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Marketing rBST-Free Milk Is Misleading

By [Ruth Kava, Ph.D., R.D.](#)

Both the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have ruled that companies that sell milk and other dairy products may state that the milk comes from cows that were not treated with [recombinant bovine somatostatin \(rBST\)](#). This bioengineered hormone is identical to the one naturally produced by cows and, when injected, extends the period of milk production. Monsanto, the corporation that produces rBST, had sued to restrict such labeling.

Marketers who use the "our cows aren't given rBST" approach are thus legally correct but scientifically wrongheaded. There's nothing unhealthful or dangerous (to humans or cows) from using rBST, in spite of activists' claims (does anyone doubt that the proponents of organic foods are behind these claims?). But the implication of this labeling is that the milk from rBST-treated cows is somehow inferior to that from untreated cows, which it isn't. Thus it perpetuates a myth about the supposed advantages of "natural" products.

While ACSH is in favor of truthful advertising and marketing, sometimes following the letter of the law can lead to the dissemination of misinformation. This is such a case.

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