

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-2011, 20 October 2010

Question: E10-020

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: GM FOODS AND ALLERGIES

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

In light of research linking GM and food allergy has any review of previously approved GM products been undertaken?

Answer:

No. The assertion that Genetically Modified (GM) foods are linked with food allergies has been investigated and is not supported by robust evidence. For example, in Europe the incidence of food allergies has also increased at a rate similar to that observed in other western countries, but there has been no concomitant exposure to GM food. Moreover, allergies are increasing to certain staple, but highly allergenic, foods such as milk, eggs and tree nuts, which are not genetically modified. The reasons for increasing allergies is currently the subject of international discussion and debate amongst allergy experts, however, the suggested connection with GM foods is not afforded scientific weight.

The potential for a novel protein in a GM food to cause food allergies is assessed using a weight-of-evidence approach. FSANZ carefully evaluates the possible impact on consumers and would take appropriate regulatory action if there was any credible evidence that approval of a GM food could introduce a new allergen into the food supply.