

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2014-2015, 2/3 June 2014

Ref No: SQ14-000602

OUTCOME: 1 – Population Health

Topic: Nanomaterials in food packaging

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Siewert, Rachel

Question:

Will FSANZ take steps to:

- (a) determine whether food packaging used in Australia contains nanomaterials as claimed in Friends of the Earth's recent report Way too little?
- (b) prohibit the use of such packaging until safety is tested and assured?

Answer:

- (a) Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is currently reviewing regulatory (and non-regulatory) requirements for food packaging through a statutory proposal process. As part of this process, FSANZ has surveyed industry to gauge uptake and use of emerging technologies, including nanotechnology, in food packaging (refer to SQ14-000586).

FSANZ continues to monitor the literature on nanotechnology in relation to food safety and the migration of chemicals from packaging into food and assess each study on its own merits in order to ascertain whether it builds the evidence base.

- (b) The Australian food regulatory system has the following requirements for ensuring the safety of packaging:
 - (i) The State and Territory Food Acts have requirements to ensure that food packaging materials are safe and suitable.
 - (ii) The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code):
 - (A) Standard 1.4.3 – Articles and Materials in Contact with Food¹ has general requirements for food packaging materials

¹ <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2008B00620>

- (B) Standard 1.4.1 – Contaminants and Natural Toxicants² details the maximum levels of specific packaging contaminants, such as vinyl chloride, acrylonitrile and tin (in)
- (C) Standard 3.2.2 – Food Safety Practices and General Requirements³ outlines requirements on food businesses (including manufacturers, importers and retailers) whereby they must only use packaging material that is fit for its intended use or not likely to cause food contamination.

FSANZ recognises that the use of nanomaterials is a developing science and is continuing to review and monitor the scientific literature. Should FSANZ become aware of a health risk to consumers, FSANZ has the capacity to introduce packaging requirements beyond those currently in place in the Code.

² <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2008B00618>

³ <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/F2008B00576>