



Australian Government

Department of Health

Submission to the inquiry into the role of development partnerships in agriculture

The Australian Government Department of Health actively participates in a number of international fora engaging directly with diplomatic partners to improve health outcomes in our region and protect Australia's national interest.

The Department of Health recognises the importance of continued investment in initiatives that address nutrition and the prevention of non-communicable diseases in the Indo-pacific region.

Food and nutrition security is a significant global public health priority that requires national action and international collaboration. Australia has and continues to communicate with other countries (including in the Indo-Pacific region) regarding such issues, including through the World Health Organisation (WHO) to promote good nutrition and strengthen food safety capacity. The Department has also recently assisted Fiji in developing a rating system to identify healthier food options.

The following activities and areas of participation and contribution by Australia are of relevance to the inquiry.

The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) was held jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WHO from 19-21 November 2014, with the participation of more than 170 Member States (including 85 Ministers), high-level guests including the Pope and several royals, and 250 representatives of civil society and the private sector. The goal of ICN2 was to refocus global attention on addressing malnutrition in all its forms through policies that effectively address today's major nutrition challenges.

Australia actively participated in the ICN2, including in the development of the high-level outcomes statement, the *Rome Declaration on Nutrition*, and *Framework for Action*. Noting the multi-sectoral nature of nutrition, Australia was represented at the conference by three agencies, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture. ICN2 saw the successful adoption of both documents.

The Rome Declaration

The Rome Declaration calls on countries to eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide, particularly under-nutrition in children, anaemia in women and children - among other micronutrient deficiencies - as well as reverse the trend in obesity.



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Framework for Action (FFA)

The voluntary FFA, prepared by the FAO and WHO Secretariats, provides a ten year strategy to guide implementation of the Rome Declaration commitments through policy options. ICN2 called on the United Nations (UN) General Assembly to endorse the Rome Declaration and FFA and to declare a Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025.

Next steps

The Rome Declaration and FFA were considered by both the WHO Executive Board (EB) at its 136th session in January 2015 and the 68th World Health Assembly in May 2015. The EB decided to request the Director General to facilitate consideration by the UN General Assembly, of a Decade of Action on Nutrition within existing structures and available resources and recommended that the World Health Assembly endorse both ICN2 outcome documents. The World Health Assembly subsequently endorsed the two documents, calling on Member States to implement commitments to the Rome Declaration and the set of voluntary policy options set out in the FFA.

The 70th Session of the UN General Assembly is currently considering the declaration of a Decade of Action as called for in the Rome Declaration.

Global Action on Nutrition

Australia, as an active Member State of the WHO, has also endorsed a number of resolutions concerning nutrition including:

- Resolution WHA65.6 on a comprehensive implementation plan for maternal, infant and young child nutrition.
- Resolution WHA66.10 on the follow up to the Political Declaration of the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases.

Australia also supports the WHO's Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of non-communicable diseases.

Regional Action

Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015

Australia recently attended the 65th WHO Western Pacific Regional Committee Meeting, 12-16 October 2015, and participated in discussions to renew the Western Pacific Regional Food Strategy 2011-2015 (the Strategy).



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The Strategy serves as a key tool to reduce the health and social burden of foodborne diseases in the region. Further action will be required after 2015 to continue to strengthen national food safety systems and ensure that robust food regulation systems are in place for the protection of public health and economic stability.

Health Star Rating System

The Health Star Rating (HSR) system was developed by the Australian, state and territory governments in collaboration with industry, public health and consumer groups. The HSR system is a front-of-pack labelling system that rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns it a rating from ½ a star to 5 stars. It provides a quick, easy, standard way to compare similar packaged foods. The more stars, the healthier the choice.

On 27 April 2015, the Fijian Ministry of Health and Medical Services wrote to the Australian Department of Health seeking permission to use the HSR system in Fiji.

On 11 June 2015, the Australian Department of Health responded to the Fijian Minister for Health and Medical Services welcoming Fiji's interest in implementing the HSR system, but noting a number of legal, technical and regulatory issues that underpin the HSR system which Fiji would need to consider if it were to introduce the HSR. No further communication has occurred between Fiji and the Australian Department of Health.
