

I posted earlier about an FDA move to remove nicotine from cigarettes in the hope of preventing addiction. FDA is also moving forward on some food nutrition issues. That makes FDA's Commission, Scott Gottlieb, an oasis of sanity within the Trump Administration.

First, as of May, FDA will begin enforcing a regulation requiring restaurants to list calories on their menu. The House has passed a [bill](#) weakening (though not repealing) the requirement. It remains to be seen whether there are 60 votes in the Senate to approve such a bill, or even whether the Senate can move quickly enough for a vote.

In the meantime, FDA has just [announced](#) it would update its voluntary target for salt content in 150 different foods, with the goal of making the change in binding regulations after the National Academy of Medicine reports back on the issue. The average consumer currently imbibes about 150% of the FDA recommended level. You'll be shocked to learn that the Salt Institute, representing the salt industry, takes a dim view of this effort. But there does seem to be some legitimate dispute about the health effects of salt, which is the reason for the Academy of Medicine report.

FDA is also moving forward on new labeling requirements championed by Michelle Obama, which require disclosure of added sugar, mandate simpler language, and dictate larger print for total calories. The evidence about the effectiveness of these labels is [mixed](#), with results that may vary depending on the type of consumer and restaurant. In any event, it's hard to quarrel with the proposition that consumers should have the right to know what they're getting.

On the food safety front, FDA has [pledged](#) to speed up recalls and make greater efforts to notify consumers of health problems. The agency is also gearing up to begin enforcing the Food Safety Modernization Act next year, after spending this year educating industry about the requirements and ironing out a few wrinkles. FDA had agreed to the firm deadlines as part of a [lawsuit settlement](#).

As one public health expert [said](#) about Scott Gottlieb, the FDA Commissioner, "This commissioner does seem to have an interest and understanding of the importance of nutrition. . . 'Progressive' is a relative term, but I think [he is], compared to what we're up against in other agencies." Not that it's all that hard to compete with the likes of Scott Pruitt as a defender of the public interest. But it's a relief to see someone in the Administration who is competent and seems to care about the public interest. Hopefully, Trump won't find out.

