Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Public Hearing (GM), 18 April 2011

Question: 1

OUTCOME 1

Hansard Page: CA8

Senator Boyce asked:

In relation to percentage thresholds for other countries for the presence of GM material in food, will FSANZ:

(a) provide a list of the percentage thresholds for other countries for the presence of GM material in food.; and

(b) provide an explanation as to why there are variations in these thresholds?

Answer:

(a) International threshold levels which trigger the requirement for labelling of GM ingredients, based on unintended and intended presence of GM material are shown in the Table below.[1]

Country	Labelling Scheme	Product-based [a] or process-based [b]	Labelling Coverage	% Threshold
United States	Voluntary	Product	All products based on GM content	N/A
Argentina	Voluntary	Product	All products based on GM content	N/A
China	Mandatory	Process	List; products derived from GM, food sold in restaurants	None (0%)
European Union	Mandatory	Process	Food, feed, additives, flavours, products derived from GM, food sold in restaurants	0.9%
Russia	Mandatory	Product	All products based on GM content	0.9%
Australia & New Zealand	Mandatory	Product	All products based on GM content	1.0%
Brazil	Mandatory	Process	Food, feed, products derived from GM, meat and animal products from animals fed GM feed	1.0%
Saudi Arabia	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	1.0%
South Korea	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	3.0% [c]
Canada	Voluntary	Product	All products based on GM content	5.0% [d]
Philippines	Voluntary	Product	All products based on GM content	5.0%
Japan	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	5.0% [e]
Thailand	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	5.0% [f]

[1] Table adapted from Gruère GP, Rao SR. (2007). A Review of International Labeling Policies of Genetically Modified Food to Evaluate India's Proposed Rule. AgBioForum. 10(1):51-64.

Indonesia	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	5.0% [f]
Taiwan	Mandatory	Product	Specified food items	5.0%

[a] Product-based labelling targets the presence of GM in the final food.
[b] Process-based labelling requires labelling on any product derived from a GM crop or if GM technology was used as a production process, irrespective of the presence of GM material in the final food.
[c] GM material is present at up to 3% of the top five major ingredients in each product.
[d] Threshold applied only when voluntary negative claims are made e.g. 'not a product of genetic engineering'.
[e] GM material is present in the top three raw ingredients and accounts for less than 5% of the total weight.
[f] GM material is present at up to 5% of the three main ingredients in each product.

(b) Variations in international labelling approaches, including thresholds for the presence of GM material, are illustrated in the response to the table above.

Differences in threshold levels are likely to occur for a variety of reasons, such as for the purposes of international trade, to mitigate compliance and enforcement costs, the costs of food products and efficacy of detection methods used.

Legislative development processes in other countries are not always readily accessible and the specific reasons why each country has selected a particular threshold may not be apparent.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Public Hearing (GM), 18 April 2011

Question: 2

OUTCOME 1

Hansard Page: CA11

Senator Xenophon asked:

Does the National Compliance and Monitoring Strategy for GM Foods include a requirement for the States and Territories to undertake periodic testing?

Answer:

The Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC) National Compliance and Monitoring Strategy for Genetically Modified Foods (the Strategy) and Compliance Guide (User Guide) for Standard 1.5.2 – Food produced using Gene Technology of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* was provided by the Department of Health and Ageing in response to an Estimates Question on Notice (E10-040) on 1 December 2010 (http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/estimates/sup_1011/doha/index.htm).

I understand that there is no requirement for periodic testing in the Strategy. However, jurisdictions are currently discussing the national surveillance program for GM foods that will form part of the roll-out of the Strategy. Key discussion points under consideration include:

- compliance tools (e.g. analytical testing, document review)
- a proposal for a national survey where testing will be a likely component
- short term and long term strategies
- the utilisation of expert advice
- keeping abreast of technologies for both qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Jurisdictions are strongly committed to the ISC process to ensure a nationally consistent approach to the implementation of the Strategy.