

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014-2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000490

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Risk Assessment of Carbendazim in Frozen Concentrate Orange Juice

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

Has FSANZ conducted a risk assessment relating to carbendazim, in Frozen Concentrate Orange Juice (FCOJ) in particular?

- a) What does this risk assessment involve?
- b) What were the results?

Answer:

- a) See Attachment 1 for a brief explanation of Food Standards Australia New Zealand's (FSANZ) role in the overall risk assessment of Maximum Residue Limits (MRL).

FSANZ conducted a dietary exposure assessment for carbendazim in a range of citrus products, including oranges, in 2011-12. A dietary exposure assessment is the process of estimating how much of a particular chemical that a population, or population sub group, may consume through food use at the appropriate MRL values. Dietary exposure to food chemicals is estimated by combining food consumption data with food chemical concentration data.

The estimated dietary exposure to a food chemical is then compared with a known health-based guidance value, for example, an acceptable daily intake (ADI), which is set by the Office of Chemical Safety. The ADI takes into account long term exposure to the chemical and represents a 'safe' level of exposure or intake, below which adverse health effects are not likely to occur. These assessments are conservative and assume the worst case scenario such that all commodities listed for a chemical contain it at the highest concentration permitted in citrus fruits (i.e. the MRL value).

- b) FSANZ assessed exposure to carbendazim in the context of the Australian diet. This assessment considered residues that may occur from all foods relating to citrus (including juice and juice concentrate) and considered foods imported from countries where the use of agricultural chemicals may legitimately differ from those in Australia.

Through Proposal M1008, the MRL for carbendazim residues in oranges was revised from 10 mg/kg to 0.2 mg/kg. This limit maintains the public health and safety of consumers whilst not unnecessarily restricting trade. Details of the Approval Report for Proposal M1008 can be found at Attachment 2.