

**The MAHA Movement
and
Its Impact on the Tortilla Industry**

By Dr James Curry

How the **MAHA movement** affects tortilla manufacturers

- Particularly regarding the transition to **natural colors and natural flavors**.
- High-quality **natural flavors** have been under development for many years, and today there are many excellent options to replace artificial ones.
- The primary challenge with natural flavors is **cost**, but the technology and flavor intensity are well established.

Natural colors, however, are more complex. The science is still evolving, and there are real challenges—stability, cost, and supply—but these are solvable, and as an industry we will meet them successfully.

What MAHA Is About

MAHA stands for **Make America Healthy Again**, a coordinated national effort to improve the health of Americans by focusing on what we eat, how our food is made, and what ingredients go into it.

As tortilla producers, we are very much part of that story. We need to stay ahead of the curve and lead with practical, science-based solutions

How MAHA Began

MAHA began in **2025**, when the **White House launched the Make America Healthy Again initiative** by executive order. The goal was to create a nationwide push to reduce chronic diseases through improvements in food production, environmental policy, and public health practices.

The program was created after data showed that **childhood chronic conditions**—especially obesity and diabetes—were rising sharply. Government scientists and advisors concluded that **poor nutritional quality and excessive use of food additives** were major contributors, and the initial focus centered on **artificial colors**.

MAHA was launched under the leadership of the **Secretary of Health and Human Services**, working with agencies including the **FDA, USDA, and EPA**. Consumer advocates were also deeply involved.

The goal was to coordinate federal efforts to **reduce harmful ingredients**, promote **cleaner, more transparent manufacturing**, and support healthier food choices across the nation.

MAHA's Core Objectives

1.Reduce childhood chronic disease by addressing diet-related causes.

2.Eliminate synthetic dyes and phase out artificial colors.

3.Encourage the use of natural ingredients wherever possible.

4.Set national guidelines for schools, the military, and public food service systems.

What This Means for Tortilla Manufacturers

For now, our immediate challenge is **eliminating artificial colors**.

Switching to natural colors is the right strategic move—both for **regulatory compliance** and for **consumer trust**. But we must be realistic: there will be challenges with **supply, cost, stability, and sourcing**.

The key is to **work closely with color suppliers**, start **testing early**, and take advantage of the **one to two years** most states have given us before the mandates take full effect.

Do not wait until the last minute. Lead times for natural pigments—especially crops like black carrot, annatto, or beet—can be several months due to agricultural cycles. The sooner you test and qualify alternatives, the smoother your transition will be.

Progress to Date

MAHA has already mandated the **removal of petroleum-based synthetic dyes**, beginning with products aimed at children and served in school systems.

Several states are already implementing timelines:

- California** will phase out these dyes by **December 2027**.

- Texas** will follow by **September 2026**.

This means **tortilla manufacturers** must begin reformulating ingredients for **tortilla wraps and chips** now. At **IFS of New Braunfels, Texas**, we have developed **clean-label alternatives** for both wraps and chips. Our website includes a full section showing non-artificial color systems suitable for tortillas and snack applications.

IFS has also created:

- An **economical natural red** for chips,

- High-protein chip technology**, and

- High-fiber multigrain blends** that provide a “good source of fiber” claim.

Looking Ahead — The Next MAHA Focus: Sugar

My prediction is that MAHA's next phase will focus on **reducing sugar** in food products.

This transition is already happening in many categories—chocolate, bread, peanut butter, and ketchup, to name a few. Many products are lowering sugar content using **sugar alcohols** or **natural sweeteners** such as **stevia** and **monk fruit**.

In my opinion, reducing sugar will have a **far greater impact on public health** than removing artificial colors.

While some studies show concerns with synthetic dyes, there is overwhelming evidence linking **excess sugar** to **obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and metabolic syndrome**.

Sugar raises **insulin**, and chronic high insulin levels cause **insulin resistance**, a key step toward diabetes. Insulin is also a **storage hormone**, meaning excess sugar gets converted into fat—a root cause of many health problems.

If you want to learn more, I highly recommend the book "*The Case Against Sugar*" by **Gary Taubes**, which summarizes the scientific and historical evidence in detail.

Final Thoughts

MAHA represents a powerful shift toward cleaner, more transparent food manufacturing. The tortilla industry can—and should—be a leader in this movement.

Let's commit to doing our part to **Make America Healthy Again** by offering tortillas and snacks that meet the highest standards of quality, nutrition, and integrity.

Thank you for your attention—and please feel free to contact me anytime if you have questions about implementing MAHA-compliant formulations or sourcing natural colors and ingredients.

Together, we can keep our products delicious, compliant, and part of a healthier future for everyone.