



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Senate Rural and Regional
Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee report:

Don't mince words: definitions of meat and other animal products

April 2026

Introduction

On 15 June 2021, the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee self-referred an inquiry into the current state of meat category branding in Australia.

The committee tabled its report on 24 February 2022. The committee's recommendations covered a number of areas, including the introduction of a mandatory regulatory framework for labelling of plant-based protein products and cultured meat products; measures to define and restrict usage of meat, seafood and dairy category terms to animal protein products; and efforts to support and grow the Australian plant-based protein sector.

The Australian Government thanks the committee and those who made submissions and took part in hearings for their work and welcomes the report. The government **notes** all nine of the committee's recommendations and **notes** the dissenting report from the Australian Greens Party.

The government is committed to supporting both traditional and plant industries

The Australian Government **notes recommendations 7 and 8.**

Recommendation 7:

The committee recommends the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, examines measures to:

- strengthen the plant-based protein product sector's capacity to source its products from Australian grown produce; and
- support investment opportunities into the Australian plant-based alternative product sector's manufacturing infrastructure to foster competitiveness and market opportunities on the international market.

Recommendation 8:

The committee recommends the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment ensures that the plant-based protein product sector is supported to contribute to the Ag2030 goal of achieving a \$100 billion agricultural sector by 2030.

The government acknowledges there is growing demand in Australia and around the world for more protein. This is reflected in consumer purchasing behaviour, with global consumption of traditional meat increasing alongside growth in plant-based alternatives.

The government is committed to supporting this growth by ensuring consumers can make informed choices about the products they purchase, and there is regulatory clarity for industry on the food and labelling requirements of those products.

In May 2022, the government committed to improving existing regulations to deliver accurate and clear food labelling for products so that consumers can make informed

choices. The government subsequently committed \$1.5 million in the 2024-25 Budget to improve existing arrangements for the labelling of plant-based and alternative protein products.

In 2024, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry established a working group to consider improvements to existing labelling arrangements. The working group consisted of stakeholders representing red meat, chicken, seafood, dairy and plant-based industries.

An Industry Code of Practice will strengthen existing arrangements

The Australian Government **notes recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5**

Recommendation 1:

The committee recommends the Australian Government develops a mandatory regulatory framework for the labelling of plant-based protein products, in consultation with representatives from the traditional and plant-based protein sectors, food service industry and retailers.

Recommendation 2:

The committee recommends the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission reviews the placement of plant-based protein products in retailers' stores, including online platforms.

Recommendation 3:

The committee recommends the Australian Government ensures the application of a mandatory regulatory framework is applicable to cultured meat products, in preparation for the introduction of those products onto the Australian market.

Recommendation 4:

The committee recommends that, as part of its current review and modernisation of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991*, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) initiate a review in consultation with industry, of section 1.1.1—13(4) of the FSANZ Code and recommend exempting its application to named meat, seafood and dairy category brands.

Recommendation 5:

The committee recommends, on conclusion and application of the review of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Code, that Food Standards Australia New Zealand develops guidelines to inform labelling and marketing practices for manufacturers of plant-based protein products.

In January 2026, following consultation with meat and plant industries and informed by new consumer research, the government announced that it will work with the Alternative Proteins Council (APC) to develop a voluntary Industry Code of Practice that strengthens existing arrangements by setting clearer labelling standards,

discouraging animal imagery, improving qualifier placement and introducing a transparent complaints mechanism

The Industry Code will build off existing industry guidelines to support continued best practice for labelling of plant-based proteins. The Industry Code will complement existing consumer laws which prohibits false representations, and misleading or deceptive conduct. This approach provides practical improvements while remaining proportionate, evidence-based and aligned with the Government's commitment to improve food labelling.

The government is committed to minimising red tape on businesses through regulations which are right sized and evidence based.

Accordingly, the government commissioned Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to undertake research into the effect of labelling of plant-based protein product and dairy alternative labelling on consumer perceptions. The study is one of the largest of its kind in Australia, with a sample of almost 3,000 respondents. FSANZ applied a randomised controlled trial, which is considered the 'gold standard' in research design.

The research concluded Australian consumers could accurately identify the ingredient content of plant-based alternatives, were confident in the intended use of these products, and did not believe plant-based alternatives are nutritionally equivalent to an animal counterpart. The study also found that less than 4% of plant-based products on the market use animal imagery. On this basis, the Government considers additional mandatory labelling regulation unnecessary at this time.

The government's response builds on existing regulatory arrangements

The Australian Government **notes recommendations 6 and 9**

Recommendation 6:

The committee recommends the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission develops a National Information Standard that defines and restricts the use of meat category brands to animal protein products. This standard should include guidance on the use of livestock imagery for labelling and marketing of plant-based protein products.

Recommendation 9:

The committee recommends that, as part of its review of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991*, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), initiates consultations with stakeholders about amending the FSANZ Code to include:

- a definition of plant-based protein products; and
- minimum compositional requirements for plant-based protein products.

All foods, including plant-based foods, are subject to a mandatory regulatory framework through requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code), and the provisions against misleading or deceptive conduct and false or

misleading representations in the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), which is part of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

Any agency, organisation, or person can make an application to FSANZ to vary the Code. It is at the discretion of FSANZ whether a new food standard should be prepared or an existing food standard amended. FSANZ must also follow the processes and requirements outlined in the FSANZ Act, including public consultation and evidence-gathering, when developing and making decisions on food standards.

The *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*, which includes the ACL prohibits any advertising material or statements made by a business that are false, misleading, deceptive, or likely to mislead or deceive. The scope of these requirements is broad and includes any statement or image that creates an overall false or misleading impression about a product – including its nutritional value.

Taken together, these frameworks provide strong and enforceable consumer protections, and the Industry Code will enhance clarity within this existing system.

Dissenting Views from the Australian Greens Party:

The Australian Greens largely rejects the recommendations of this inquiry, and significantly question its validity as an appropriate use of public service time, resource and money.

The government **notes** the dissenting report from the Australian Greens Party.