

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2010-201 20 October 2010

Question: E10-021

OUTCOME 1: Population Health

Topic: GM FOODS

Written Question on Notice

Senator Siewert asked:

- a) FSANZ is the body that gives the initial approval for the public consumption of GM foods in Australia and New Zealand. Is the Department aware that FSANZ GM food approvals are based on data provided by the commercial company of interest? (That is, company that wish to profit provides the data?)
- b) Does the Department consider such data to be sufficiently independent to be of reliable quality?

Answer:

- a) The Department is aware that all proposed amendments to the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* require the sponsor to provide suitable safety data to enable Food Standards Australia New Zealand to undertake a safety assessment. The Department is also aware that all major regulatory agencies around the world including those responsible for food, human drugs, veterinary medicines and pesticides require safety data that has been funded by the sponsor.
- b) The Department considers that existing mechanisms to ensure the quality of data submitted for assessment have been demonstrated as effective. The Department is aware that many of the studies required by regulatory agencies are not directly undertaken by the sponsor, but have been conducted in independent contract laboratories each with quality assurance systems in place. Moreover, since all regulatory agencies review such data, it is extremely unlikely that any unreliable data would pass the scrutiny of hundreds of regulatory scientists around the world who view the documents.