers  
Source: Technomic Foodservice Planning Program January 2026 Navigating Societal and Regulatory Changes study

This change may lead to foodservice operators having more difficulty sourcing product if manufacturers are forced to reformulate products or if products are removed from the supply chain for failing to meet FDA standards. In addition to sourcing challenges, operators may be required to change recipes in response to ingredients having been modified to pass new reviews. And, again, affordability may become a question if manufacturers choose to pass along costs associated with reformulations and/or new requirements associated with safety reviews.

## **Ingredient Regulation and Differing Local Standards**

In 2025, Health and Human Services leadership began

taking actions toward banning or changing regulations around such products as seed oils, food dyes and artificial sweeteners. There is continuing conversation within the government about expanding the list of food products or ingredients under review. For foodservice, changing regulations around a category like seed oils (e.g., soybean, canola, corn, etc.) has far-reaching implications. These refined oils are heavily used throughout foodservice, particularly in operations that have a number of fried foods on the menu.

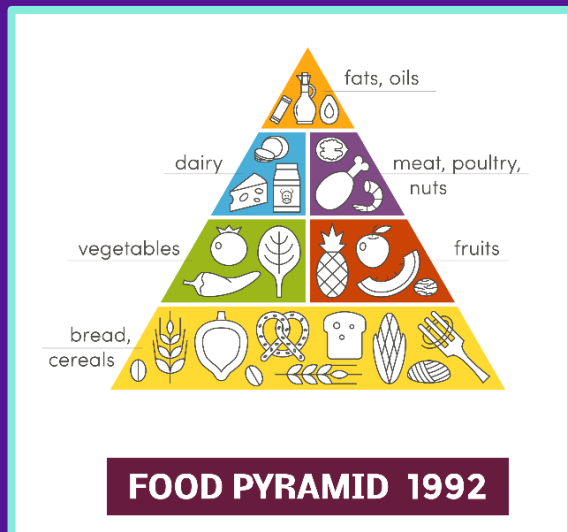
The government's initiatives around these products has led to certain states proactively implementing laws around usage or labeling. This creates major issues for foodservice operators that have locations in multiple states. Chain restaurants, for example, may be required to

comply with different laws for different units, which is in direct conflict with chains' efforts to create efficiency across its entire supply chain network.

There are now upstart organizations, such as Americans for Ingredient Transparency, which are working toward uniform national standards for ingredient safety rather than state-by-state regulation.

It should be noted that a great deal of education may be required if certain regulations are implemented. A recent Technomic survey showed that only 14% of Americans consider seed oils to be unhealthy. Therefore, the public will have to be informed of the risks identified by the government.





## Other Considerations

One highly visible change that is less likely to have an impact on foodservice, broadly, is the revised food pyramid released jointly by the Department of Agriculture and HHS. The food pyramid, which had not been updated since 1992, provides a visual to American consumers designed to identify the components to a healthy diet. The update places a higher emphasis on minimally processed foods, including proteins and healthy fats, while decreasing the emphasis on grain-based foods.

A 2026 Gardner Food and Agriculture Policy survey indicates that only 48% of Americans are aware of the new pyramid. Further, multiple recent analyses show that adhering to the new

pyramid would cost the typical household an additional \$1,000-plus per month in food spending. In today's environment, this level of spending on more fresh, whole foods is unlikely due to affordability concerns. Most consumers will not be reassessing their eating behavior or asking for different menu items due to these changes.

The most foodservice concerns exist within certain noncommercial segments, like K-12 and military, where meals are required to meet federal nutrition standards.

Another element in understanding how the foodservice industry will respond to certain MAHA actions is timing. There are some in the industry who consider the MAHA agenda to

be opinion-based more than science-based. Those with this viewpoint believe that a future administration is unlikely to continue pursuing many of the Trump/Kennedy positions. This perspective contributes to the delaying of any action by foodservice companies as seen in the data below from a 2026 Technomic survey of 500 foodservice operators. Operators agree that they will wait as long as possible to make changes recommended or regulated by Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) because...

**65%** say there is no consumer demand for it

**64%** say it will impact cost

# Final Thoughts

The majority of Americans continue to agree with the overall principles of the MAHA movement, including improving food safety, fighting chronic disease, helping people make healthier choices and building more transparency into the system. For example, according to a May 2026 poll by KFF Polling, 75% of Americans agree that there is a need for more regulation of food additives.

So, while the broad MAHA goals have support, the foodservice industry will face challenges in responding to potential HHS/MAHA actions in the future. Most concerns from the industry are focused on complexity, cost, confusion and the real impact of certain regulation.

The industry can expect a great deal of activity and debate over the next 24 months.





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