PepsiCo Discontinues ‘Natural’ Gatorade

CANDICE CHOI, AP Food Industry Writer

In this Friday, Aug. 24, 2012, file photo, Gatorade bottles sit on the bench during preseason NFL football game between the Minnesota Vikings and the San Diego Chargers in Minneapolis. As of Jan. 16, 2015, photo, PepsiCo discontinued a line of Gatorade it marketed as "natural," even as people increasingly look for foods and drinks that are positioned as such. **(AP Photo/Andy King, File)**

NEW YORK (AP) — PepsiCo has discontinued a line of Gatorade it marketed as "natural," even as people increasingly look for foods and drinks that are positioned as such.

The Purchase, N.Y. company said in a statement that through "engagement with athletes on their fueling needs, we found that Gatorade Naturals and G2 Naturals did not resonate with this core consumer."

On its website, the company said the drinks provided the benefits of regular Gatorade while using ingredients like sea salt. The line had limited distribution in select Whole Foods and Kroger locations.

It's not clear why PepsiCo didn't invest more heavily in marketing Gatorade Naturals. Americans in recent years have shifted toward foods they feel are natural, with a growing number shunning processed foods that contain chemicals they don't recognize. Last year, for example, PepsiCo said it would stop using a chemical linked to a flame retardant in its regular Gatorade in response to consumer feedback.

Separately, however, PepsiCo has also faced legal challenges over its use of the word "natural." Last year, it agreed to settle a lawsuit by removing "all natural" from its Naked juice drinks. A lawsuit had challenged the description, saying the

drinks contained a synthetic fiber made by Archer Midland Daniels.

A lawsuit filed in California in 2012 also questioned the use of the word "natural" to describe some of Frito-Lay's chips. This past October, PepsiCo revamped its "Simply Natural" line to be called "Simply," without "Natural." A spokesman said the change was part of its updated marketing.

A spokesman for PepsiCo noted that Gatorade Natural was not the subject of any litigation. He confirmed that the Gatorade Naturals were discontinued this past November.

Missi Nadeau, a health psychologist who lives in Ann Arbor, Mich., said she has been buying the natural Gatorade for at least the past three years for her son, to prevent allergic reactions to artificial dyes and preservatives. Even though there are other natural sports drinks, she said those have to be mixed and she liked the convenience of giving her son bottles of Gatorade Natural at games.

"It was just like what all the other kids were drinking," she said.

Now that she's down to her last few bottles of Gatorade Natural, Nadeau said she is looking for alternatives.

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