



# The Newsletter of the Food Regulation Secretariat

AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY AND NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENTS

## CURRENT PROJECTS AND REVIEWS

### FSANZ Act amendments

The Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council agreed to a number of measures to expedite Food Standards Australia New Zealand's (FSANZ) assessment and approval processes and better protect commercially valuable information in October 2005 and February 2006. Since this time the Department of Health and Ageing has consulted with government officials from both Australia and New Zealand on the proposed implementation of agreed measures. This took place between 22 March and 27 April 2006. The feedback received assisted the Department to develop drafting instructions for submission to the Office of Parliamentary Council.

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand Amendment Bill 2007 (the Bill) was developed based on feedback received and was introduced in the Senate on 28 March 2007. Two Senate Committees reviewed aspects of the Bill. The Community Affairs Committee held public consultations and produced a report which can be found at [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac\\_ctte/food\\_standards/report/report.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/clac_ctte/food_standards/report/report.pdf). The Scrutiny of Bills Committee has considered matters regarding the commencement provision, legislative instruments and the delegation of legislative power under the Bill. Their report can be found at <http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/scrutiny/alerts/2007/d05.pdf>.

In light of these reports the Australian Government moved three Government amendments to the Bill during the Senate debate that occurred on 14 and 15 June 2007. The Senate passed the Bill including the three government amendments on 15 June 2007.

The Bill was considered and passed by the House on 20 June 2007 without any further amendments.

## CURRENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT

### NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE FOOD AUTHORITY

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Senator Brett Mason announced the 2007 appointments to the FSANZ Board. They are: Associate Professor Pamela Williams and Dr Laurence Eyres.

Senator Mason said: "The expertise and experience of the new appointees to the Board Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) will ensure that public health, science and technology, and consumer affairs continue to be strongly represented on the FSANZ board."

"Dr Pamela Williams is a new appointment to the board," Senator Mason said. "As a former lecturer on consumer rights she will bring considerable knowledge of this field and Australian consumer-affairs policy to the board".

Associate Professor Williams has extensive experience in public health, food science, human nutrition, food allergies, food safety and consumer affairs.

Dr Eyres was nominated by the New Zealand Government in recognition of his contribution as a board member. "His re-

The Australian Government has announced that all applications received on and after 1 October 2007 will be assessed under the reform assessment process. It will harmonise as far as possible the processes for the assessment of applications and proposals and aligns the processes for setting of Maximum Residue Limits of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and FSANZ. The reforms also enable the development of urgent standards due to unforeseen negative impacts on trade.

### Country of Origin Labelling

The Australian Government established a working group to develop recommendations for a voluntary 'Australian Grown' labelling scheme. A logo for this scheme has been developed and the proposal has been submitted to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (the ACCC) for final approval. It is expected that a decision by the ACCC will be made by the middle of 2007.

### Front of Pack Labelling

In October 2006 the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) asked the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) to explore and report back to the Ministerial Council on whether a uniform front-of-pack food labelling system would be an effective health strategy, and to advise on the efficacy of a range of options for such a labelling system.

An independent consultant, engaged by NSW Health, has collated information on a number of front-of-pack labelling options including the pros and cons of each option. A summary of this work will be presented by FRSC Front-of-Pack Labelling working group to FRSC in August 2007 and to the Ministerial Council in October 2007.

Ms Elizabeth Develin from NSW Health is the Chair of the working group in agreement with the NSW Food Authority. The Department of Health and Ageing has agreed to provide secretariat support to the working group.

### Mandatory Fortification

The Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) met on 22 June 2007 to consider FSANZ's First Review of Proposal P295 – Consideration of Mandatory Fortification with Folic Acid. Members affirmed the draft standard on the mandatory fortification of food with folic acid for inclusion in the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code)*.

appointment would help to maintain an appropriate balance of skills and experience on the board", Senator Mason said.

Senator Mason continued, "Dr Laurence Eyres and Associate Professor Peter Williams have been re-appointed for three years and four years respectively. Both members have made a valuable contribution to date and their reappointment will help maintain appropriate balance of skills and experience on the FSANZ Board."

Senator Mason concluded by stating that, "These appointments have been made after consultation with the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council."

### National Food Safety Audit Policy

In October 2006, the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council endorsed the National Food Safety Audit Policy for the approval and management of food safety auditors and food safety audits. The policy focuses primarily on regulatory audits, including those conducted on behalf of regulators by approved private third-party food safety auditors.

The main objectives of the national policy are to:

- promote national consistency in managing auditors and auditing;
- assist food regulators implementing regulatory food safety audit management systems, including greater sharing of resources;
- simplify requirements for business and auditors operating in more than one jurisdiction; and

The draft standard requires the mandatory addition of folic acid to wheat flour for bread-making within the prescribed range of 200-300 micrograms per 100 grams of flour. This level of fortification is expected to prevent between 14 and 49 neural tube defects (NTDs) in the 300-350 affected pregnancies in Australia each year when combined with existing voluntary fortification permissions and current levels of supplement usage. There is a transition period of two years for the new standard.

New Zealand have declared that the standard is inappropriate for New Zealand on the basis of third country trade and has asked FSANZ to consider a New Zealand only standard mandating fortification of bread with folic acid.

Ministerial Council has committed to a review of mandatory fortification two years following the implementation of the standard.

### FRSC Survey of Antimicrobial Resistant Bacteria in Food

Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) commenced a survey of antimicrobial resistant bacteria in food in February 2007. A range of foods from retail outlets in four major population centres (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth) will be sampled monthly for 12 months. Whole poultry will be tested for the presence of *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *Enterococcus*. Beef mince and pork shoulder chops will be tested for the presence of *E. coli* and *Enterococcus*. Iceberg lettuce will be tested for the presence of *E. coli*. Bacterial isolates will then be tested to assess their level of resistance to a wide range of antimicrobials.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing is managing the project on behalf of FRSC, and after an open tender process, appointed Food Science Australia to conduct the survey. The design of the survey was endorsed by FRSC and the National Health and Medical Research Council's Expert Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance. The Australian Government and all States and Territories have contributed funds for the work. The survey forms part of a three-tiered approach being undertaken by the Australian Government to assess the impact of antimicrobial resistance on human health, targeting humans, animals and food.

### Food Safety Risk Profiling Framework

A consortium, managed by the Australian Food Safety Centre of Excellence, developed a draft Risk Profiling Framework which was made available for stakeholder comment through a FRSC public consultation process in 2006. A revised Risk Profiling Framework was endorsed by FRSC at the March 2007 meeting. The FRSC Food Safety Management Working Group is in the process of canvassing policy options on how the Framework

- give recognition and acceptance by industry of minimum core regulatory requirements.

The policy will be used by food regulators as the basis of their own arrangements to support the implementation of food safety programs and auditing requirements. Jurisdictions have five years to make changes to their auditor management systems in line with the policy. With its national focus, the policy will simplify requirements for businesses and auditors operating in more than one state or territory in domestic markets and aims to reduce the number of food safety audit.

### COMPLETED POLICY GUIDELINES

The following policy guidelines have been completed and are on the Food Regulation Secretariat website.

- Fortification of Food with Vitamins and Minerals.
- Nutrition, Health and Related Claims.
- Food Safety Management in Australia: Food Safety Programs.
- Country of Origin Labelling.
- Novel Foods.
- Addition of Caffeine to Foods.
- Primary Production and Processing.
- Policy principles for health and related claims in food labelling and advertising.
- Regulation of Residues of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals in Food.
- National Food Safety Audit Policy.

could be used within the current food regulatory system, for both regulatory and non-regulatory interventions, and will make recommendations to FRSC at its August 2007 meeting.

The Framework is not intended for general use by local government or by individual food businesses. It is designed to be used by regulators as a high level priority setting tool.

The Framework helps to assess risk associated with products and process, and is both transparent and scientifically based. Risk management options are currently being assessed by the Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC) of FRSC.

### National Food Incident Response Protocol

The National Food Incident Response Protocol (the Protocol) has been developed to provide clear guidance to member agencies of the Implementation Sub-Committee for responding too a range of food incidents in a timely, appropriate, consistent and coordinated manner. The Protocol was endorsed at the May 2007 Ministerial Council meeting. The Protocol will be reviewed on an on-going basis to incorporate feedback received on the use of the Protocol in actual food incidents.

## FOR OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Please let us know if your contact details have changed, or you know of anyone who might be interested in receiving the newsletter. Our contact details are:

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## CALENDAR DATES 2007

**PLEASE NOTE:  
THE FOLLOWING DATES MAYBE  
SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**August:**  
9th & 10<sup>th</sup> – FRSC – Alice Springs

**October:**  
19<sup>th</sup> - ANZFRMC - Adelaide

**November:**  
7 & 8<sup>th</sup> - ISC - Hobart

**November:**  
30<sup>th</sup> - FRSC – Melbourne

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**ISC** – Implementation Sub Committee

**FRSC** – Food Regulation Standing Committee

**ANZFRMC** – Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council