

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2011-2012, 15 February 2012

Question: E12-005

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: GMO CONTAMINATION

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

At the last estimates it was said that there is a zero tolerance for unapproved GM products in the food supply, but then went on to say that the response would be determined on a case to case basis:

- a) Given the zero tolerance stance does this mean that any response would be based on eradicating the unapproved GM products and ensuring that it will not continue to enter the food supply?
- b) If not, then what does the zero tolerance stance mean in practical terms?
- c) If a decision is made to accept any amount of the unapproved GM products, isn't this essentially giving backdated approval for its entry into the supply chain?
- d) Who has that authority to make those allowances?

Answer:

In Senator Siewert's reference to 'the last estimates', it is assumed that the reference is to a Question on Notice (APD- 110) referred to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry regarding the unintended presence of unapproved Genetically Modified (GM) wheat in the unlikely event it would enter the food supply.

- a) A zero tolerance for an unapproved GM food means that, if such a food were to be detected in the Australian or New Zealand food supply, Food Standards Australia and New Zealand would liaise with the relevant federal, state and territory agencies to ensure steps were taken to both remove the food in question from the food supply in a timely manner and to prevent any further entries of the food. There is no case-by-case consideration of the status of an unapproved event. What might be a case-by-case consideration, is the steps taken in order to execute its removal from, and continued lack of entry to, the food supply.
- b) N/A.

- c) Unapproved GM foods are not accepted in the food supply.
- d) N/A.