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Industry Insights: States Have Beef With Labeling of Meat Alternatives

Across the country, states are enacting laws related to the labeling of meat alternative products. [Missouri](#), [Mississippi](#), [Arkansas](#), and [Louisiana](#) have passed laws restricting the ability of vegetable-based proteins and other meat alternatives from labeling their products as burgers, hot dogs, sausage, or other meat-like descriptions. [Proponents](#) of the laws argue that the laws are essential for protecting "consumers from being misled or confused by false or misleading labeling of agricultural products that are edible by humans." These laws have drawn several federal lawsuits so far and will likely be the subject of further controversy. Food companies, particularly those that produce plant-based, insect-based, or cell-based proteins, should be advised that several of these new laws create *criminal* penalties in addition to civil sanctions for potential violations. In [Missouri](#) and [Mississippi](#), violations of the meat advertising laws may lead to jail time and/or a fine. While important carve-outs for such criminal sanctions may apply, such as good faith, the prospect of criminal penalties is of substantial concern for those that manufacture, distribute, and sell such products. The implementation of these labeling laws, particularly criminal proceedings, may affect company decisions regarding labeling of new and existing products. This is especially true for lab-created meat products, alternatively known as cellular agriculture. These products, which are not yet commercially available, are grown from cells cultivated from livestock. At the federal level, the USDA and FDA will [jointly regulate](#) the cell-cultured food industry. At the state level, states like [Missouri](#) are encouraging manufacturers of such products to work with regulators to arrive at appropriate labels before commercial sale in their jurisdictions. Further information about this topic can be found [here](#).

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