

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014-2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000491

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Maximum Residue Limit-Setting Process

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Xenophon, Nick

Question:

I understand FSANZ considers a range of factors when setting Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) including health and safety impacts and potential trade impacts.

- a) What is the current MRL for carbendazim?
- b) What weighting is given to health and safety impacts versus trade impacts?
- c) What potential trade impacts are considered when setting MRLs?
- d) How often are MRLs reviewed and/or reset?

Answer:

- a) Schedule 1 of Standard 1.4.2 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) lists all agricultural and veterinary chemical limits allowed for particular foods, expressed in mg/kg. The commodities and their Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) values that are included in the group *Citrus fruits* for carbendazim are: Citron 0.7; Grapefruit 0.2; Lemon 0.7; Lime 0.7; Mandarins 0.7; Oranges 0.2; Shaddock (pomelo) 0.2; Tangelo [except mineola] 0.2 and Tangors 0.7.
- b) Food Standards Australia New Zealand's (FSANZ) primary objective in developing or reviewing food regulatory measures and variations of food regulatory measures is the protection of public health and safety. FSANZ is also required to have regard to 'the desirability of an efficient and internationally competitive food industry' and 'the promotion of fair trading in food.'

As a World Trade Organization (WTO) Member, Australia has a legal obligation to comply with the provisions of the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement.

- c) During the FSANZ MRL proposal process, FSANZ consults with interested parties through a public comment period following the release of a call for submissions. FSANZ also notifies the World Trade Organization of proposed MRL amendments.

MRLs that are set in response to submissions received from importers or exporting countries are set on the same basis with respect to public health and safety as those MRLs set in response to domestic registration of agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals.

- d) There are two routes for establishing or changing MRLs. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) amends the MRL Standard in the Code approximately monthly. This is as a result of applications for product registrations, variations of product registration, or approval of uses under APVMA permit. From time-to-time, the APVMA requests that FSANZ amend the MRL Standard in the Code in response to decisions made as part of the chemical review process, or to remove MRLs for which there is no longer an approved domestic use.

FSANZ also amends the MRL Standard 1.4.2 of the Code. This is done through a proposal (initiated by FSANZ) or application (by someone outside of FSANZ e.g. a company, organisation or individual). An MRL proposal is largely aimed at accepting into the Code, where appropriate, MRLs in imported foods as a result of legitimate use of chemicals overseas. Other countries may legitimately use chemical products differently to Australia because of varying pest or disease pressures or because of varying climatic conditions. An MRL proposal is initiated by FSANZ at least once each year after a request for stakeholders to submit information in support of the establishment of imported MRLs. Assessment of an application or proposal to amend MRLs in the Code is a statutory process under the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991*. Applicants may apply at any time and need to supply information as specified in the FSANZ Application Handbook.