

The MAHA Movement and What it Entails

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Overview

The *Make America Healthy Again* (MAHA) initiative, led by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., seeks to promote public health, environmental responsibility, and transparency in government health agencies. Kennedy, known for his work with the Waterkeeper Alliance and Children's Health Defense, has joined forces with President Donald Trump in this bipartisan endeavor, aiming to reform sectors that impact Americans' health and well-being. The initiative's overarching goal is to address and reduce chronic disease, environmental degradation, and public mistrust in regulatory agencies.

"Make America Healthy Again" had gone viral, particularly with wellness influencers over the past year, but really exploded when RFK Jr. teamed up with President Donald Trump to support his campaign. The overarching goal of Make America Healthy Again is to "dismantle the corporate stranglehold on our government agencies that has led to widespread chronic disease, environmental degradation, and rampant public distrust".^[1] The issue areas outlined under MAHA span multiple agencies and sectors.

RFK Jr. has been selected to serve as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). This is a Senate-confirmed position, and there is some doubt of his ability to be confirmed.

Under his purview at HHS, RFK Jr. will oversee the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Indian Health Service, and the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, among others. Below are a few key areas relevant to the food and agriculture industries where RFK Jr. may influence:

- **Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2025.** The DGAs are set to be released in 2025. They are jointly written by HHS and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Shifts to the recommendations around meat consumption, dairy consumption, ultra-processed foods and other issues may shift from the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee recommendations.
- **FDA's Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program.** While the Environmental Protection Agency sets the pesticide residue tolerance levels, FDA is tasked with enforcing those tolerance levels in human and animal foods. Given RFK's focus on pesticides in the food system, he may try to influence how FDA enforces pesticide residues.
- **Food Chemical Safety.** FDA is tasked with ensuring exposure to chemicals in food is safe. Food additives and color additives require pre-market review and approval by FDA.
- **Voluntary GRAS Notification.** FDA has established a voluntary Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) program to ensure ingredients or additives are safe and to help industry meet its responsibility to ensure the GRAS status.

- **Animal Drugs and Animal Food.** As with human foods, FDA oversees safe food additives for animal food use, evaluates GRAS notices, and reviews food labels. FDA also approves new animal drugs.

Regardless of his future influence within the administration, the MAHA movement has gained broad support from social media influencers, and discussions about toxicity and health are likely to continue both within and beyond the Beltway. Below are the broader perspectives on food and agriculture policy from the MAHA movement.

1. Agriculture

- **Promote Regenerative Agriculture:** Support policies that incentivize sustainable farming, improve soil health, and reduce chemical use.
- **Ban Harmful Pesticides:** Align U.S. policies with international standards by prohibiting widely used pesticides, including glyphosate.¹
- **Reform Crop Subsidies:** Shift subsidies toward nutrient-dense crops, such as fruits and vegetables, to improve public health.²
- **Legalize Raw Milk:** Advocate for policies allowing the sale of raw milk, which is currently restricted in many states.³

2. Environment

- **Eliminate Harmful Chemicals:** Remove toxins from the food supply, water sources, and air to promote safer environmental conditions. Lower the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in food packaging and water systems.

3. Food and Nutrition

- **Ban Ultra-Processed Foods from the National School Lunch Program:** Prohibit certain additives and foods, like grains, seed oils, and sugar.⁴
- **Promote Research on Diets and Health:** Fund studies to understand the impact of dietary choices on metabolic and chronic diseases.
- **Restrict Food Purchases Under SNAP:** Limit the purchase of soda and processed foods by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program beneficiaries to encourage healthier diets.⁵
- **Introduce Nutrition Education:** Incorporate nutrition courses into federally funded medical education.
- **Conflict of Interest in Dietary Guidelines:** MAHA calls for members of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee to be prohibited from receiving funding from food or pharmaceutical companies.⁶
- **Nutrition Education in Medical Training:** The initiative would make nutrition classes a mandatory part of federal medical school curricula.⁷

¹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-robert-f-kennedy-make-america-healthy-again/>

² <https://www.cato.org/blog/kennedy-says-cut-subsidies-farmers-junk-food>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/12/health/robert-kennedy-jr-fda.html>

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-robert-f-kennedy-make-america-healthy-again/>

⁵ <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/trump-can-make-america-healthy-again-rfk-jr-reforms-chronic-disease-crisis-a9b4b8c0>

⁶ <https://foodfix.co/what-food-policy-looks-like-in-a-trump-administration/>

⁷ <https://www.wsj.com/politics/trump-rfk-calley-casey-means-bc996dc1>

- **Presidential Fitness Standards:** MAHA supports implementing new presidential fitness and health standards to encourage healthy lifestyles nationwide.

4. Health and Safety

- **Investigate Vaccine Safety:** Advocate for further research on vaccine safety to address public concerns while ensuring scientific rigor.⁸
- **Remove Fluoride from Drinking Water:** End the addition of fluoride in public water, citing concerns about its safety.⁹
- **Promote Access to Alternative Therapies:** Support access to innovative treatments, including psychedelics, stem cells, ivermectin, and nutraceuticals, by reducing FDA restrictions.¹⁰

⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/06/nx-s1-5181197/rfk-jr-discusses-potential-role-in-the-trump-administration-and-health-policy-vision>

⁹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/11/07/rfk-jr-fluoride-ban-00188032>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/12/health/robert-kennedy-jr-fda.html>

