

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-14, 20 November 2013

Question: E13-185

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Front-of-Package Labelling

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: McKenzie

Question:

It has been stated in answer to a question that the algorithm has been recalibrated to reflect properly the role of dairy and that that work has finished. Can you clarify what outcome is considered to properly reflect dairy and who has signed off on this to warrant it be considered finished?

Answer:

Within the Health Star Rating Calculator (HSRC) - the algorithm that generates the star rating for food products, dairy foods have been removed from their parent categories, to create three separate dairy categories that have been rescaled to achieve higher (up to five) star ratings. As per the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, 'core dairy food' is limited to milk, cheese, yoghurt and analogues, with the calcium content of the food products being used to determine if the food product is classified as a (core) dairy food.

The resultant six categories of foods in the HSRC are described in the table below.

Category Name	Category Description
Category 1	Beverages other than dairy beverages
Category 1D	Dairy beverages
Category 2	All other food than those included in Category 1, 1D, 2D, 3, 3D
Category 2D	Dairy foods other than those included in Category 1D or 3D (cheeses < 320mg/100g, yogurt and other fermented milk products)
Category 3	Oils and spreads, defined as follows <ul style="list-style-type: none">- edible oil as defined in Standard 2.4.1- edible oil spreads as defined in Standard 2.4.2- margarine as defined in Standard 2.4.2- butter as defined in Standard 2.5.5
Category 3D	Cheese and processed cheese as defined in Standard 2.5.4 (with calcium content >320 mg/100 g)

The creation of three distinct categories for core dairy products resulted in a greater differentiation in scores for these products. Core dairy products generally receive a rating of at least three stars, which is a result of adjusting the HSRC (rather than a base score). In line with the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommendation to consume reduced and low fat dairy products, higher star ratings are assigned to core dairy products with reduced saturated fat, with full fat counterparts scoring lower star ratings. Products with added sugar are also assigned lower star ratings than those with no added sugar.

In August 2013, the HSRC was circulated to industry and public health stakeholders for a second round of testing and feedback. In considering this feedback, the Front of Pack Labelling Steering and Project Committees, and Technical Design Working Group have agreed that the current version of the HSRC is now producing accurate results for dairy products, which are in-line with the provisions in the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines and Guide to Healthy Eating.

On 13 December 2013, the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) considered refinements to the HSRC to address initial technical issues with respect to dairy. The Forum endorsed the use of the HSRC as part of the voluntary Health Star Rating System.