



Food System Beliefs of Make America Healthy Again Supporters

Maria Kalaitzandonakes and Jonathan Coppess

Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics
University of Illinois

Brenna Ellison

Department of Agricultural Economics
Purdue University

June 4, 2025

farmdoc daily (15): 102

Gardner Policy Series

Recommended citation format: Kalaitzandonakes, M., B. Ellison, and J. Coppess. “Food System Beliefs of Make America Healthy Again Supporters.” *farmdoc daily* (15): 102, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, June 4, 2025.

Permalink: <https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2025/06/food-system-beliefs-of-make-america-healthy-again-supporters.html>

Introduction

The current administration’s Make American Healthy Again initiative continues to be top of mind for food system players. In particular, this month the Make America Healthy Again (often abbreviated MAHA) Commission released its first report, which was highly critical of the food system ([MAHA Report: Make Our Children Healthy Again, 2025](#)). The report has come under fire from a variety of groups, including food system players (e.g., [Schemmel, 2025](#); [Stone, 2025](#); [Oprysko, 2025](#); [Seitz and Price, 2025](#); [Kennard and Manto, 2025](#); [Bottemiller Evich, 2025](#); [Alvey, 2025](#)). The Commission has been instructed to propose a strategic plan, informed by the report, to President Donald Trump by mid-August ([EO 14212, 2025](#)).

While many organizations have released statements about MAHA’s report or the MAHA initiative broadly, less is known about public knowledge and public sentiment. Last week, we reviewed results from the most recent wave of the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey, a quarterly survey of U.S. adult consumers about ongoing food and agricultural issues. We highlighted that approximately 65% of participants were aware of MAHA prior to the survey and, of those who were aware, public sentiment was quite positive (*farmdoc daily*, [May 30, 2025](#)). We also provided an initial look at which consumers were most supportive of MAHA – finding that both awareness and sentiment were connected to political ideology. In this post, we examine this further, exploring which consumers were most likely to have positive views of MAHA and unpacking their food system values – including perceptions of food safety and trust in food system players.

Data & Methods

Each quarter, we conduct the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey (GFAPS) to evaluate public sentiment about ongoing food and agricultural issues. The survey is conducted online, with approximately

We request all readers, electronic media and others follow our citation guidelines when re-posting articles from farmdoc daily. Guidelines are available [here](#). The farmdoc daily website falls under University of Illinois copyright and intellectual property rights. For a detailed statement, please see the University of Illinois Copyright Information and Policies [here](#).

1,000 U.S. adult consumers, recruited by Qualtrics to match the U.S. population in terms of gender, age, annual household income, and region.

In this post, we review results from May 2025, focusing on the food system beliefs of MAHA supporters. Two questions were used to categorize MAHA supporters. First, participants were asked, “Prior to this survey, had you heard of the ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign?” and were able to answer either yes or no. Participants who said they were aware of MAHA prior to the survey, were then asked, “How would you describe your view on the ‘Make America Healthy Again’ campaign?” and were able to answer very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative. Below, we compare participants who reported a (somewhat or very) positive view of MAHA (n=515) to those who were either unaware of MAHA or had a negative (somewhat or very negative) view of MAHA (n=492). We refer to those who had a positive view of MAHA as a MAHA supporter.

First, we use a logistic regression model to predict the probability that a participant is a MAHA supporter. Specifically, we explore what consumer characteristics were related to likelihood to support MAHA. These included participant characteristics (gender, income, geography, region, age, and education), measures of political ideology (both self-reported political ideology and 2024 presidential voting), food system experiences (personal/familial connections to agriculture, use of nutrition assistance programs, geography, experience with farmers markets), and whether or not the participant had children under 18 in their home. Output from this regression can be found at the end of the post.

Second, we use summary statistics to compare participants’ beliefs about food safety. Specifically, each quarter, participants are asked, to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with several statements about the food system. Here, we focus on the statement, “Our food system produces food that is safe to eat.” Participants could respond with strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). For our analyses, we consider the proportion who responded that they agreed with each statement (either strongly or somewhat). We also evaluate responses about specific food safety perceptions. Specifically, as MAHA food safety discussions are often focused on the use of food additives, participants were asked about their level of concern with the question, “How worried are you about food additives?”. Participants were asked about their level of concern about another food safety issue – foodborne illness – using the question, “How worried are you about being affected by foodborne illnesses (e.g., E. coli, Salmonella, Listeria)?” For both worry questions, participants could respond with one of four answers: very worried, somewhat worried, not very worried, or not at all worried.

Third, to explore perceptions of food system actors, we use summary statistics to compare responses from MAHA supporters to the other participants. We assess perceptions of trust using a recurring GFAPS question where participants are asked “To what extent do you trust each of the following groups in the food system?”. Participants rate their level of trust from 1 (do not trust) to 7 (trust very much) for farmers, food manufacturers, grocery stores, restaurants, and government. The order of players was randomized to prevent ordering effects. Later, as firm size and firm influence has been a central MAHA critique of the food system, we also evaluate participants perceptions of the size of farmers, food manufacturers, grocery stores, and restaurants. For each, participants were asked, “Do you think any of the following groups in the food system are too big (i.e., have too much control or share of the market)?” Participants could respond with yes, no, or I don’t know. Again, the order of players was randomized to prevent ordering effects.

Results

Characteristics Associated with MAHA Support

We explore what characteristics were related to a participant’s likelihood of reporting a positive view of MAHA. First, perhaps unsurprisingly, we find that participants’ politics were highly related. Both having voted for President Trump in the November election and being “very conservative” increased likelihood of a participant having a positive view of MAHA. Interestingly, participants’ experiences with the food system were also related: going to the farmers market *increased* likelihood of being supportive of MAHA, whereas having personal or family connections to agriculture, living in a rural area, or using nutrition assistance programs (such as SNAP or WIC) each *decreased* a participants’ likelihood. Additionally, quite surprisingly given the focus on “MAHA Moms” at the center of the movement (e.g., [Demopoulos, 2025](#), [Coleman, 2025](#); [Newman and Andrews, 2025](#); [Reed, 2025](#)), neither gender nor having children was

related to a change in likelihood. A participant's household income, level of education, age, and home region were also not correlated with their likelihood to have a positive view of MAHA.

Perceptions of Food System Safety

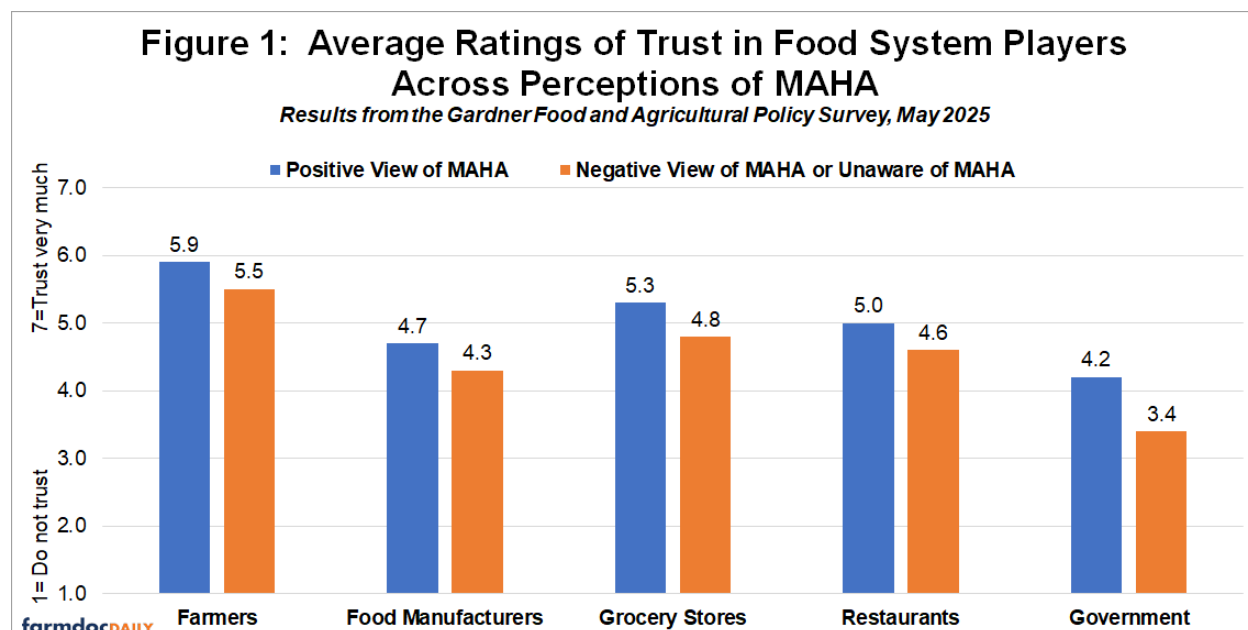
Those who support MAHA agree at high rates that the U.S. food system produces food that is safe to consume, but perceptions of particular food issues are divisive. Broadly, we find that 76% of those who have a positive view of MAHA agreed that the U.S. food system produces food that is safe to consume, higher than the 69% of those who have a negative view of MAHA or who were unaware of MAHA who agreed to the same statement. However, the groups worry about particular food issues differently. For example, Table 1 shows that, while the groups are approximately equally concerned about foodborne illness, those who have a positive view of MAHA are much more worried about food additives.

Table 1. Extent to Which Participants are Worried about Food Additives and Foodborne Illness, Across Perspectives on MAHA

	Food Additives		Foodborne Illness	
	Positive View of MAHA	Negative View of MAHA or Unaware of MAHA	Positive View of MAHA	Negative View of MAHA or Unaware of MAHA
Very worried	35%	22%	27%	23%
Somewhat worried	43%	45%	39%	40%
Not very worried	17%	26%	26%	29%
Not at all worried	5%	7%	9%	8%

Perceptions of Food System Players

Media reports often suggest that supporters of MAHA tend to be untrusting of the food system. While this may be true of some MAHA leaders, we do not find evidence of increased distrust – in fact, just the opposite. MAHA supporters had higher mean levels of trust for farmers, food manufacturers, grocery stores, restaurants, and government than those who either had a negative view of MAHA or who were unaware of MAHA (see Figure 1). Both groups continue to report the highest level of trust for farmers.



However, those who supported MAHA also viewed food firm sizes differently (see Table 2). While the majority of both groups thought food manufacturers were too large, those with a positive view of MAHA were more likely to agree that grocery stores, restaurant, and farmers were also too large. This is in line with the broader MAHA initiatives critique of the role of large players in the food system (e.g., [Oprysko, 2025](#); [MAHA Report: Make Our Children Healthy Again, 2025](#); [Cprysko, 2025](#)).

Table 2. Proportion of participants who think each group in the food system is “too big”

	Positive View of MAHA	Negative View of MAHA or Unaware of MAHA
Farmers	31%	15%
Food Manufacturers	69%	63%
Grocery Stores	60%	48%
Restaurants	50%	34%

Conclusions

Using results from the most recent wave of the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey, we discuss Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) supporters’ food system beliefs – including perceptions of food system safety and trust in food system players. We also discuss what consumer characteristics are associated with positive perceptions of MAHA.

First, we find MAHA supporters are not broadly concerned about food safety or untrusting of food system players. MAHA supporters agree at high rates that the food system produces food that is safe and report higher levels of trust in food system players than those who were either unaware of MAHA or had a negative view of MAHA. However, they report high levels of concern about specific issues, including food additives, and show higher levels of concern about food firm size.

These results appear to be in line with the central messaging from the Make America Healthy Commission, which noted, “the American food system is safe but could be healthier” and focused its criticism on consumption of ultra-processed foods, the use of food additive ingredients, pesticide use in food production, the size and influence of some food firms, etc. ([MAHA Report: Make Our Children Healthy Again, 2025](#)).

Second, in line with our previous discussion of MAHA and politics (*farmdoc daily*, [May 30, 2025](#)), our results show that MAHA support is highly tied to political ideology. Here, we also highlight that support for MAHA is also related to consumers’ experiences with the food system – namely, experience with farmers markets *increase* likelihood to support MAHA, whereas personal or familial experience in agriculture, living in a rural area, or utilizing nutrition assistance programs *decrease* a participant’s likelihood. Interestingly, other characteristics – including having children, gender, income, age, and education – were unrelated.

As MAHA’s role in the food system is quickly evolving, the Gardner Food and Agricultural Policy Survey will continue to monitor public perceptions of the initiative.

References

- Bottemiller Evich, H. (2025). "Washington strikes back over MAHA commission report." *Food Fix*. <https://foodfix.co/washington-strikes-back-over-maha-commission-report/>
- Coleman, T. (2025). "MAHA moms: the cohort of women backing RFK Jr.'s health agenda." *The Week*. <https://theweek.com/health/maha-moms-rfk-jr-health-agenda>
- Cprysko, C. (2025). "MAHA report whacks the influence industry." *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2025/05/22/maha-report-whacks-the-influence-industry-00366683>
- Demopoulos, A. (2025). "Rise of the Maha moms: the momfluencers embracing RFK's push for a 'healthier' America." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/jan/13/rfk-jr-moms-health-trump>
- Executive Order No. 14212 (2025). <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/02/19/2025-02871/establishing-the-presidents-make-america-healthy-again-commission>
- Kalaizandonakes, M., J. Coppess and B. Ellison. "Public Perspectives of Make America Healthy Again and the Food System." *farmdoc daily* (15):99, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, May 30, 2025. <https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2025/05/public-perspectives-of-make-america-healthy-again-and-the-food-system.html>
- Kennard, E. and Manto, M. (2025). "The MAHA Report Cites Studies That Don't Exist." *NOTUS*. <https://www.notus.org/health-science/make-america-healthy-again-report-citation-errors>
- Newman, J. and Andrews, N. (2025). "How MAHA Moms and RFK Jr. Are Spooking Food Companies." *The Wall Street Journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/business/how-maha-moms-and-rfk-jr-are-spooking-food-companies-64f639e9>
- Oprysko, C. (2025). "MAHA report whacks the influence industry." *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2025/05/22/maha-report-whacks-the-influence-industry-00366683>
- Reed, T. (2025). "RFK Jr.'s not-so-secret weapon: the moms." *Axios*. <https://www.axios.com/2025/04/30/rfk-moms-online-influencers>
- Schemmel, A. (2025). "Key Trump voting bloc has concerns with MAHA report, as Trump officials give assurances." *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/key-trump-voting-bloc-has-concerns-maha-report-trump-officials-give-assurances>
- Seitz, A. and Price, M. (2025). "RFK Jr.'s MAHA report raises concerns about vaccines, American foods and prescription drugs." *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/kennedy-vaccines-food-supply-pesticides-prescription-drugs-de043eb2e0ef7de889416b98141b9078>
- Stone, W. (2025). "MAHA Commission report paints a dark picture of U.S. children's health." *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/05/22/nx-s1-5406772/rfk-maha-commission-report-childrens-health>
- "The MAHA Report: Make Our Children Healthy Again." (2025). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/WH-The-MAHA-Report-Assessment.pdf>

Appendix

Table 1A. Logistic Regression Output

Variables	DV= MAHA Supporter
Political Ideology (Base: Moderate)	
Very Liberal	0.01 (0.24)
Liberal	0.02 (0.22)
Conservative	0.38 (0.21)
Very Conservative	0.83*** (0.26)
Female	0.10 (0.15)
Income (Base: <\$25,000 annual household income)	
\$25,000-\$49,999	0.16 (0.23)
\$50,000-\$74,999	0.14 (0.26)
\$75,000-\$99,999	0.24 (0.29)
\$100,000-\$149,999	0.16 (0.29)
\$150,000-\$199,999	-0.10 (0.38)
\$200,000+	-0.24 (0.37)
Geography (Base: Urban)	
Suburban	-0.20 (0.17)
Rural	-0.57*** (0.22)
Region (Base: East)	
South	0.25 (0.21)
Midwest	0.47 (0.24)
West	-0.12 (0.24)
Age (Base: 18-24 years old)	
25-34	-0.10 (0.27)
35-44	-0.46 (0.28)
45-54	-0.35 (0.27)
55-64	-0.38 (0.28)
65+	-0.10 (0.28)
Children (Base: no children under 18 in household)	0.04 (0.18)
Farm Family (Base: no farm family ¹)	-0.61*** (0.24)
Nutrition Assistance (Base: no nutrition assistance ²)	-0.79*** (0.18)
Farmers Market Goer (Base: has not been to farmers market in last	0.72***

two weeks)	(0.16)
2024 Trump Voter (Base: did not vote for Trump in 2024 election ³)	1.50***
	(0.18)
College Education (Base: less than 4-year Bachelor's degree)	0.27
	(0.18)
Constant	1.50**
	(0.62)

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.01$ and ** $p < 0.05$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1755$; The dependent variable (MAHA Supporter) takes the value of 1 when a participant indicated they viewed Make America Healthy Again is either somewhat or very positive and the value of 0 when the participant indicated that they viewed it as negative (somewhat or very) or were unaware of the initiative. Details on both the dependent and independent variables can be found in the Data & Methods section above. Base categories listed above. (1) Farm Family refers to participants who answered yes to “Do you or anyone in your immediate family (grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts, or uncles) farm or ranch for a living?” (2) Nutrition Assistance refers to participants who answered yes to “Is your household currently participating in any food and nutrition assistance program (SNAP, WIC, School Meals, etc.)?” (3) 2024 Trump Voter refers to participants who indicated that they voted for Donald Trump in the 2024 Presidential Election. The base includes both those who voted for another candidate and those who did not vote in the election. Pseudo $R^2 = 0.1755$