

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Budget Estimates 2015 - 16, 16 March 2016

Ref No: SQ16-000319

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: GM Expert Panel Conflicts of Interest

Type of Question: Hansard Page 5, 16 March 2016

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

- a) Did FSANZ ask for a written disclosure of potential actual conflicts of interests before the expert panel for the 2012 and 2013 new breeding techniques technical workshops was convened?
- b) If not, why not?
- c) If FSANZ did, please table the request.
- d) If people did declare a potential conflict of interest, did FSANZ require them to exclude themselves from any of the proceedings?

Answer:

- a) No.
- b) Formal written disclosure was not considered necessary for two reasons. Firstly, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) had talked with each of the experts prior to inviting them to participate in the workshops and so already knew about their background, research interests and expertise. Secondly, the workshops were being held for the sole purpose of improving FSANZ's knowledge and understanding of the various new breeding techniques. The experts were not being asked to participate in any regulatory decision-making process.
- c) Not applicable.
- d) One of the invited experts declared a research interest in some of the genome editing techniques, as well as the hybrid production technique known as seed production technology, and three others declared research interests in RNA interference. FSANZ did not require the exclusion of these experts from the proceedings when those particular techniques were discussed. To do so would have defeated the purpose of inviting them to participate in the workshop to access their knowledge of those techniques.