

FOOD MINISTERS' MEETING

COMMUNIQUE

4 April 2023

The Food Ministers' Meeting (FMM) met on Tuesday 4 April 2023 via video conference to consider food regulation and policy matters. The FMM is chaired by the Hon Ged Kearney MP and comprises all Australian and New Zealand Ministers responsible for food. The Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Board Chair and CEO attended the meeting as observers.

Key outcomes from the meeting include:

Bovine lactoferrin in infant formula products

Ministers considered the variation approved by the FSANZ Board to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) to permit the voluntary addition of bovine lactoferrin as a nutritive substance in infant formula products up to a maximum permitted amount of 40 mg/100 kJ.

At today's meeting the FMM did not request a review of the draft variation to the Code.

The variation enables the addition of bovine lactoferrin to infant formula products to more closely reflect the lactoferrin content in human milk. It also includes an exclusive use permission for the Applicant's brand of bovine lactoferrin when used as a nutritive substance in infant formula products for a period of 15 months after gazettal.

Ministers also agreed that the Food Regulation Standing Committee should examine and, if necessary, clarify the evidence required to substantiate whether an infant formula product has a beneficial role in the normal growth and development of infants including considering the cumulative effects.

Pregnancy warning labels for corrugated cardboard packaging

Ministers noted their ongoing commitment to effective pregnancy warning labels.

Ministers considered the variation approved by the FSANZ Board to the Code to permit pregnancy warning labels on corrugated cardboard packaging used for multiple individual units of alcoholic beverages to be in a single colour on a contrasting background.

The request was due to a technical impediment to printing the prescribed warning mark on corrugated cardboard when a post-print process is used.

At today's meeting the FMM did not request a review of the draft variation to the Code.

The variation provides a suitable alternative which amends the colour and increases the size of the warning statement.

Review of the kava standard

Ministers considered the re-affirmation by the FSANZ Board of the kava standard.

In March 2022 FSANZ approved a draft variation to the Code through an Urgent Proposal to clarify the existing permission for kava to ensure it continues to protect public health and safety following the Australian Government's decision to allow the commercial importation of kava from 1 December 2021 under Phase 2 of the Pacific Step-up Kava Pilot.

This variation amended Standard 1.1.2 to:

- require kava products only be obtained from the Noble varieties of kava named in the Codex Regional Standard for Kava; and
- explicitly prohibit the use of processing aids and food additives in the manufacturing or processing of kava products.

Per the requirements of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (the FSANZ Act) FSANZ undertook a review of the variation within 12 months of it taking effect and re-affirmed its decision to approve the variation.

At today's meeting the FMM did not request a review of the variation to the Code. Ministers sought an update on the outcomes of the Kava pilot review.

New Zealand will not be adopting the Kava standard amendment on cultural grounds and abstained from voting on this item. New Zealand would be maintaining the previous Kava standard.

Ministers noted the FSANZ Act review will consider how urgent reviews are triggered.

FSANZ Act Review: Recognising Indigenous Food and Culture

Following their agreement in November 2022 to reform concepts as part of the FSANZ Act Review Food Ministers requested additional scoping work be undertaken into the recognition of Indigenous culture and expertise within the FSANZ Act and FSANZ operations.

Ministers agreed to a number of concepts in relation to Indigenous culture and food expertise for further exploration and development as part of the FSANZ Act Review. These concepts include for example, ensuring Indigenous culture and food knowledge is recognised through improved representation processes and ensuring engagement and consultation on applications and proposals. Ministers noted the need for further tailored consultation with Indigenous Peoples on the proposed concepts.

These concepts will be incorporated into the FSANZ Act Review impact assessment. Ministers will consider the impact assessment prior to additional public consultation in early 2024.

Next Meeting

Ministers with responsibility for food will meet again on 28 July 2023.

Visit the Food Regulation website for further information on food regulation activities – www.foodregulation.gov.au