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Why does the FDA think it's a crime to call a prune a "dried plum"?

The prune industry wants a makeover — but the FDA may file a lawsuit

WASHINGTON, DC — You know the government has gotten too darned big when people have to worry about being fined or sued by the FDA for calling a prune a "dried plum," the Libertarian Party said today.

But that's exactly what happened after California growers requested permission from the FDA to market their prunes — which are, technically speaking, dried plums — as "dried plums."

"A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet — but a prune by another name could get you in trouble with the Food & Drug Administration," noted Steve Dasbach, the party's national director. "Libertarians have to ask: Should it really be against the law in America to call something *exactly* what it is?"

The Great Dried Plum Debate started in March when the California prune industry decided it was time to polish its image. Concerned that young people associate prunes with laxatives for old people, the industry asked the FDA's Office of Food Labeling for permission to call them "dried plums" — a name with a healthier, livelier connotation.

It took the FDA more than six months to respond, and the early word was that bureaucrats would reject the proposal as "false and misleading." However, the FDA promised to consider the idea, but not before demanding that plum-growers explain:

- The effect on FDA regulations of renaming prunes.
- The "international aspects of changing the name."
- "Results of consumer research" about renaming prunes.

And the FDA demanded a "plan of action for educating consumers about the name change" — presumably so ignorant Americans wouldn't be tricked into buying dried plums that were misleadingly labeled "dried plums."

That has Libertarians "raisin" heck — but don't call it a dried grape.

"This is a classic case of bureaucratic constipation that no dose of prunes (or dried plums) can cure — and an example of how big, powerful, and arrogant our federal government has become," charged Dasbach.

"Libertarians have a better solution: How about if we simply allow 270 million Americans to decide whether *they* want to buy dried plums?" he asked. "Is there *really* a need for federal bureaucrats to interject themselves in this voluntary transaction?"

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