Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014-2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000565

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Nanomaterials in Food

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Ouestion:

I have recently received replies to some Estimates questions on notice regarding nanomaterials in food. In Question SQ14-000086 FSANZ was asked:

- a) Is it FSANZ's view that all of the nanomaterials currently being used in food available in Australia are safe for use?" You did not answer that question, replying instead that you had received no applications to amend the Food Standards. Is it the view of FSANZ that nanomaterials currently being used in foods are safe? If yes:
- b) Are you saying that there is no evidence of harm for any of the nanomaterials used in food and food contact materials?
- c) Is that based on an absence of studies or studies that have found no harm?
- d) What are all the nanomaterials that are used in food, which foods are they used in and what studies you are relying on to assert no evidence of harm.

Answer:

a) to c)

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is not aware of the use of any nanomaterials that do not comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) and are unsafe for human consumption in foods in Australia.

All food manufacturers and suppliers are required under law to ensure food sold in Australia is safe and suitable. This requirement is in food legislation in the states and territories. Food must also meet the requirements in the Code. Food law in Australia is enforced by state and territories.

FSANZ amended its Application Handbook in December 2008 so that appropriate information is required to ensure that any novel characteristics introduced by nanotechnologies in food or food ingredients are taken into account as part of the risk assessment process

FSANZ notes that there are various categories of nanomaterials and recognise that those that are intentionally added, with novel properties, may need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. A number of food substances with a history of safe use are also likely to contain materials that have size dimensions in the nanoscale, but which are not specifically manufactured using nanotechnologies. The general requirements of state and territory food legislation also apply to these materials, meaning that all food must comply with the Code and be safe for human consumption.

If FSANZ was to become aware of any public health issues with specific nanomaterials, then FSANZ would work with the state and territory enforcement agencies to develop appropriate risk management measures.

Nanotechnology is an evolving science and FSANZ takes into account all available evidence in reviewing the safety of nanomaterials. FSANZ maintains routine scrutiny of nanotechnology food safety information.

d) There is no inventory of nanomaterials for use in foods in Australia (see SQ14-000607).