

Draft of White House Report Suggests Kennedy Won't Push Strict Pesticide Regulations

The report is not final, but indicates good news for the food and agriculture industries.



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A highly anticipated White House report on the health of American children would stop short of proposing direct restrictions on ultraprocessed foods and pesticides that the health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has called major threats, according to a draft of the document that was reviewed by The New York Times.

The report, if adopted, would be good news for the food and agriculture industries, which feared far more restrictive proposals than the ones outlined in the draft. Through his “Make America Healthy Again” movement, Mr. Kennedy has sought to overhaul the nation’s diet by pushing those industries to make major changes.

The draft includes an array of policy proposals calling for research into topics as distinct as electromagnetic radiation and children’s oral health.

It also recommends action on health initiatives, like efforts to increase breastfeeding rates, address infertility and educate the public on the dangers of vaping.

Questions about a possible push for new pesticide regulations were raised in May when the White House [released an initial report](#), from a presidential commission chaired by Mr. Kennedy, that raised strong concerns about possible links between pesticides and childhood diseases. It also linked the dominance of ultraprocessed foods in children’s diets to a range of chronic diseases.

Those findings touched off tensions between Mr. Kennedy's movement and Republican lawmakers who have traditionally drawn support from powerful agriculture, food and drug lobbyists.

The Times obtained the draft of the new report from a former federal official. An industry official confirmed that it was nearly identical to a copy the administration had recently shown the official at the White House.

Kush Desai, a White House spokesman, on Thursday would not verify the draft. At this stage, any draft would go through a number of revisions before it is finalized. The document The Times reviewed was labeled "pre-decisional" and dated Aug. 6.

Called the "Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy," the report comes from the commission led by Mr. Kennedy, which includes cabinet secretaries and agency heads from across the government.

The White House has not said when the report will be made public, though it was to have been presented to President Trump on Tuesday, the deadline set by Mr. Trump's [executive order](#) establishing the "MAHA Commission." The final report is expected to be released in the coming weeks.

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The draft report says that environmental regulators will work with "food and agricultural stakeholders" to ensure that the public is aware of and confident in existing pesticide review procedures. It described those procedures as "robust" and did not propose new restrictions.

It also says the Trump administration will back research on technologies to try to help farmers reduce pesticide use and on the health effects of Americans' cumulative exposure to chemicals.

After the first report was published in May, agriculture groups, including the American Soybean Association and the National Corn Growers Association, [urged](#) the Trump administration to listen to farmers as the commission prepared its follow-up report outlining a strategy.

The draft reviewed by The Times does not mention how the proposed research and the new policy initiatives would be funded or how much money might be allocated to them.

But it says that the Department of Health and Human Services will form a working group to evaluate "overprescription trends" involving mental health medications, such as S.S.R.I.s and stimulants, for children. It reiterates Mr. Kennedy's pledge to study the ["root causes" of autism.](#)

Mr. Kennedy has spent much of his tenure as health secretary characterizing modern American childhood as a state of stress and sickness, with children mainly eating ultraprocessed food, which he has called “poison,” tethered to screens and reliant on pills and shots.

And he has railed against the pharmaceutical industry, which he says exerts undue influence over scientific research, all while the Trump administration has [decimated funding](#) for many academic research programs. Mr. Kennedy has also condemned scientific experts. In June, he [fired all the members](#) of an influential vaccine advisory panel.

The first report, from May, reflected many of Mr. Kennedy’s key talking points. It was heavily scrutinized. While some scientists applauded its focus on flaws within the American food system, many noted it misrepresented the scientific consensus on issues like vaccines. The report also [cited studies that did not exist](#).

In recent weeks, Mr. Kennedy’s aides and allies have [publicized](#) what they described as the administration’s most significant steps to improve American health. These include persuading some food makers to phase out petroleum-based food dyes, working with several states to remove soda and candy from their [food stamp programs](#) and trying to tighten oversight of food additives. The draft reiterates that the administration will continue these efforts.

[Some researchers have cautioned](#) that such steps may not do much to improve the overall healthfulness of the American food supply.

Ultraprocessed foods, which make up about [62 percent of the calories consumed by U.S. children](#), are explicitly mentioned in the draft of the second report only once, in a line about the [administration’s effort to define them](#). The near-omission of ultraprocessed foods from the draft report raises questions about the administration’s appetite for regulation, which the food industry is likely to vehemently oppose.

The draft does describe prioritizing “whole, healthy” foods in federal programs like those providing meals in schools. It suggests offering these foods in “MAHA boxes” for food stamp recipients.

The draft touches on a number of other topics, including vaccines, a focus of Mr. Kennedy’s. It says the health department will develop a framework for “Ensuring America has the Best Childhood Vaccine Schedule.”

Mr. Kennedy, one of the nation’s most prominent vaccine skeptics, recently [pledged to overhaul](#) the nation’s system to compensate people harmed by vaccines. Earlier this month, he canceled nearly [\\$500 million](#) in contracts for mRNA vaccines.

The draft report also suggests that the government will consider developing guidelines that would limit marketing of unhealthy foods directly to children and will more vigorously enforce restrictions around direct-to-consumer drug advertising. It says the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will update its [recommendations on fluoride](#) in water.

On Tuesday, Calley Means, a senior adviser to Mr. Kennedy, spoke at a [Heritage Foundation event](#) on the role of agriculture in public health, presenting farmers as key players in American health care. “We are not going to win if the soybean farmers and the corn growers are our enemy,” he said.

There are signs that the report, as drafted, could land with a thud among Mr. Kennedy’s followers. In July, [500 people](#), including leaders of advocacy groups aligned with Mr. Kennedy’s movement, sent a letter to Mr. Kennedy and other members of the White House commission urging them to ban pesticides like [glyphosate](#).

Hundreds of people tied to the MAHA movement, including [Vani Hari](#), a prominent food activist and MAHA influencer, also [sent a letter](#) addressed to Mr. Trump on Monday urging him to take action against protections for pesticide manufacturers.

Over the first six months of his presidency, Mr. Trump has largely supported Mr. Kennedy’s decisions, after urging him during the campaign to “go wild” on health. This month, though, after Mr. Kennedy canceled the contracts for mRNA vaccines, Mr. Trump [told reporters](#) that the mRNA coronavirus vaccine development initiative from his first term, Project Warp Speed, was “one of the most incredible things ever done in this country.” He said he had scheduled a meeting with Mr. Kennedy to discuss the cancellations.

While Mr. Trump convened the commission, and put Mr. Kennedy at the helm, he does not have to follow its guidance.

“Unlike other administrations, we will not be silenced or intimidated by the corporate lobbyists or special interests,” Mr. Trump said in May during an event celebrating the release of the commission’s first report. “I want this group to do what they have to do.”

“In some cases, it won’t be nice, or it won’t be pretty,” he added, “but we have to do it.”