

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001118

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: FSANZ Input into Labelling Review Recommendations

Type of Question: Hansard Page 108, 22 October 2014

Senator: McLucas, Jan

Question:

Would FSANZ please provide the Committee with a timetable for FSANZ's input into the Blewett Labelling Review recommendations?

Answer:

In March 2012, the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) agreed to a four-year (2012–2015) implementation work plan for the labelling review. At that time, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) was assigned 21 recommendations from the implementation work plan to action.

FSANZ has completed work on five recommendations assigned by the Forum (*see Table 1*).

In June 2014, the Forum further considered its implementation work program and classified a number of recommendations as 'completed' or 'ongoing/as required'. Nine recommendations on the implementation work plan were re-classified as 'completed' or 'ongoing/as required' (*see Table 2*).

FSANZ is currently working on the remaining seven recommendations assigned by the Forum (*see Table 3*). Work on these seven recommendations is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

Table 1: Completed labelling review projects (5)

Labelling Review Recommendation		FSANZ Deliverable	Timeframe
14	The mandatory declaration of total and naturally occurring fibre in the Nutrition Information Panel.	Technical evaluation and advice	Completed June 2014
15	Voluntary declaration of potassium content in the Nutrition Information Panel	Considered as part of Proposal P293 – Nutrition, Health & Related Claims	Completed December 2012
20	Introduce a standard for nutrition, health and related claims	Delivered as part of Proposal P293	Completed December 2012
40	Australia's existing mandatory country-of-origin labelling requirements for food be extended to cover all primary food products for retail sale.	Technical evaluation and advice	Completed June 2014
43	The Perceptible Information Principle be used as a guide for presenting label information.	Technical evaluation and advice	Completed December 2013

Table 2: Outcomes from streamlining of recommendations (9) assigned to FSANZ

Labelling Review Recommendation		Outcomes from the Forum
7	There be more effective monitoring and enforcement of the existing requirements in the Food Standards Code to provide mandatory warning and advisory statements and allergen declarations on packages of food not for retail sale, foods for sale at restaurants and other food outlets, foods from mobile food vendors and vending machines, and foods for catering purposes.	No further action.
11	Industry develop in consultation with government, medical authorities and relevant consumer organisations a voluntary code of practice and education initiatives to enable consumers to quickly identify label information relating to additives, colourings and flavourings that are of agreed medical priority for sensitive consumers.	Ongoing work to continue as required
25	That a suitably worded warning message about the risks of consuming alcohol while pregnant be mandated on individual containers of alcoholic beverages and at the point of sale for unpackaged alcoholic beverages, as support for ongoing broader community education.	The Forum has agreed to provide industry with another two years to implement voluntary labelling initiatives.

Labelling Review Recommendation		Outcomes from the Forum
35	FSANZ and other relevant bodies develop as a matter of urgency a standard for regulating the presence of nanotechnology in the food production chain, consistent with the recommendations in this Report relating to new technologies.	Ongoing.
45	A set of guidelines be developed in consultation with industry that includes reference to other presentation factors such as letter and line spacing, text justification and stroke width.	FSANZ to progress with industry as required.
48	Industry be encouraged to develop a set of guidelines relating to the co-location of mandatory health information presented in a standardised manner on the label. Government should facilitate this process through the provision of appropriate resources and expertise.	As required. FSANZ is to provide advice on any guidelines developed by industry.
49	The development of an automated label assessment tool be investigated that can gauge a label's compliance with mandated legibility requirements and those stipulated in relevant voluntary codes.	No further action.
60	Food standards always be drafted with the understanding that they are intended to be enforceable legal documents. Where current deficiencies in the labelling requirements have been identified, standards should be re-drafted to make the obligations clear.	Ongoing work as required.
61	<p>A new and effectively resourced entity in the form of a trans-Tasman Food Labelling Bureau be established under the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 to undertake the functions as specified in this Report and more generally to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) be the primary contact for, and source of, food labelling information and advice; (b) undertake research into food labelling issues; (c) undertake a general educational role in relation to food labelling issues and requirements; (d) assist industry to comply with labelling requirements; (e) act as a clearinghouse for complaints and facilitate compliance and the resolution of complaints; (f) monitor and report on food labelling compliance; (g) monitor consumer values issues claims on labels and liaise with consumer protection agencies in relation to confusing, misleading or deceptive food labelling. 	Continuation of the work already being undertaken by FSANZ.

Table 3: Remaining active labelling review projects (7)

Labelling Review Recommendation		FSANZ Deliverable	Timeframe
6	That the food safety elements on the food label be reviewed with the aim to maximise the effectiveness of food safety communication	Technical evaluation and advice	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in mid-2015
12	The terms 'added sugars' and 'added fats' and/or 'added vegetable oils' be used in the ingredient list as the generic term, followed by a bracketed list	Technical evaluation and advice	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in mid-2015
13	The mandatory declaration in the Nutrition Information Panel of all trans fatty acids, if manufactured trans fatty acids have not been phased out of the food supply.	Technical evaluation and advice	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in January 2015
17	That the declaration in the nutrition information panel of per serve amounts be no longer mandatory, unless a daily intake claim is made.	Proposal	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in mid-2015
26	That the energy content of all alcoholic beverages be displayed on their labels.	Cost-benefit analysis	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in mid-2015
34	That the requirement for mandatory labelling of irradiated food be reviewed.	Review	Currently scoping work for commencement in late 2014
47	That warning and advisory statements be emboldened and allergens emboldened in the ingredients list.	Technical evaluation and advice	Work under way Expect to report to Forum in mid-2015