

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2011-2012, 30/31 May 2011

Question: E11-014

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: NANOTECHNOLOGY MONITORING

Written Question on Notice

Senator Xenophon asked:

What ongoing monitoring does FSANZ conduct of international and domestic research into nanotechnology and emerging risks?

Answer:

At the international level, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) provided resources to, and chaired, the 2009 World Health Organization/Food and Agriculture Organization (WHO/FAO) expert meeting on the application of nanotechnologies in food and agriculture. Since then, experts from international agencies involved in the regulation of food, including FSANZ, have been sharing information on scientific research on nanotechnology relevant to food safety.

FSANZ also participates at meetings of the Australian consortium of the OECD sponsorship program for safety testing of manufactured nanoscale materials. This consortium is another avenue through which FSANZ monitors international research on the safety of manufactured nanomaterials in food.

At the domestic level, FSANZ is an active participant on the Health Safety and Environment Working Group established under the National Enabling Technologies Strategy for which the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research has primary responsibility. This working group comprises representatives of all Australian Government agencies involved in the regulation of nanotechnology and enables dissemination of information relating to any new scientific developments related to nanotechnology in a broad spectrum of areas, including food.

FSANZ also has an ongoing internal program of work to actively monitor and assess the rapidly expanding international scientific literature around nanoscale materials relevant to food safety. The most recently completed component of this work has been a review of the pharmacokinetics of nanoscale materials as a determinant of potential human health and safety risks associated with the ingestion of these materials in food.