

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014

Ref No: SQ14-001302

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Health Effects of Nanotechnology

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

Across a variety of foods and nanomaterials, would you be able to detect any relevant nanomaterial to a legal certainty; would you be able to determine its quantity and would you have the data or testing capacity to determine whether effects seen in the community could be attributed to a particular nanomaterial? If not: doesn't the lack of capacity to respond to health effects significantly increase the risks associated with nanomaterials in foods?

Answer:

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) does not have analytical laboratories. If an analytical survey to measure a specific nanoscale material in food were to be commissioned by FSANZ, the work would be contracted to a commercial analytical testing laboratory.

Tendering laboratories would need to develop a method to measure the specific nanoscale material in food, noting any technical limitations associated with the method. The same process is applicable to both nanoscale materials and non-nanoscale materials.

FSANZ and other international food regulatory agencies have not identified any health effect known to be associated with new or novel nanoscale materials, following oral ingestion in foods.

Should an adverse health effect be suspected, analytical methodologies would need to be developed in a manner analogous to any other hazardous substance.