

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**

**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO**

**Additional Estimates 13 & 15 February 2013**

**Question: E13-017**

**OUTCOME 1: Population Health**

**Topic:** Carbon Monoxide In Fish

**Type of Question:** Hansard Page 49, 13 February 2013

**Senator:** Senator Fierravanti-Wells

**Question:**

In relation to the call for submissions on the use of carbon monoxide in fish:

- a) Is there any information on what proportion of fish sold in Australia is subject to the treatment?
- b) Are there any source countries where the treatment is more prevalent?
- c) Has any additional information come to light to suggest that any Australian operators use this process?
- d) What is the intention of the review?
- e) Are there any particular health risks associated with the process?
- f) When do you expect a final report to be available?

**Answer:**

- a) On the basis of information contained in submissions to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) in its call for comment on Proposal P1019 – Carbon Monoxide Treatment of Fish, it would appear that the majority of imported tuna, some tilapia and some swordfish are subjected to this treatment.
- b) The source countries mentioned most often in the submissions to FSANZ are Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.
- c) Some submitters from Australia stated that the use of carbon monoxide as a component in modified atmosphere packaging for fish was either in use or undergoing trials for product to be exported.
- d) This proposal was raised to clarify the use of carbon monoxide as a treatment on fish in response to concerns raised by some state and territory jurisdictions that the current lack of clarity has resulted in some enforcement difficulties.

- e) Concerns have been raised that the process of carbon monoxide treatment may make the age and condition of treated fish difficult to estimate, which may result in health risks, as noted by some overseas authorities. In Australia, there is no evidence to date that suggests that carbon monoxide treatment has had any impact on food safety.
- f) FSANZ is currently evaluating submissions and issues raised. While the plan is to have the final report available mid-year, some issues may require further investigation.