General Mills Scraps Controversial New Legal Terms

NEW YORK (AP) — General Mills [1] is scrapping a controversial plan to strip consumers of their right to sue the food company.

The company, which owns Cheerios, Progresso and Yoplait, had posted a notice on its website notifying visitors of a change to its legal terms — visitors using its websites or engaging with it online in a variety of other ways meant they would have to give up their right to sue.

Instead, the new terms said, people would need to have disputes resolved through informal negotiation or arbitration.

The Minnesota-based company's decision was widely denounced on social media after The New York Times wrote a story Wednesday bearing the headline, "When 'Liking' A Brand Online Voids the Right to Sue." The next day, General Mills clarified the meaning of its new terms to say they did not apply when people engaged with its brands on Facebook and Twitter.

"No one is precluded from suing us merely by purchasing our products at the store or liking one of our brand Facebook pages. That is just a mischaracterization," the company said.

The terms would apply in instances such as when people subscribed to one of its publications or downloaded its coupons from its websites, General Mills said.

Despite the clarification, the company apparently continued to feel pressure regarding its new terms, and issued another statement late Saturday saying that it decided to return to the previous legal terms.

"We are announcing today that we have reverted back to our prior legal terms, which contain no mention of arbitration," the email said.

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