

The Death of High Fructose Corn Syrup

By [Melanie Warner](#) | Mar 25, 2010

The back-to-back, double whammy announcements that **PepsiCo** (PEP) is ditching high fructose corn syrup in Gatorade along with the results of a scathing new study from researchers at **Princeton** make it official — allies of the controversial sweetener have lost the war.



For years, the **Corn Refiners Association**, a trade group consisting of companies like **Cargill** and **ADM** (ADM), has been hammering away at the bad press gushing out about high fructose corn syrup. In ads, in the press and online, they argue that the sweetener is a perfectly natural product and that it is no worse for you than regular old sugar.

To which consumers have responded with a collective “Yeah, right.” **Con Agra** (CAG) is taking HFCS out of its Hunt’s ketchup, **Kraft** (KFT) is banishing it from Wheat Thins and you will no longer find it in Snapple drinks. It’s all in response to what food companies say is overwhelming consumer demand. “We know moms don’t like it, and they don’t want to feed it to their kids,” supermarket expert **Phil Lempert** told **Ad Age**. Last month, outraged San Francisco parents forced high fructose corn syrup out of chocolate milk in the school system. More products are sure to follow.

Rightly or wrongly, HFCS is deeply entrenched as the most popular symbol of the growing consumer distrust of a food system that churns out nutritionally empty, overprocessed foods with a long list of strange, unpronounceable ingredients.

And now the Princeton study gives HFCS foes the scientific bombshell they’ve been looking for, since actual evidence that eating lots of HFCS is going makes you fatter and healthier than simply eating lots of sugar is scant. The university reports that rats that ate HFCS gained significantly more weight than those that ate table sugar, even when their overall caloric intake was the same. The fact that the results of this study may be based on inconclusive results and thus not really offer convincing evidence, as **NYU** nutrition expert and no fan of HFCS **Marion Nestle**, points out, will likely get lost in the shuffle.

If only the Corn Refiners Association had changed the name of their beleaguered product, things might have worked out differently. Despite its name, high fructose corn syrup is only marginally higher in fructose, which has been clearly linked to obesity and metabolic syndrome, than regular sugar. (The fructose however is not chemically bonded to glucose as it

is in sugar and thus more freely available to the body, so that could actually make a difference, though it's never been proven).

But when you're trying to tell people that your product doesn't have a lot of fructose, but it's called high fructose corn syrup, it's a bit like naming your new butter alternative Extra Trans Fat Margarine. No one's going to buy it.

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