

FOOD MINISTERS' MEETING

COMMUNIQUE

16 December 2021

The Food Ministers' Meeting (FMM) met on Thursday 16 December 2021 via video conference to consider food regulation and policy matters. The FMM is chaired by Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck and comprises all Australian and New Zealand Ministers responsible for food. The Australian Local Government Association and Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) attended the meeting as observers.

Ministers remain committed to the three priorities of the Food Regulation System (the System):

- Reducing foodborne illness, particularly related to *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*.
- Supporting the public health objectives to reduce chronic disease related to overweight and obesity.
- Maintaining a strong, robust and agile Food Regulation System through an ambitious reform agenda, to be progressed in conjunction with the review of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991*.

Key outcomes from the meeting include:

Kava Pilot for Commercial Importation into Australia

Ministers noted that a request has been made for FSANZ to prepare an urgent Proposal to consider Standard 2.6.3 – Kava to ensure the standard is still fit for purpose in light of the [Kava Pilot Program](#) which will permit increased personal imports of kava root and allowing unlimited commercial imports.

Review of Nutrition Labelling for Added Sugars

In 2019, Ministers asked FSANZ to review nutrition labelling for added sugars. A report has now been presented to Ministers which will shortly be published on the [FSANZ website](#).

Following publishing of the report, FSANZ will determine timelines for a proposal to consider changing the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) with regard to added sugars information in the nutrition information panel.

The proposal will include an assessment of the evidence and other matters, public consultation and consideration of costs and benefits.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 (FSANZ Act) Review

Ministers were presented with the outcomes flowing from consultations on a draft Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) options for the FSANZ Act review.

Public consultation on the draft RIS was conducted between 6 April 2021 and 8 May 2021. The draft RIS presented three options for reform, with option 1 representing the status quo, while options 2 and 3 represented increasingly ambitious measures to reform the FSANZ Act. The options presented in the draft RIS were informed by previous consultations on a scoping paper in October and November 2020. Ministers stated that there was insufficient opportunity to consider the agenda paper and were not able to consider the options presented at this time, however ministers acknowledged the importance of this work and need for due consideration accordingly.

Ministers confirmed the principle of the protection of public health and safety and this has primacy in the FSANZ Act. Ministers agreed to defer consideration on a preferred option to a future meeting to allow further discussions with jurisdictions and to better align with other actions associated with the modernisation of the food regulatory system.

Modernisation of the Food Regulatory System: Plan to Progress the Ambitious Reform

Ministers remain committed to an ambitious reform agenda for the System and agreed to key actions to progress the next phase of this work. The agreed actions are intended to deliver:

- A clear purpose and set of objectives for the System to support strategic direction setting, and the ability to measure System performance.
- A shared understanding of the System that reinforces all stakeholders' responsibilities for mitigating risks, enhanced collaboration and greater consistency in implementing regulations.
- Clarity about how the System intersects with other regulatory systems.
- A System that invests in and delivers suitable functions and tools to achieve the aims.
- Clearer structures and processes that are integrated to support an agile and robust System.
- Proactive assessment and demonstration of performance.

Ministers also endorsed the implementation of a strategic planning cycle to support priority-setting that is evidence based and informed by stakeholders.

The actions are informed by the draft Aspirations for the system, best practice regulation and an understanding of the System's existing strengths and opportunities for improvements.

This next phase supports core reform activities to improve jurisdictional consistency, review the operations of the system and develop a revised Food Regulation Agreement by late 2022.

Ministers acknowledged there is significant stakeholder interest in this reform work. It was agreed that the Food Regulation Standing Committee will engage further with stakeholders in 2022 to inform the progression of the actions and support a culture of collaboration.

Next Meeting

Ministers with responsibility for food will meet as required to make decisions on food regulatory matters.

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