

NRDC: GRAS Process May Allow Dangerous Chemicals into Food

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The Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) review process of chemicals used as food additives is “woefully inadequate and may be putting the health of Americans at risk,” according to a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) [report](#) [1].

“Americans should expect that their food is safe to eat, but sadly today there’s no guarantee because food safety oversight from federal agencies and food manufacturers is shockingly weak and hidden from public scrutiny,” said Tom Neltner, NRDC health scientist and co-author of the report.

The [GRAS provision](#) [2] under the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act allows a substance to be considered GRAS either through scientific procedures or, if the substance was used in foods prior to 1958, through experience based on its common use in food products.

The NRDC indicates that 275 chemicals used by 56 companies are marketed as GRAS that did not need to be reported to the U.S Food and Drug Administration or the public, creating a “gaping loophole” in the nation’s food safety system.

“Congress should close the loophole responsible for this failing now,” Neltner said. “Until it does, FDA should strictly limit companies’ conflicts of interest and require them to disclose to the agency when they self-approve the safety of a chemical.”

The [Grocery Manufacturers Association](#) [3] (GMA) defended the GRAS system in a statement saying, “Americans enjoy one of the safest food supplies in the world. The current regulatory framework in place for FDA’s oversight of food additives has been helping to keep our food supply safe for over 50 years.”

The GMA said it is constantly working to improve industry processes, including GRAS review procedures. The group recently announced a partnership with Michigan State University to create the [Center for Research on Ingredient Safety](#) [4], which is designed to help ensure the “safe use of chemical ingredients in consumer packaged goods.”

The GMA statement continued, “We are committed to working with the FDA and other stakeholders to identify ways of continuing to strengthen the GRAS review process so that it can continue to help ensure the safety of our food supply, just as it has done for decades.”

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- [1] <http://www.nrdc.org/media/2014/140407b.asp>
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