

**Focus Groups on Consumer Understanding and Behaviors
Related to Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives
Moderator's Guide**

Appendix III

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I. Introduction and Ground Rules [5 min.]

Thanks for joining us today. I'm _____, and this is my colleague_____. We're from RTI, a research company based in Durham, NC. On behalf of FDA, RTI is conducting discussions with individuals like yourselves around the country. The focus of our discussion today is on plant-based products, such as, almond, rice, or soy beverages, sometimes also called milks. Your insights are very important to us, and your time today is appreciated. We will have about 90 minutes for our discussion.

Before we get started there are a few things I need to mention. I know when you all came into the facility they had you read and sign an informed consent form, but I would like to review the key elements in that form.

- First, your participation is voluntary. You don't have to answer any of our questions that make you uncomfortable, and you can leave at any point in the discussion. There's no penalty to you for doing so.
- Having said that, we do not think there are any risks to you for participating in today's discussion. We're going to ask for your views and opinions about plant-based foods. There are no particular benefits to your participation, either, although you will be contributing to FDA's understanding of what American consumers know and think about plant-based products. You

will receive a token of appreciation of \$75 at the end of the discussion as a “thank you” for taking the time to join us today.

- Next, everything you say here today will be kept secure under the Privacy Act to the extent provided by law, which means we will never use your name in anything we write about the project. When preparing our report for FDA, we might use a quote from someone in the group, but we would only say, “A participant in [CITY] said.”
- We are also audio- and video-recording today’s discussion. This is so we have an accurate record of what was said when we do our analysis. The files are stored on secure servers at RTI and FDA, are only available to members of the project team, and will be destroyed once the project is completed.
- We also have some observers today from the project team at FDA: [NOTE ANY OBSERVERS BEHIND the GLASS]; we are also livestreaming today’s discussion so that FDA staff who could not be here in [CITY] can log in and view the discussion. All staff who are observing have had to complete our human subjects training and must maintain your confidentiality.

Do you have any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]

Great! Let me tell you just a couple of rules to make sure our discussion flows smoothly today. If you could, please speak one at a time. This will ensure that I can hear everybody and that everyone’s perspective can be included in our study. Also, there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions I ask. Feel free to express an opinion that’s different from others in the room – we want to hear the full range of views on this topic. Please silence your cell phones at this time. Finally, if you need to step out for any reason, please feel free to do so. The restrooms are [DESCRIBE LOCATION]. But I would ask that not everyone decide to go at the same time!

Any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]

Let’s get started!

II. Warm-up [5 min.]

Let’s go around the room and please tell us just your first name and how many people live in your household, and something interesting about yourself. I’ll go first... [MODERATOR GO FIRST]

III. Expectations Regarding Naming Terminology [15 min.]

As I mentioned when we started, tonight, we are going to talk about plant-based beverages, such as almond, rice, or soy-based beverages. One thing I'm not talking about are juices, like Naked Fruit juice, for instance. Does that make sense? I want to make sure we are all on the same page.

1. **[PASS OUT EXERCISE 1]** First, I need your help coming up with what to call these products. When you think about products like almond, soy and almond beverages, what would you broadly call this class of products? For instance, we might call bread, rolls, and biscuits a "bread" product. What would you call broadly the product with almond, soy and rice beverages? On your own, write down the term you would use then we will discuss as a group. [Moderator: Write ideas on a white board.]
 - a. [If not mentioned] Sometimes these products are called "milk" products. Would you call them "milks"? Why or why not?
 - b. [If not mentioned] Would you call them a "dairy" product? Why or why not?
 - c. [If not mentioned] Would you call them a "non-dairy" product.
2. How does the name of these products change your expectations?
 - a. [Probe] For instance, is "almond milk" and an "almond beverage" the same thing?
3. Do you believe people who consume these products understand what they are purchasing when they choose them? [Probe for: milk, dairy alternative, healthy beverage, etc.]

For the rest of this group, I'm going to call all these products plant-based beverages. I want you to use the term you would describe them, but for the sake of having a common term that we are all using today, that is what I'm going to call them.

[Handout Exercise 2] I want to get some initial reactions from you before we talk about them as group, so I'm passing around a survey that should only take 2 minutes.

IV. Usage and Attitudes [15 min.]

4. Have you seen these plant-based beverages in your grocery store?
5. What do you think about them? [Moderator: keep this brief, just first reactions.]
6. Which of them, if any, do you buy for yourself or your family? [Moderator: please write down on a flipchart the names/types of plant-based dairy alternatives that participants buy.]
7. How often do you buy them compared to cow's milk? [Moderator: listen carefully to participants' personal stories; they may say that they do not buy cow's milk at all, or that they only buy cow's milk and dairy alternative sometimes, etc.]
8. Approximately when did you start buying these products?
9. What made you start buying these products? [Probe for: lactose intolerance, vegetarian/vegan diet, just wanting to limit milk consumption, animal welfare, environmental issues, etc.]
 - a. Why do you continue to buy these products?

10. How do you, most often, use these products? /What are the occasions in which you use them?
[Probe for: with coffee, drinking with meals, for smoothies, to use in recipes/which ones?]

V. Perception of Nutritional Characteristics [15 min.]

[Moderator: please stay neutral, i.e., don't give participants the impression that you think plant-based products are healthier than milk or vice-versa.]

11. To what extent are these plant-based products good/healthy for you?
a. [For Parents Group] Do you buy these products for your children? Why
b. [For Parents Group] To what extent are these healthy for your children?
12. To what extent could these plant-based products replace, or not, cow's milk for you or your family? [Moderator: refer to the list on a flipchart.]
13. To what extent are they, or not, equal to cow's milk? [Moderator: If similarities/differences are pointed out, ask: how are they similar/different?
14. What are the specific advantages of these plant-based products for you and your family?
a. [Moderator: if not mentioned probe about health benefits.]
b. How do these benefits of plant-based products compare to cow's milk?
15. What are the disadvantages of these plant-based products for you and your family?
16. How nutritious do you think plant-based products are?
a. What kind of nutrients do they provide? [Moderator: ask about soy, almond, rice products, etc.]
17. How nutritious are they compared to cow's milk?
a. Are they lacking any nutrients?
b. Do they have additional nutrients?

VI. Creative Exercise - Sentence Completion [15 min.]

[Please pass out **Exercise 3** and ask participants to fill them out. When they are finished ask them what words they have put in.]

- When I see the name "milk" on the box, _____ comes to my mind.
- When I see the name "beverage" on the box, _____ comes to my mind.
- When I see the name "drink" on the box, _____ comes to my mind.

[This exercise can also use pictures and bubbles to fill in.]

- Dear, please buy soy _____ in the store.
- Dear, please buy almond _____ in the store.
- Dear, please buy rice _____ in the store.

[Moderator, please write the answers on the flip chart.]

VII. Reactions to Mock-Ups [15 min.]

[We will show participants several product mock-ups and ask a set of questions after each mock-up. The order of showing these mock-ups will be rotated in consecutive groups. Almond, soy and coconut mock-ups will be alternatively shown in different groups.]

Mock-ups [Alternate Almond, Soy, and Coconut mock-ups]

Visual: a printout of a fictitious “milk-like” box with labels (with NF labels available), such as; Almond Milk, Almond Beverage, Almond Drink, Non-Dairy Almond Milk, etc. **We could also include examples of soy, rice and/or other beverages; reviewers please discuss.*

17. What are your first impressions of this product?
18. Would you purchase it for yourself or your family? Why? How would you consume it/use it?
19. What are your expectations of this product?
20. What are your expectations of this product as compared to cow’s milk, and other products you have seen here?
21. What else would you like to see on this label in order to feel well informed?

[Moderator: Show all labels at the same time]

22. **[Hand out Exercise 4]** Which one of these would you purchase for yourself or your family? Why? [Moderator: ask participants to order labels from the one that they would most likely purchase to the one they would be least likely to purchase.]

**At this point, we may want to consider showing nutritional content for all shown products and then ask if this changes how participants think about them?*

VIII. Close [5 min.]

[Moderator: Ask questions from observers.]

23. Those are all the questions that I had for you. Any final thoughts for me?

Thank you and good bye.