

A strategy to promote a shared understanding among stakeholders of effective ways to engage in food regulation issues

Engaging in the Australian and New Zealand joint food regulation system

engagement food regulation



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Introduction

The purpose of this document, *Engaging in the Australian and New Zealand joint food regulation system (the strategy)*, is to outline the opportunities for engagement in the joint Australian and New Zealand food regulation system (the joint food regulation system). It aims to create a shared understanding among stakeholders of effective ways to engage in dialogue about food regulation issues. This document:

- Sets out the vision and objectives (page 5).
- Outlines the process for developing the strategy (page 6).
- Sets out the engagement principles that guide the engagement processes, and recognises the constraints on resources that are experienced by all stakeholders (page 7).
- Introduces an engagement framework for the food regulation system, to identify the different levels and types of engagement that are possible (pages 8–9).

Vision

A co-operative and mutually beneficial approach to engagement that promotes clarity, integrity, trust and connectivity, to support a workable and effective joint Australian and New Zealand food regulation system.

Objective

To increase stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the opportunities to engage, and to facilitate fair and equitable engagement among a diverse range of stakeholders.

The success of the strategy depends on a commitment by all stakeholders in the joint food regulation system to adopt and apply a collaborative approach to stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholders in the joint food regulation system are extensive and include individual consumers, industry bodies, primary producers, food manufacturers, importers and retailers, public health organisations, consumer advocacy organisations, community groups, and all levels of government in Australia and New Zealand. These groups often have competing interests and the joint food regulation system aims to satisfy a range of interests, without compromising public health. Even within each of the stakeholder groups there are diverse views. Therefore, stakeholder engagement often focuses on addressing the tensions between these interests and seeks to resolve them.

The joint food regulation system is complex and has broad aims and objectives. It is recognised that food regulation will not always be the one (or only) means for advancing these objectives. There are also a range of other frameworks in place in relation to regulatory and non-regulatory food-related issues. Examples include: initiatives in public health nutrition; healthy eating guidelines; and protection for consumers from false and misleading information about foods.

Background

In late 2011, the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) agreed to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy in recognition that there were opportunities to improve the way stakeholders engaged in the joint food regulation system.

An example of the concerns raised by stakeholders include:

- Communication about key events, processes, decisions and feedback is often ad-hoc and unstructured.
- Information available about the roles, relationships and obligations of the government committees, working groups and agencies in the joint food regulation system is not detailed enough.
- Access to consistent and up-to-date information, and opportunities to participate in government-initiated working groups and advisory committees, is limited.

Stakeholders have also acknowledged that there are many positive aspects to existing engagement processes.

The following stakeholders were approached and agreed to work collaboratively to develop the strategy:

Australian Food and Grocery Council	Dietitians Association of Australia	NZ Heart Foundation
Australian National Retailers Association	Environmental Health Australia	NZ Nutrition Foundation
Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation, Chair	Food Standards Australia New Zealand	Progressive Enterprises—New Zealand
CHOICE	Foodstuffs NZ	Public Health Association of Australia
Coles	Goodman Fielder	Queensland Health
Consumer NZ	New Zealand Food and Grocery Council	Retailers Association
Croplife Australia	NZ Ministry for Primary Industries	Safe Food Production Queensland
Dairy Australia	Northern Territory Health	Sanitarium—New Zealand
Department of Health and Ageing	NSW Food Authority	Unilever
Dietitians—New Zealand	Nutrition Australia	Woolworths

Public consultation on a prototype of the strategy was carried out in June and July 2012. The prototype was further refined to address the feedback received during consultation.

Engagement Principles

To realise the vision and achieve the objective of the strategy, engagement processes are guided by a set of core principles. These are of equal importance, recognising there may be practical limitations, constraints on resources that are experienced by all stakeholders, and a need to prioritise activities within available resources.

<p>PRINCIPLE</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Clear purpose, scope and outcomes</p> <p>Engagement processes should be undertaken with a clear purpose and scope. The constraints and conditions of the engagement process should be communicated to stakeholders. Stakeholders should be aware of how a contribution can affect an outcome.</p>
<p>PRINCIPLE</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Appropriateness and structure</p> <p>Engagement processes should be structured and appropriately designed for each issue being considered, mindful of practical realities. Engagement opportunities should be offered early in the consideration of an issue. Information shared among stakeholders should be recorded and considered before making a decision. The appropriate level of engagement should be clearly articulated for all processes.</p>
<p>PRINCIPLE</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Open communication and collaboration</p> <p>Engagement processes should foster dialogue that is open, genuine and reciprocal. Engagement processes should be based on communication that is adaptable and can occur through multiple channels.</p>
<p>PRINCIPLE</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Inclusiveness and balance</p> <p>Engagement opportunities and processes should enable fair and equitable participation, and should take into account the impacts and benefits of decisions on stakeholders. Engagement processes should include stakeholders from both Australia and New Zealand, where appropriate.</p>
<p>PRINCIPLE</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Commitment, accountability and transparency</p> <p>All stakeholders in the joint food regulation system should commit to improving the quality of engagement. Stakeholders should provide each other with timely, constructive and evidence-based information and be accepting of differing positions. Stakeholders should be mindful to maintain confidentiality of information, where appropriate. Processes and decisions should be transparent.</p>

Engagement Processes

One of the features of the joint food regulation system is the separation of policy decision making from the development of food standards. Generally, food policies are only developed where a significant problem has been identified. Food standards are developed to deal with issues that require a regulatory response. Further information on the engagement processes related to [food policy development](#) and [food standards development](#) is available on the website.

The development of these processes may be initiated and endorsed by government, but may also be proposed by another sector, such as industry, public health or consumer and community advocacy.

In addition to the processes for food policy and food standards development, there are the processes for the [implementation of food standards](#). These are outlined in more detail on the Website. Each of these processes relates to a specific food standard or issue, and the project structure and steps for these types of activities are developed on a case-by-case basis to suit the project scope or specific issue. However, formal and/or informal stakeholder engagement is used to inform and shape the final outcome.

All [current activities](#) of the food regulation system are listed on the website. Engagement opportunities and who to contact are also included.

Projects are also undertaken in the joint food regulation system. Examples of this are the agreement by FRSC to develop this engagement strategy; and the decision by the Forum to develop a voluntary interpretive front-of-pack labelling system. In both these examples, a collaborative approach with stakeholders has been taken.

The engagement framework

The Engagement Framework in Table 2 on page 9 has been developed to give an overview of the different levels and types of stakeholder engagement processes that can be applied within the joint food regulation system.

It is recognised that different engagement methods are needed for different processes and subject matter. Engagement among stakeholders for a particular issue could occur at one or more of the levels identified in the framework. At each of the levels of engagement, the framework includes some possible indicators of whether an engagement process is working well, and provides some broad examples of a situation where the engagement may occur at each of the levels.

It is important to note that each of the levels of engagement can also occur at any stage of the [policy](#), [food standards development](#) and the [implementation](#) processes. It is also important to recognise the practical constraints and limitations on the resources that are available to all stakeholders and that activities need to be prioritised.

The Engagement Framework

Table 2: The food regulation system engagement framework

	ENGAGEMENT LEVEL				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	INITIATE
PURPOSE	To provide good quality sources of information about key activities, engagement opportunities and decisions.	To seek advice and suggestions on a particular process or issue.	To be part of structured dialogue about an issue or process.	To be part of a shared process with a common objective.	To propose a new policy topic. To make an application for a new standard. To propose a new standard.
INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVENESS	Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are aware of sources of information can easily access key information are informed of key activities and milestones in a timely way understand the information provided. 	Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand why advice is needed agree to provide advice provide pertinent advice. 	Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> participate in dialogue perceive that there is an equitable balance of interests represented understand the purpose and intended outcome of the dialogue. 	Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a shared objective and process perceive that there is an equitable balance of interests represented Understand the rationale for group decisions. 	Stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have their issue considered have influenced a process or decision.
POSSIBLE MECHANISM / TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Regulation website FSANZ website Food Regulation Secretariat contact list FSANZ Contact list Advertising Seminars Printed material Forums Jurisdictions may initiate engagement activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad call for comments or written submissions from the Food Regulation Secretariat or FSANZ Direct approach for advice from Jurisdictions or FSANZ Jurisdictions may initiate engagement activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitations to group workshops, meetings and stakeholder forums from the Food Regulation Secretariat or FSANZ One-to-one discussions (by invitation) Jurisdictions may initiate engagement activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working groups / project committees, technical advisory groups or innovation projects (by invitation) Jurisdictions may initiate engagement activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact FSANZ to make an application for, or to propose, a new standard Contact your local member of Parliament, a Forum or FRSC Member, or enforcement agencies in your jurisdiction Jurisdictions may initiate engagement activity.
EXAMPLES	Notifications about items for consultation, or other engagement opportunities such as consultation forums or workshops, will be circulated by the Food Regulation Secretariat and FSANZ or be available on the respective websites. Jurisdictions also share information on their websites.	A FRSC working group or individual jurisdictions may seek comment on the development of a policy and will do so via the Food Regulation website. In seeking input when developing a food standard, FSANZ will issue a call for consultation via its email alerts, website and social media.	In addition to items for broad consultation, ISFR may ask industry stakeholders to be part of a working group to develop approaches to assist in the consistent implementation of a food standard. For example, ISFR worked with the Australian flour millers to develop a National Implementation Strategy for the mandatory fortification standards.	FRSC, FSANZ and jurisdictions may ask for input from stakeholders at various stages of the policy development and standards development processes. For example, a FRSC working group may invite stakeholders with specific technical expertise in the early stages of policy development.	To initiate discussion about a policy issue, correspondence should be directed to a local member of Parliament or enforcement agency in the first instance. To have an issue tabled for discussion at a Forum or FRSC meeting, correspondence should be forwarded to the committees via the Food Regulation Secretariat.

Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation, 2004.



For additional information about this Strategy,
please contact the Food Regulation Secretariat.

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