

## Report: Watch Nano-Based Food Products

by Gwyneth K. Shaw | Dec 8, 2011 10:34 am

**(NHI Nanoblog)** Andrew Schneider, an investigative journalist who's been tracking the emergence of nano-technology in food and food-related products, has an interesting story about a recent report on the latest developments.

In Food Safety News, Schneider writes up a new report from **As You Sow**, an environmental and social advocacy group. The report advises caution on introducing super-small nanoparticles into food and packaging and advocates for safety testing before the ultra-tiny materials hit the shelves.

The report also expresses concern that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is behind the curve in terms of ensuring safety in this area—a common complaint from consumer and health advocates.

Nanotechnology leverages the often amazing properties of super-small engineered particles (a nanometer is a billionth of a meter). These tiny materials can make airplane wings stronger, through the introduction of nearly weightless carbon nanotubes, or make exterior paint self-cleaning with nano-titanium dioxide. Shrinking these materials, however, sometimes changes the way they interact with the world around them, raising serious questions about their impact on health and the environment.

Toxicologists around the world are trying to figure out what's dangerous and what's not, as governments grapple with how to proceed. But the pace of innovation may outstrip efforts to promote safety.

Nanoparticles are prized as a way to keep food fresher longer, through nanoclays and other products. Experts say they're likely to also be explored as a way to improve taste or texture, like a low-fat ice cream that has the yumminess of Haagen-Dazs.

The FDA announced last summer, in concert with several other federal agencies, that it plans to look more closely at nano-enabled products. But little has happened, at least in the public arena.

Keep an eye on Schneider (who also blogs about his work), who is well-sourced and has emerged as a journalistic authority on nano food.