

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND MINISTERIAL FORUM ON FOOD REGULATION

FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

11 October 2018

The Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) met today to consider a range of food regulation matters. The Forum comprises all Australian and New Zealand Ministers responsible for food regulation, and the Australian Local Government Association and is chaired by Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie. The Forum oversees the collaborative joint Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation System.

Key outcomes from the meeting include:

PREGNANCY WARNING LABELS ON PACKAGED ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Government advice in Australia and New Zealand is that pregnant women do not consume any alcohol. If a baby is exposed to alcohol in the womb it can have irreversible impacts such as intellectual, behavioural and developmental disabilities. The Forum recognised that Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a life-long disability which can be prevented if pregnant women do not consume alcohol.

Pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages can raise awareness and prompt discussions about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy and may also support the establishment of cultural norms in relation to pregnant women not drinking alcohol. The alcohol industry has applied pregnancy warning labels to packaged alcoholic beverages on a voluntary basis since late 2011.

The Forum noted a Decision Regulation Impact Statement (DRIS) with four options for progressing pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages. The DRIS was prepared by the Food Regulation Standing Committee and took into account stakeholder views provided through a targeted stakeholder consultation in May and June 2018 and further research, modelling and evidence gathering.

The Forum agreed that, based on the evidence, a mandatory labelling standard for pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages should be developed and should include a pictogram and relevant warning statement. The Forum requested Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) develop this mandatory labelling standard as a priority and that the work be completed expeditiously.

The Forum recognised the efforts of a large segment of the sector, including many small businesses, in voluntarily adopting pregnancy labelling. In recognition of these efforts, the Forum called for comprehensive consultation and appropriate transition timelines and stock-in-trade exemptions on new arrangements.

SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS

Sports supplements are regulated through the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, or therapeutic goods regulations, depending on how they are presented in the market.

The Forum noted the outcomes of a stakeholder roundtable held in July 2018 to discuss current regulations for sports supplements and what can be done to enhance consumer safety in this area. The roundtable included stakeholders from government, consumer groups, the sports supplement industry and health professionals.

The Forum agreed to an action plan drawn from the outcomes of the roundtable which includes regulatory actions, targeted education and improved labelling to enhance the safety of consumers who choose to use sports supplements.

As part of this action plan, Forum Ministers requested that FSANZ undertake a full review of Standard 2.9.4 – *Formulated Supplementary Sports Foods* as a matter of priority to modernise the Standard to capture the expanding sports supplement market.

The Forum also agreed to provide the action plan to the Meeting of Sport and Recreation Ministers for their information.

The Food Regulation Standing Committee will work with the Therapeutic Goods Administration on the implementation of the action plan due to the crossover of products in this area.

FOOD WASTE

Globally food waste is a considerable problem. Forum Ministers noted the breadth and causes of the issue, along with initiatives that are currently being undertaken in Australia, New Zealand and internationally to combat food waste. Australia has recently released the *National Food Waste Strategy*, which aims to address food waste in all aspects of the food chain and is working towards halving Australia's food waste by 2030. New Zealand has recently agreed to a targeted briefing into food waste also with goal of halving food waste by 2030.

The Forum agreed that consumer education initiatives and information through the food regulatory system can support the wider government initiatives to address food waste. Australia and New Zealand will continue to work together globally on food waste.

MISLEADING DESCRIPTIONS FOR FOOD

Forum Ministers remain committed to maintaining the integrity of the food system. Food and consumer laws prohibit misleading conduct, which includes misleading descriptions of food on labels.

The Forum noted that recent action has been taken by relevant jurisdictions and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in relation to adulterated and counterfeit honey.

The Forum further noted recent international regulatory amendments in relation to the naming of food products, including meat and dairy alternative products. The Forum requested the Food Regulation Standing Committee develop an options paper on how food standards, including labelling, definitions and other elements be considered out of session in early 2019 allowing enough time for decisions to be taken at the May 2019 Forum meeting.

SEAFOOD LABELLING

Australian Forum Ministers considered advice prepared by the Food Regulation Standing Committee concerning seafood labelling in the food service sector. The Forum was advised of the current Australian provisions that enable consumers to request country of origin information for seafood directly from the foodservice business and that based on extensive consumer research, there is insufficient evidence to warrant extension of the current Australian Country of Origin Labelling legislation to seafood in the foodservices sector.

The Forum will write to the Consumer Affairs Forum to request they further consider the issue of country of origin seafood labelling in the food service sector with respect to any new evidence and experience.

LABELLING OF SUGARS

Forum Ministers noted that labelling of sugars remains an important issue for the Forum and a timeline for this work will be provided to the next Forum meeting.

Next Meeting

The next Forum meeting will be in December 2018.

Visit the Food Regulation website for further information on food regulation activities – www.foodregulation.gov.au.