

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1.1 On 13 May 2015, the Senate referred the following matters to the Economics References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2015:

- a. the extent of food certification schemes and certifiers in Australia including, but not limited to, schemes related to organic, kosher, halal and genetically-modified food and general food safety certification schemes;
- b. current labelling requirements of food certification schemes;
- c. the need for labelling on products produced by companies that pay certification fees;
- d. whether current schemes provide enough information for Australian consumers to make informed purchasing decisions;
- e. details regarding certification fees paid by food producers and/or manufacturers, and the potential for these to impact on prices for consumers;
- f. the importance of food certification schemes in relation to export market access and returns to producers;
- g. the extent and adequacy of information available to the public about certifiers including, but not limited to, certification processes, fees and financial records; and any related matters.<sup>1</sup>

## Conduct of the inquiry

1.1 The committee received 1492 submissions, as listed in Appendix 1.

1.2 The committee held three public hearings; a list of the public hearings is included in Appendix 2.

## Structure of the report

1.3 This report addresses the committee's terms of reference and is divided into three chapters:

- Chapter one (this chapter) states the administrative arrangements for the inquiry.
- Chapter two provides an overview of food certification schemes and the roles of organisations and government agencies involved in food certification, for both the domestic market and for export.

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 93 – 13 May 2015, p. 2586.

- Chapter three examines issues identified by submitters and makes a number of recommendations to enhance the food certification system.

**Notes on references**

1.4 References to submissions in this report are to individual submissions received by the committee and published on the committee's website. References to the committee Hansards are to the official transcripts from inquiry hearings.

**Acknowledgements**

The committee thanks the many individuals and organisations that made written submissions, as well as those who gave evidence at the