Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017–2018, 29 & 30 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000749

OUTCOME: 2 – Health Access and Support Services

Topic: Nanomaterials in food

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Janet Rice

Question:

In response to SQ17-000412 FSANZ declared that "Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is not aware of 'engineered nanomaterials' being added to foods available for sale in Australia."

(a) Isn't it correct that the ToxConsult review of nanoparticles in food was specifically charged with looking at the use of 'Engineered nanomaterials' (ENMs) in food? (see ToxConsult p.13 - "ENMs is the term used in this report to distinguish between nanomaterials that are man-made and purposefully added to food from those that are naturally present or formed during food preparation")
(b) And isn't it correct that the ENMs reviewed by ToxConsult included nano forms of titanium dioxide, silica and silver?
(c) In its response to SQ17-000412, is FSANZ suggesting that the nano titanium dioxide and nano silica found in food in testing in Australia and around the world is naturally occurring?

Answer:

(a) No
FSANZ sought expert scientific opinion which addresses the question of whether there is currently reasonable scientific evidence to support the contentions that:
- The potential application of nanotechnologies to food additives for which permissions already exist in Standard 1.3.1 of the Code, may pose a risk to public health and safety, following oral ingestion in foods.
- The adventitious presence of nanoparticles which may occur as a part of the particle size distribution of a permitted food additive in the Code may pose risks to public health and safety, when ingested via the oral route.

(b) No
The term "engineered nanomaterials" was used in the ToxConsult report. FSANZ has not adopted a definition of nanomaterials for regulatory purposes.

The ToxConsult report relates to nanoscale titanium dioxide, silica, and silver.

(c) No
Food grade titanium dioxide and silicon dioxide approved for use in food has a distribution of particle sizes in the micro and nano range.