

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Attachment (APD 19)

Question: PIAPH 18

Division/Agency: Product Integrity and Animal Plant Health

Topic: Country of Origin Labelling

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 20 which states; *Consideration of amendments to the Food Standards Code to clarify country of origin labelling requirements.*

1. What 'Consideration' has the department undertaken to clarify country of origin labelling requirements?
2. What are the current requirements for the country of origin labelling on fresh food and on processed food?
3. Is it currently possible of a consumer to find out where processed food which is labelled 'packaged in Australia from import products' comes from?
4. How would the consumers find out where the imported products came from?
5. Is it possible for the department to find out where the imported products came from?
6. Has the department undertaken any work or training exercises on being able to trace back and trace forward ingredients used in processed food?
7. Who within the Department has been talking to Treasury about amending the Trade Practices Act? When were these discussions held?

Answer:

1. The department is developing options to clarify country of origin labelling including the appropriateness of amending the Food Standards Code and the viability of amending safe harbour defences for country of origin statements in the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.
2. Standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code requires all packaged food and unpackaged fresh or processed fruit, vegetables, seafood and pork to be labelled with country of origin.
3. Yes. Further information on specific details can be sought at the point of sale or from the food supplier/importer. Standard 1.2.2 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code requires that the label on a package of food must include the name and business address, in Australia or New Zealand, of the supplier of the food.
4. As per Question 3.
5. Yes. As per Question 3.
6. No.

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7. Senior departmental officers from the Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division met with senior Australian Competition and Consumer Commission officials on 29 August 2008 to discuss the viability of amending the Trade Practices Act.