

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH PORTFOLIO**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2014 - 2015, 22 October 2014**

**Ref No:** SQ14-001347

**OUTCOME:** 1 – Population Health

**Topic:** Research into Nanomaterials

**Type of Question:** Written Question on Notice

**Senator:** Siewert, Rachel

**Question:**

You indicate in SQ14-000565 that it is the responsibility of manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that the food sold in Australia is safe and suitable. A recent review of environmental, health and safety research into nanomaterials by the National Research Council outlines the woeful lack of information relating to both the environmental and health impacts associated with nanomaterials. They note the lack of study of exposure pathways for food, lack of data on exposed populations, lack of data as to whether and how nanomaterials accumulate along the food chain, lack of studies of non-lethal toxicity, lack of toxicity data for a range of nanomaterials, lack of standardised testing methodologies, etc.

Under these circumstances – and the NRC aren't the only ones that recognise how far environmental, health and safety research is lagging behind commercial application - how can you reasonably expect manufacturers and suppliers to determine the safety of nanomaterials for human consumption?

**Answer:**

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) considers that the current risk assessment framework is generally sufficient to assess the safety of new or novel nanoscale materials. This is consistent with a body of international opinion including that of the European Food Safety Authority, the United States Food and Drug Administration, a Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations / World Health Organisation expert consultation on the application of nanotechnologies in food and agriculture, and the position of the OECD working party on manufactured nanomaterials.