

Dear Sir/Madam,

We would like to have our say on the issue of certification of our foods in Australia.

Firstly we understand that there is a need for certain certifications to be applied to foods so that customers know whether the food is edible or to the standards for them and their personal beliefs.

We like to buy free range and organic where we can so that we have a clearer conscience about the food we are eating and what impact it has had on the environment and indeed on the animal itself. We understand why allergy certification and labels are applied to food items for safety reasons for those with allergies.

What we do not understand is what any religious certification is doing on any food item in this country. We are a mix Christian and atheist in our family and it is against our religious and non-religious beliefs to eat food that is sacrificed or funds from this food are set aside to a false idol (God). We find it discriminating that we have had to completely change our shopping items and even go without the basics of milk and bread (because there is none that is made by non-religiously certified companies). Our shopping bill has also increased by a lot because non-religiously certified foods are more expensive than religiously-certified foods. We are among hundreds of thousands of Australians who have gone to extraordinary measures to ensure we are not contributing financially to any religious institution who demands that food be certified for their followers to eat.

We believe the monopoly from certifiers of religiously certified food and fast food needs to be removed. There should be equality of food for all people regardless of religious identification. If a company want to say their food abides by religious laws then they should be free to say so without paying for certification. A label must be applied to the item to state this so those that who do not want it are not duped into buying it, as is the current standards for religious certification at the moment. Most religiously certified items are not labelled as such or the label is hidden in inside the packaging.

If for export reasons food has to be compliant with certain religious laws, then this should be a user pays system and the certification done for free. This food should not be combined with any non-religious food because of possibility of mixing for those that are atheist or of a different religious denomination that cannot consume the religiously certified food.

We believe that with a few simple changes everyone can get what they want out of the certification of food items. There is no need for one religion to be placed above any other like what is being done at the moment with Islam and halal certification.

Thanks

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