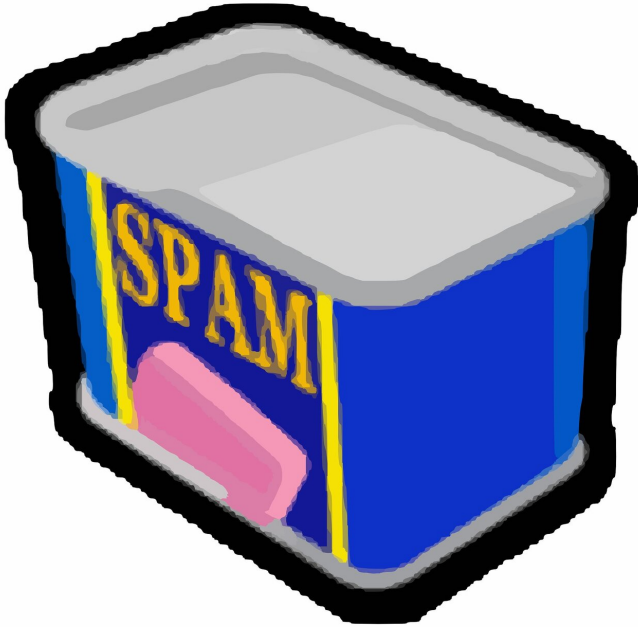


Hormel seeks metaverse trademarks for Spam and Mr. Peanut

13 July 2022, by Brooks Johnson



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Mr. Peanut is headed to the metaverse.

Hormel Foods is seeking [trademark](#) protections for NFTs and other virtual products related to its largest brands.

The Austin, Minn.-based company joins a handful of other major food companies making early moves toward this digital frontier, including Kraft Heinz, Conagra Brands and Coca-Cola.

"They want to make sure they're protected; they want to cover themselves because the competition is doing it; they think they can monetize it; and they don't want to run into any roadblocks in the future," said Michael Kondoudis, a trademark attorney.

A non-fungible token, or NFT, is proof of ownership of a digital asset. These ownership stakes, in

digital art and sports collectibles especially, have sold for eye-popping sums—though the market has slumped along with the broader cryptocurrency market this year.

The trademark applications for Spam, Planters, Skippy, Mr. Peanut and Hormel cover digital products such as photos and videos backed by NFTs and "downloadable virtual goods, namely food and beverage products for use in virtual worlds," according to U.S. Patent and Trademark Office filings made July 6.

Hormel is also seeking trademark protections for a virtual marketplace and "entertainment services" related to its brands. The metaverse is essentially an interactive virtual-reality internet.

While Hormel didn't provide specifics on what it plans to do with the brands in the [virtual world](#), trademarks need to be used in order to be granted. The company has up to 4 1/2 years to make that happen from the date of filing, Kondoudis said.

He said it's likely a matter of when and not if other food companies move to protect their brands and try to monetize the metaverse. Most national restaurant chains have filed their own metaverse trademarks already.

"Anything you can find in a [grocery store](#)—eventually you're going to see a [metaverse](#) trademark application for that [brand](#)," he said.

Companies want to be sure others can't use and profit off their brands, and it's not yet settled whether trademarks for physical goods cover computer code, Kondoudis said.

Kondoudis said many companies getting in now are expecting improved technology and the ability to pay for ready-made solutions in the coming years, rather than having to develop technology in-house.

"Now it's kind of a novelty, but everyone is banking on in three or four years you should be able to easily enter the market."

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