

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 135
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H135-PCS40547-BPxa-13

Short Title: Misbranding/Cell-Cultured Meat/WNC Donations.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 18, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO REQUIRE LABELING OF CELL-CULTURED FOOD PRODUCTS; TO
PROHIBIT COMMUNITY COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FROM PURCHASING CELL-CULTURED FOOD PRODUCTS; TO ESTABLISH A
VOLUNTARY DONATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT FARMS AFFECTED BY
HURRICANE HELENE; AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR A FARM AND
FORESTRY DISASTER RELIEF EFFICIENCY AUDIT.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

REQUIRE LABELING OF CELL-CULTURED FOOD PRODUCTS

SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 106-549.15 reads as rewritten:

"§ 106-549.15. Definitions.

As used in this Article, except as otherwise specified, the following terms shall have the meanings stated below:

...

(1a) "Agricultural food animal" means a domesticated animal belonging to the bovine, caprine, ovine, or porcine species.

...

(5a) "Cell-cultured food product" means a food product having one or more sensory attributes that resemble a type of tissue originating from an agricultural food animal but that, in lieu of being derived from meat processing, is derived from manufacturing cells, in which one or more stem cells are initially isolated from an agricultural food animal, are grown in vitro, and may be manipulated, as part of a manufacturing operation.

(5b) "Close proximity" means any of the following:

a. Immediately before or after the name of the product.

b. In the line of the label immediately before or after the line containing the name of the product.

c. Within the same phrase or sentence containing the name of the product.

...

(9a) "Identifying meat term" means any word or phrase that states, indicates, suggests, or describes a meat product, regardless of whether the word or phrase is used individually, as a portmanteau, or as a compound word. This term includes all of the following:



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- a. A common name for the species of the agricultural food animal subject to slaughter and processing, including a calf or cow, goat or kid, hog or pig, lamb, or sheep.
- b. A common name for a characteristic of a species of the agricultural food animal subject to slaughter and processing based on age, breed, or sex.
- c. Meat; beef or veal; cabrito or chevon; lamb or mutton; or pork.
- d. A common name used to describe a major cut of a meat of an agricultural food animal slaughtered and processed, including a major meat cut specified in 9 C.F.R. § 317.344, or the common name of an organ or offal, including heart, liver, kidney, or tongue.
- e. Any other common name that a reasonable purchaser would immediately and exclusively associate with a meat product prepared for sale in normal commercial channels such as bacon, baloney, bologna, bone, brat or bratwurst, brisket, burger or hamburger, butt, chop, chuck, cold cut, cutlet, filet, flat iron, frank or frankfurter, ham, hock, hot dog, jerky, liverwurst, loin, London broil, lunch meat, New York strip, pepperoni, porterhouse, ribeye, roast, rib or sparerib, salami, sausage, shank, sirloin, tenderloin, or a comparable word or phrase.

...

(14) "Meat food product" means any product capable of use as human food that is made wholly or in part from any meat or other portion of the carcass of any cattle, sheep, swine, goats, bison, fallow deer, or red deer, or any cell-cultured food product made from cells of those animals, excepting products that contain meat or other portions of such carcasses only in a relatively small proportion or historically have not been considered by consumers as products of the meat food industry, and that are exempted from definition as a meat food product by the Board under such conditions as it may prescribe to assure that the meat or other portions of such carcasses contained in such product are not adulterated and that such products are not represented as meat food products. This term as applied to food products of equines shall have a meaning comparable to that provided in this subdivision with respect to cattle, sheep, swine, goats, and bison.

(15) "Misbranded" shall apply to any carcass, part thereof, meat or meat food product under one or more of the following circumstances:

- a. If its labeling is false or misleading in any particular;
- b. If it is offered for sale under the name of another food;
- c. If it is imitation of another food, unless its label bears, in type of uniform size and prominence, the word "imitation" and immediately thereafter, the name of the food imitated;

...

- m. The product is a cell-cultured food product and it is not labeled in accordance with G.S. 106-549.28A.

...

(21a) "Qualifying term" means a word, compound word, or phrase that would clearly disclose to a reasonable purchaser of meat food products that a food product is a cell-cultured meat product. This includes the following terms: "cell-cultured," "fake," "lab-grown," or "grown in a lab."

(21b) "Ratite" means a bird whose breastbone is smooth so that flight muscles cannot attach, such as an ostrich, an emu, and a rhea. These birds are subject

to the provisions of this Article and Article 49C to the same extent as any other meat food product.

...."

SECTION 1.(b) Article 49B of Chapter 106 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 106-549.28A. Labeling of cell-cultured food products.

(a) The label of any cell-cultured food product that contains an identifying meat term shall also contain in at least 20-point font or the size of the surrounding type, whichever is greater, and in close proximity to the name of the product, an appropriate qualifying term.

(b) A cell-cultured food product that does not meet the requirements of this section shall be deemed misbranded for purposes of this Article."

SECTION 1.(c) G.S. 106-549.51 reads as rewritten:

"§ 106-549.51. Definitions.

For purposes of this Article, the following terms shall have the meanings stated below:

...

(4a) "Cell-cultured food product" means a food product having one or more sensory attributes that resemble a type of tissue originating from poultry but that, in lieu of being derived from meat processing, is derived from manufacturing cells, in which one or more stem cells are initially isolated from poultry, are grown in vitro, and may be manipulated, as part of a manufacturing operation.

(4b) "Close proximity" means any of the following:

a. Immediately before or after the name of the product.

b. In the line of the label immediately before or after the line containing the name of the product.

c. Within the same phrase or sentence containing the name of the product.

...

(10a) "Identifying poultry term" means any word or phrase that states, indicates, suggests, or describes a poultry product, regardless of whether the word or phrase is used individually, as a portmanteau, or as a compound word. This term includes all of the following:

a. A common name for the species of the poultry subject to slaughter and processing, including chicken, poultry, or turkey.

b. A common name for a characteristic of a species of the poultry subject to slaughter and processing based on age, breed, or sex.

c. Meat, broiler, fryer, poulet, or yearling.

d. A common name used to describe a major cut of poultry slaughtered and processed, including a poultry product such as breast, drumstick, giblet, thigh, or wing; or the common name of an organ or offal, including gizzard, heart, liver, kidney, or tongue.

e. Any other common name that a reasonable purchaser would immediately and exclusively associate with a poultry product prepared for sale in normal commercial channels.

...

(17) "Misbranded" shall apply to any poultry product under one or more of the following circumstances:

a. If its labeling is false or misleading in any particular;

b. If it is offered for sale under the name of another food;

c. If it is an imitation of another food, unless its label bears, in type of uniform size and prominence, the word "imitation" and immediately thereafter, the name of the food imitated;

...

m. If it is a cell-cultured food product and it is not labeled in accordance with G.S. 106-549.55(e).

...

(26) "Poultry product" means any poultry carcass, or part thereof; or any product which is made wholly or in part from any poultry carcass or part thereof, or any cell-cultured food product made from cells of poultry, excepting products which contain poultry ingredients only in a relatively small proportion or historically have not been considered by consumers as products of the poultry food industry, and which are exempted by the Board from definition as a poultry product under such conditions as the Board may prescribe to assure that the poultry ingredients in such products are not adulterated and that such products are not represented as poultry products.

...

(28a) "Qualifying term" means a word, compound word, or phrase that would clearly disclose to a reasonable purchaser of poultry products that a food product is a cell-cultured food product. This includes the following terms: "cell-cultured," "fake," "lab-grown," or "grown in a lab."

...."

SECTION 1.(d) G.S. 106-549.55 reads as rewritten:

"§ 106-549.55. **Labeling standards; false and misleading ~~labels~~labels; labeling of cell-cultured food products.**

...

(e) The label of any cell-cultured food product that contains an identifying poultry term shall also contain in at least 20-point font or the size of the surrounding type, whichever is greater, and in close proximity to the name of the product, an appropriate qualifying term."

SECTION 1.(e) This section becomes effective October 1, 2025, and applies to products sold or offered for sale on or after that date.

PROHIBIT COMMUNITY COLLEGES, PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM PURCHASING CELL-CULTURED FOOD PRODUCTS

SECTION 2.(a) G.S. 115C-12 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(50) Purchases of meat and poultry products. – The State Board of Education shall prohibit public school units from purchasing cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(b) Part 2 of Article 17 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-264.6. **Purchases of meat and poultry products.**

Local boards of education shall prohibit local school administrative units from purchasing cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(c) G.S. 115C-218.75 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(p) Purchases of Meat and Poultry Products. – A charter school shall not purchase cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(d) G.S. 115C-238.66 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(23) Purchases of meat and poultry products. – A regional school shall not purchase cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(e) G.S. 116-239.8(b)(4)c. reads as rewritten:

"c. Food services. – The laboratory school shall strive to ensure that one hundred percent (100%) muscadine grape juice is made available to students as a part of the school's nutrition program or through the operation of the school's vending facilities. The laboratory school shall not purchase cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51. Upon request, the local school administrative unit in which the laboratory school is located shall administer the National School Lunch Program for the laboratory school in accordance with G.S. 115C-264."

SECTION 2.(f) G.S. 115D-20 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115D-20. Powers and duties of trustees.

The trustees of each institution shall constitute the local administrative board of such institution, with such powers and duties as are provided in this Chapter and as are delegated to it by the State Board of Community Colleges. The powers and duties of trustees shall include the following:

...

(16) To establish policies to prevent the purchase of cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(g) Part 5 of Article 1 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 116-43.26. Purchases of meat and poultry products.

Each constituent institution shall establish policies to prevent the purchase of cell-cultured food products as defined in G.S. 106-549.15 or G.S. 106-549.51."

SECTION 2.(h) This section becomes effective October 1, 2025. Subsections (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e) of this section apply beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. Subsections (f) and (g) of this section apply beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year.

ESTABLISH A VOLUNTARY DONATION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT FARMS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE HELENE

SECTION 3.(a) Definitions. – Unless otherwise provided, the following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Affected area. – The counties designated before, on, or after the effective date of this section under a major disaster declaration by the President of the United States under the Stafford Act (P.L. 93-288) as a result of Hurricane Helene.
- (2) Department. – The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- (3) Foundation. – The North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation.
- (4) Fund. – The Western North Carolina Farm Relief Fund established in subsection (b) of this section.

SECTION 3.(b) There is created the Western North Carolina Farm Relief Fund as an interest-bearing, nonreverting special fund in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The State Treasurer shall be the custodian of the Fund and shall invest its assets in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 147-69.2 and G.S. 147-69.3. The Department shall award grants from the Fund to individual farmers located in the affected area with verifiable crop losses or damage to farm infrastructure due to Hurricane Helene to assist with any of the following priorities:

- (1) Removal of debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges.
- (2) Reshape and protect eroded banks.
- (3) Repair damaged drainage facilities.
- (4) Establish cover on critically eroding lands.
- (5) Repair damaged levees and structures.

(6) Repair conservation practices.

SECTION 3.(c) The Department, in collaboration with the Foundation, shall develop a voluntary plan by which retailers may offer consumers the option to round up the amount of their purchases to the nearest dollar or make a greater contribution and remit the collected funds to the Fund. The Department shall develop criteria for the prioritization of funds and requirements for the matching of funds by grant recipients, if any. A retailer may retain one percent (1%) of the funds collected by the retailer to offset the costs of participation in the program. The Foundation may use up to one percent (1%) of the funds in the Fund for the administration of the program and two percent (2%) of the funds in the Fund for marketing and advertising of the program.

SECTION 3.(d) This section is effective when it becomes law and expires June 30, 2030. Any unexpended, unencumbered funds remaining in the Fund on June 30, 2030, shall revert to the State Emergency Response and Disaster Relief Fund established in G.S. 166A-19.42.

FARM AND FORESTRY DISASTER RELIEF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AUDIT

SECTION 4.(a) There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services the amount of one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for the Department, in consultation with North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and North Carolina Cooperative Extension, in the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fiscal years to map damage to agricultural and forestry operations in Western North Carolina using drone and satellite data in order to determine the efficiency of the State's response to Hurricane Helene. The Department shall take all steps necessary to establish baseline data as soon as possible in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The Department shall compare the baseline data to data collected as soon as possible after the beginning of the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The Department shall report its findings to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources no later than February 1, 2027.

SECTION 4.(b) The funds appropriated under this section shall not revert but shall remain available for purposes consistent with this section until the project is complete.

SEVERABILITY CLAUSE AND EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 5.(a) If any section or provision of this act is declared unconstitutional or invalid by the courts, it does not affect the validity of this act as a whole or any part other than the part declared to be unconstitutional or invalid.

SECTION 5.(b) Except as otherwise provided, this act becomes effective October 1, 2025.