

Legislation aims to make fair labels on 'imitation' meat

By Julie Tomascik
TFB Editor

A bipartisan bill introduced in Congress last week aims to establish new labeling requirements for plant-based and cell-cultured alternative meat products.

The Fair and Accurate Ingredient Representation on Labels Act of 2024 (FAIR Labels Act) would require alternative meat products be labeled as "imitation" to clearly differentiate between real meat and plant-based or alternative meat products.

The bill was introduced by U.S. Sen. Roger Marshall (R-Kan.) in the Senate and U.S. Rep. Mark Alford (R-Mo.) in the House.

"Whether they choose protein substitutes like plant-based or lab-grown meat or traditionally raised meat, the product should be labeled clearly," Alford said in a statement. "Farmers and ranchers across the country work from sun up to sun down to produce high quality and nutritious meat for consumers. It is only fair that all products are labeled fairly. This begins with transparent and appropriate labeling laws which our legislation requires."

The FAIR Labels Act sets definitions for "imitation meat" and "imitation poultry."

It would require products like plant-based meat and substitute protein products to be labeled as "imitation" meat or another word that clearly conveys the food is derived from sources other than meat. The label

would also be required to include a clear disclaimer that indicates the product does not contain meat or poultry.

The bill also addresses cell-cultured protein labeling.

Under the FAIR Labels Act, cell-cultured meat and protein includes any product for human food use that is made wholly or in part from any cell culture of DNA of an amenable species or live bird and is grown or cultivated outside of the live animal from which the cell culture or DNA was acquired.

Labels for cell-cultured products would be required to include "cell-cultured" or "lab-grown" immediately adjacent to the name of the food.

The bill directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration to oversee the labeling and inspection standards of the products.

Texas Farm Bureau supports the bill, having endorsed similar legislation in the Texas Legislature last year.

"There is a lot of confusion at the meat counter because labels and packaging for meat and alternative meat products are often very similar," Laramie Adams, Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Government Affairs, said. "This bill addresses those labeling issues and will help protect the reputation of traditional meat products in the marketplace."

The House version is co-sponsored by U.S. Reps. Roger Williams of Texas, Jonathan Jackson of Illinois and Don



Skill-a-thon! Bronte ISD students Caden Sumrall (from left to right), Jaxon Morris, and Hadley Sumrall competed in the Sheep and Goat Skill-a-thon at the San Angelo Stock Show on Friday, February 2.

Davis of North Carolina.

Other industry groups that support the bill in addition to Texas Farm Bureau include the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Chicken Council, American Sheep Industry, National Pork Producers Council and the National Association of the State Departments of Agriculture.

the preserve every week for a few years and loves this nature space.

"Most people don't know about this place," James said. He told us he thinks the preserve is one of the best nature areas in East Texas, with bird-watching and stargazing, catch-and-release ponds, plus many trails for horseback riding. Several hiking trails crisscross through the wetland areas around the ponds, and he said we might see wild animals at the preserve too, like beaver, deer and bobcats.

Then he asked, "Have you seen the alligators in the beaver pond?"

Soon we're leaning over the splintered railing of the wooden footbridge that spans Beaver Pond. I hear dragonflies and

damsellies darting over the water and the occasional plip-plop of a fish leaping to catch one.

But no alligators in sight.

Once on the verge of extinction, the American alligator can now be found throughout the eastern third of Texas, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The reptile has made a dramatic comeback over the past 50 years and is now a protected game animal in Texas. "There are a couple of large ones who hang out at the beaver pond," James told us. "They like to sleep a lot at the bottom of the pond, but I've seen them several times."

I wonder to myself if they look like floating logs in the middle of the pond.

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Later, Gators?

By Christine Switzer

"Where are the alligators?" I can hear the frustration in my 8-year-old son's voice as we scan the serene water of Beaver Pond in the southwest portion of Aquatic Loop. This is our

second visit to the Mineola Nature Preserve, and we've just learned that some of the ponds are home to alligators.

Fifteen minutes earlier, we had passed a slightly winded hiker on Beaver Pond Trail, an old logging path that harks back to the land's integral role in the East Texas timber belt a century

ago.

The hiker smiled, greeted us and said his name was James. He chatted enthusiastically about the nearly 20-year-old preserve that spreads over close to 3,000 acres along the north banks of the Sabine River in Wood County, north of Tyler. James said he has been hiking at

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