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Coca-Cola's Juice Boxes Not Actually Healthy, Class Suit Says

By **Collin Krabbe**

Law360 (March 29, 2023, 9:03 PM EDT) -- A California man says in a proposed class action that Coca-Cola Co. is misrepresenting its Minute Maid brand juice boxes as being healthy, when the drinks actually increase the risk of chronic disease.

Gary Reynolds says in his **lawsuit** filed Tuesday in California federal court that as best he can recall, he has bought the drinks in lemonade, fruit punch and apple juice flavors, and he relied on the statements "Minute Maid Juice Boxes Are Good For You!" and "Enjoy Minute Maid Juice Boxes as Part of a Healthy, Balanced Diet" and images of whole fruit on the labels.

"Coca-Cola is well aware that consumers prefer healthful foods and are willing to pay more for, or purchase more often, products marketed and labeled as healthy," the suit said, adding that the company "has taken advantage of this by marketing the Juice Boxes as healthy options, including by promoting them with health and wellness messages directly on their labeling and packaging."

The suit says that when fruit is processed into fruit juice, its "natural food matrix" is destroyed, concentrating and releasing sugar from natural encasing. In particular, the suit alleges that juice consumption increases risk of cardiovascular heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, metabolic disease, liver disease, obesity, hypertension and high blood triglycerides.

Plus, Reynolds says Coca-Cola's "health & wellness" messaging and imaging on the drink boxes are likely to deceive reasonable consumers, and that the company "preys on preexisting misconceptions that juice is healthy." He also alleges that it intentionally leaves out material information regarding the "detrimental" health effects of consuming juice.

Finally, he says, the juice boxes and their labeling violate California Health and Safety Code. The company also breaks the FDA's nutrient content regulations and fortification policy, he alleges.

Reynolds proposes a class of all people in the U.S., plus a subclass for people in California, who bought any of the juice boxes at issue for personal or household use "at any time from four years preceding [Tuesday] to the time a class is notified."

He seeks damages and brings claims for breaking California's Unfair Competition Law, False Advertising Law and Consumers Legal Remedies Act, breaches of express warranties, breach of implied warranty of merchantability, negligent misrepresentation, intentional misrepresentation and unjust enrichment.

A representative for Coca-Cola could not be immediately reached for comment Wednesday.

Counsel information for Coca-Cola was not immediately available.

Reynolds is represented by Jack Fitzgerald, Paul Joseph, Melanie Persinger, Trevor Flynn and Caroline Emhardt of Fitzgerald Joseph LLP.

The case is Reynolds v. The Coca-Cola Co., case number 23-cv-1446, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

--Editing by Linda Voorhis.

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