

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Food Certification Schemes

I am a diabetic and my submission relates in part to food certification and labelling as it impacts diabetics

The point of certification is that an accredited body provides certainty to the consumer of the product (Terms of Reference #1)

The current mish-mash of certification schemes needs rationalising, consolidating and extending (Terms of Reference #1)

Foods should be clearly labelled where applicable as Low Glycemic Index (GI), and there should be a scheme where an accredited body can certify such foods, so that the consumer can have confidence that the food truly is Low GI. Current labelling is woefully deficient in this area, so that percentages of sodium, “energy” and sugar content have to be weighed up by the discerning shopper. Certification labels simplify this process (Terms of Reference #2, #3, #4 and #8)

The certification process needs more transparency. Certifiers should be subject to a competitive market, and food suppliers encouraged to seek competitive bids for their product to be certified. This will ensure that the mechanisms of the free market impact the cost to consumers (Terms of Reference #5 and #7)

Looking wider afield, there should be an agreed certification for egg production, for example. I want to know whether eggs are truly being produced by caged or free-range birds. Current labelling seems overly subjective, and a clear certification scheme with unambiguous labels will provide certainty (Terms of Reference #4)

It is said that one of Australia’s competitive advantages is its “fresh food” reputation. Certification schemes can only enhance this reputation (Terms of Reference #6)

Finally there should be warnings on food labelled “organic” to the effect that “There is no scientific evidence that there are any additional health benefits to consuming organic food over food grown in other ways” (Terms of Reference #1)