

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2013-14, 20 November 2013

Question: E13-193

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Front-of-Package Labelling

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: McKenzie

Question:

In relation to FOPL, the evidence demonstrating improvements in health outcomes is lacking and evidence to show FOPL can influence purchasing behaviour is conflicting[2].

The reliance on nutrient profiling to classify foods as `healthy under the proposed FOPL is inconsistent with evidence regarding food choices and improvements in health outcomes[3],[4].

What consideration has been taken to these research findings in developing the FOPL?

Answer:

Consumer research undertaken in late 2012 and early 2013 found that “[t]he overall Front-of-Pack Labelling design tested in this research (based on recommendations from the qualitative research) was shown to have a significantly higher potential to influence food purchase decisions that either a) current information available on food packs, or b) the existing Daily Intake Guide”.

Further consumer research to assess the likely impact of the Health Star Rating (HSR) System on consumer purchasing behavior will be undertaken in early 2014.

The HSR Calculator is based on science and has undergone rigorous testing to ensure its validity. The methodology underpinning the HSR Calculator is based on a modified Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criteria, originally developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand for the purpose of Standard 1.2.7- Nutrition, Health and Related Claims.

The Front-of-Pack-Labelling Technical Design Working Group, Project Committee and Steering Committee are satisfied that the HSR Calculator is producing technically accurate and appropriate star ratings that align with the principles of the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. At its 13 December 2013 meeting, the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation endorsed the use of the HSR Calculator as part of the voluntary HSR system.

The research undertaken and collected to date has been used to inform the development of the HSR system.