



Public Perspectives of Make America Healthy Again and the Food System

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On February 13, 2025, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14212, which established the Make America Healthy Again Commission ([EO 14212, 2025](#)). The Executive Order identified the Commission’s initial goal as advising the President on “how best to exercise his authority to address the childhood chronic disease crisis”, requesting that the Commission provide an initial assessment report on the current state of US children’s health and the drivers of childhood chronic disease within 100 days and, based on the initial report, suggested strategies to address childhood chronic disease by 180 days ([EO 14212, 2025](#)).

This initial Make America Healthy Again (often abbreviated MAHA) report has been on many food system players’ radars, as Executive Order 14212 instructs the Commission to study “any contributing causes”, giving a slew of potential issues to explore, including both “the American diet” and “food production techniques” ([EO 14212, 2025](#)). The Executive Order also highlights the connection with agriculture, saying “agencies shall work with farmers to ensure that United States food is the healthiest, most abundant, and most affordable in the world” ([EO 14212, 2025](#)).

The initial MAHA Commission report ([MAHA Report: Make Our Children Healthy Again](#)) was released on May 22, 2025 and the food system was front and center. The report includes critiques of food additive use, pesticide use, current dietary guidelines, current structures of government programs (including SNAP, NSLP, WIC, and crop insurance), corporate influence on research, food firm consolidation, and more ([2025](#)).

The report was met with mixed responses – from elation to anger – although the response from many food system players was decidedly negative (e.g., [Schemmel, 2025](#); [Stone, 2025](#); [Oprysko, 2025](#); [Seitz](#)

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and Price, 2025). Some food system players responded directly to the report, including statements from the American Farm Bureau Federation (2025), FMI – The Food Industry Association (2025), Center for Science in the Public Interest (2025), and others. Additionally, in the last few days, early news organizations' analyses identified issues with some of the sources included in the report, including citations of some studies that did not exist (Kennard and Manto, 2025). The White House press secretary has since said the issues “are being addressed and the report will be updated” (Seitz, 2025). As the report has only recently been released, responses and analysis will likely continue. More broadly, MAHA may have important impacts on the food system – from incoming MAHA-endorsed state policies (e.g., Alvey, 2025) to the soon-to-be MAHA Commission strategic plan (expected mid-August).

In this post, we explore public perceptions of MAHA broadly using results from the most recent wave of the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey, which is conducted quarterly to assess public perceptions of current issues in the food system. We discuss public awareness of MAHA, perceptions of MAHA, and expectations for MAHA.

Data & Methods

The results below come from the thirteenth wave of the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey. Each quarter, approximately 1,000 U.S. consumers are recruited online via Qualtrics. While we utilize quotas to match the U.S. population in terms of gender, age, annual household income, and region, surveys are limited by sample bias (i.e., people who respond to online surveys may differ from those who do not in ways that are also related to measured outcomes, such as perceptions of the food system). This wave was conducted in May 2025.

In this wave, we assessed public awareness and perceptions of MAHA. First, we gauged awareness by asking participants, “Prior to this survey, had you heard of the ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign?”. For those who were aware of MAHA prior to the survey (n=656), we asked about participants’ perceptions. First, these participants were asked about their overall view of MAHA. Specifically, we asked, “How would you describe your view on the ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign?”. Participants could respond Very Positive, Somewhat Positive, Somewhat Negative, or Very Negative. Next, these participants saw three statements about MAHA and their values. Specifically, the statements were: (1) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign reflects my values about food.”, (2) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign reflects my values about medicines.”, and (3) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign reflects my values about agriculture.” For each statement, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Strongly Disagree). These were condensed to agree (strongly or somewhat) and disagree (strongly or somewhat) for analysis below. The order of statements was randomized to prevent ordering effects.

These participants were also shown three statements about their expectations for MAHA. Again, for each statement, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Strongly Disagree). These three statements were: (1) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign will make the food system safer.”, (2) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign will make the health system safer.”, and (3) “The ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign will make the environment system safer.” As with the values statements, the order of the expectation statements was randomized to prevent ordering effects and we condensed responses to agree (strongly or somewhat) and disagree (strongly or somewhat) for analysis.

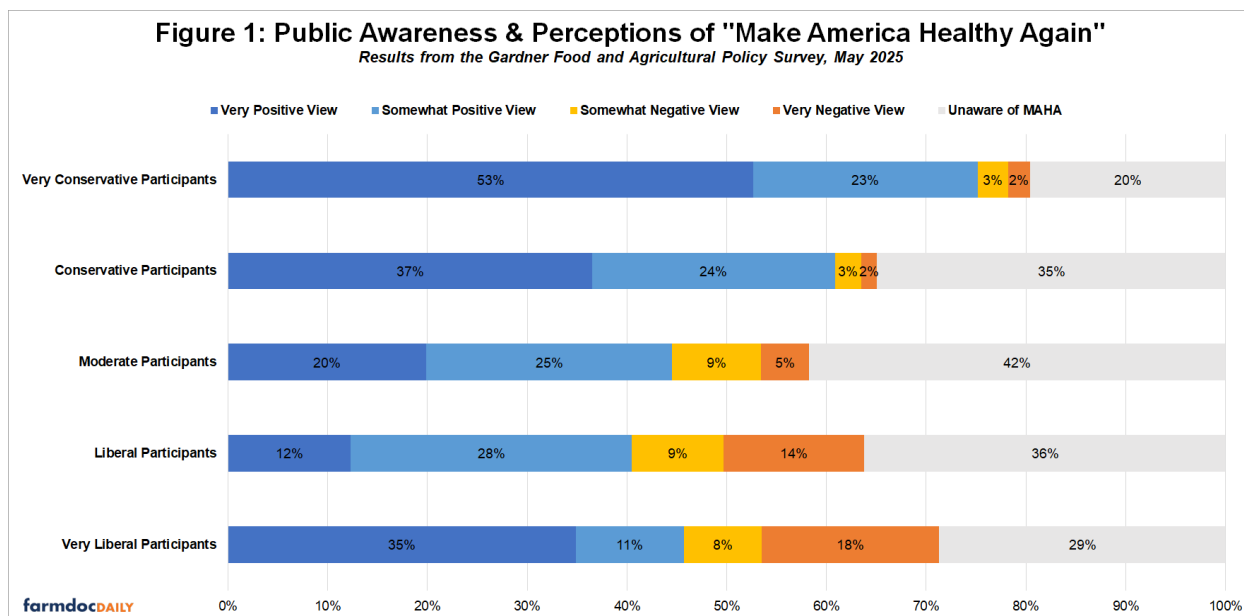
Finally, we also include results from measures of food values, which occur in every wave of the survey and are asked of all participants, including measures of safety (“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Our food system produces food that is safe to eat.”) and health (“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Our food system produces food that is healthy.”).

Results

Our results show that 65% of participants were aware of MAHA prior to the survey (n=656). Our results are higher than YouGov Survey’s estimates of public awareness from six months ago – 59% of their participants were aware of MAHA in November 2024 (YouGov, 2024). Awareness of MAHA is also lower than public awareness of some major MAHA players. For example, over 90% report awareness of Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (YouGov, 2025).

Next, we explore public perceptions of MAHA overall. Of those who were aware prior to the survey, 43% reported they had a very positive view, 36% had a somewhat positive view, 11% had a somewhat negative view, and 11% had a very negative view of MAHA. Both awareness and perception differed across political ideologies.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of participants who reported having a very positive view of MAHA, somewhat positive view of MAHA, somewhat negative view of MAHA, very negative view of MAHA, or were unaware of MAHA prior to the survey across participants' self-reported political ideologies (from very liberal to very conservative). Figure 1 highlights that public awareness differed across political ideology, with moderates being *least* aware of MAHA (42% unaware) and very conservatives and very liberals being *most* aware (20% and 29% unaware, respectively). Figure 1 also highlights that across the board, for those who were aware of MAHA, it was viewed quite positively. Interestingly, support was strongest from very conservative participants (53% indicated they had a very positive view of MAHA), conservative participants (37% indicated they had a very positive view of MAHA), and very liberal participants (35% indicated they had a very positive view of MAHA). Very liberals and liberals were also most negative, with 18% and 14% indicating they had very negative views of MAHA.



Next, we asked participants who were aware of MAHA prior to the survey whether MAHA reflected their values about food, medicine, and agriculture. Overall, these participants felt MAHA reflected their values across sectors. We find that 78% said MAHA reflected their values about food, 72% said MAHA reflected their values about medicines, and 77% said MAHA reflected their values about agriculture. While these results provide general insight, we are unable to identify with what policies or promises participants' values align. For example, previous work has highlighted higher levels of support for some proposals (e.g., banning food additives, requiring nutrition education) than other proposals (e.g., allowing sale of raw milk) ([YouGov, 2024](#)).

Finally, we asked these participants about their expectations for MAHA's impact on the food, health, and environmental systems. For those who were aware of MAHA prior to the survey, 77% expected MAHA to make the food system safer, 74% expected MAHA to make the health system safer, and 68% expected MAHA to make the environmental system safer.

Interestingly, while participants expect MAHA to improve safety in the food system, the group did not report higher levels of concern about either the safety or health of the food system than other participants. We find that 11% of those who view MAHA positively disagreed the U.S. food system produces food that is safe (the same figure as those who had a negative view of MAHA/were unaware of MAHA, 11%) and 14% disagreed the food system produces food that is healthy (compared to 18% of those who had a negative view of MAHA/were unaware of MAHA).

Conclusions

One of the more intriguing issue areas for the second Trump Administration relevant to the food and agricultural sectors is the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) effort. The Administration's MAHA Commission recently released their first report, which implicated the food system as major driver of childhood chronic illness ([MAHA Report, 2025](#)). The President has also tasked this Commission to propose strategies, informed by this report, by mid-August ([EO 14212, 2025](#)). The report, which criticized food additives, pesticide use, and other food system practices ([MAHA Report, 2025](#)), elicited responses from a variety of food system players (e.g., [Schemmel, 2025](#); [Stone, 2025](#); [Oprysko, 2025](#); [Seitz and Price, 2025](#)). Early analyses of the report also identified issues with some of the sources in the report, including citations of studies that did not exist, which the White House said it would address ([Kennard and Manto, 2025](#); [Seitz, 2025](#)). As the report has only recently been released, responses to the report are likely just beginning.

In this post, we utilize results from the latest wave of the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey, conducted in May 2025, to understand public perceptions of MAHA broadly. Here, we explore public awareness of MAHA and their beliefs and expectations for MAHA, to gain initial perspectives. We find that the majority (about 65%) of respondents were aware of MAHA prior to the survey and that, for those who were aware of MAHA, views were quite positive. Most interesting and an area for further analysis, is that both awareness and perceptions of MAHA were related to political ideology. Finally, we also find that support and expectations for MAHA do not differ strongly across sectors (food, medicine, and agriculture).

Both the MAHA Commission and the MAHA-aligned efforts more broadly (e.g., incoming state regulations) may have relevant impacts on the food system. However, the potential impacts of MAHA are likely to be affected by both the priorities and funding of the Administration and Congress. For example, significant cuts to many food assistance and other programs are currently being proposed ([HR1, 2025](#)) and some cuts to relevant programs have already been made (e.g., cuts to local food procurement) ([Brown, 2025](#); [Herrick, 2025](#)).

As MAHA and other changes to the food system occur, the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey will continue to monitor public sentiment towards these timely food and agricultural topics.

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