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Dunkin' Brands Shareholders Deliver Strong Call for Disclosure on Nanomaterials in Food Products

First-of-its-Kind Shareholder Vote on Nanomaterials Supported by 23%

OAKLAND, CA - Shareholders sent a strong message today to Dunkin' Brands Board of Directors that they want the company to prepare a report about the risks of using nanomaterials in foods – and how the company might avoid or reduce such risk. This proposal on nanomaterials in food, the first of its kind to go to a vote, was supported by 23% of shareholders representing \$547 million at Dunkin' Brands' annual general meeting.

The resolution was filed by As You Sow, a shareholder advocacy group, due to Dunkin' Brands' failure to address investor concerns arising from the company's use of [titanium dioxide nanoparticles in its white powdered donuts](#). Nanotechnology is the science of manipulating matter at the molecular scale.

Nanomaterials have not been proven safe for human consumption, and many have been found to be toxic in animal studies and in vitro studies. A UCLA study found that ingesting titanium dioxide nanoparticles causes genetic damage and inflammatory response in mice.

"This vote demonstrates that investors do not want Dunkin' flying blind on this important issue," said Danielle Fugere, President and Chief Counsel at [As You Sow](#). "Using technology before it is proven safe exposes the company to the risk of future litigation, as well as consumer backlash," added Fugere. The requested report would ensure that Dunkin' investigates whether there are potential health risks from using nanoparticles in food and, if so, that it either eliminates, or discloses, the use of nanomaterials until they are proven safe through long-term testing.

Regulatory bodies in the U.S. and the European Union have concluded that nanoparticles have the potential to raise risks not seen in their full size counterparts. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recognized that "nanomaterials can have different chemical, physical, or biological properties than their conventionally-scaled counterpart materials,"¹ but has not yet adopted food safety regulations pertaining to nanoparticles. Similarly, the European Union's Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks concluded that "health and environmental hazards have been demonstrated for a variety of manufactured nanomaterials," that "nanomaterials are similar to normal chemicals/substances in that some may be toxic and some may not," and that "a case-by-case approach for the risk assessment of nanomaterials is still warranted."²

The shareholder proposal filed by As You Sow calls on Dunkin' to identify products or packaging that currently contains nanomaterials, and discuss any actions management is taking to reduce or eliminate risk associated with human health and environmental impacts.

¹ Food & Drug Administration, 2012, *Fact Sheet: Nanotechnology*.

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/IngredientsAdditivesGRASPackaging/ucm300914.htm>

² European Commission, 2012, Second Regulatory Review on Nanomaterials, p.5. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0572:FIN:en:PDF>



As You Sow previously released [*Slipping Through the Cracks*](#), an issue brief highlighting the potential risks of nanotechnology for human health and for companies who are knowingly or unknowingly using it in their products.

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As You Sow is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit www.asyousow.org.