

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-11, 23 February 2011

Question: E11-025

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: S-26 BABY FORMULA

Written Question on Notice

Senator Xenophon asked:

Since the last Estimates, I understand FSANZ has conducted its own tests of the S-26 baby formula. However despite one of the two laboratories finding all six samples to contain traces of GM, you have considered the results to be 'false positives'.

- a) On what basis have you made this decision?
- b) Do you still not consider that parents have a right to know whether the formula their feeding their infant contains GM ingredients - no matter what the level?

Answer:

- a) FSANZ did not conclude that the test results obtained in one of the laboratories were 'false positives'. Rather, FSANZ considers that both false positive and false negative results are possible using the extremely sensitive PCR method of analysis. As a result, testing at the lowest limit of detection is not particularly reliable.

Please also refer to FSANZ's response on 23 February 2011 (Hansard page CA 101).

- b) The existing labelling laws for GM foods, which are based on the presence of novel DNA or novel protein in the final food, allow consumers to make an informed choice at the time of purchase. The 1% threshold for unintended presence of GM material is a practical measure, recognising that bulk handling, transport and processing of food commodities can result in some crossover between consignments.