

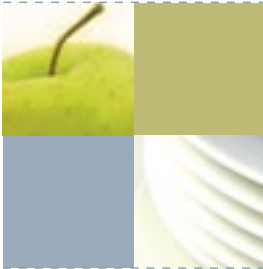


FOOD SURVEILLANCE

AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

Food Standards Australia New Zealand

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Editorial



Barbara Wilson
Chief Executive Officer,
Safe Food Queensland
Chair, Implementation Subcommittee (ISC)

I am delighted to provide an update on what has been achieved by the Implementation Subcommittee (ISC) following nine meetings and a number of workshops involving representatives for all jurisdictions (States, Territories, the Commonwealth and New Zealand).

ISC has been in operation for just over two years, its main function is to develop and oversight a consistent approach to implementing and enforcing food regulation and standards. This role encompasses food sourced from both domestic and export sources.

ISC reports to the Food Regulation Standing Committee about a range of issues, including how standards are implemented, enforcement and surveillance.

Results from the ISC process include a national strategy and three year work plan for implementing and enforcing food regulation (endorsed by Ministerial Council in October 2005), development of

- a watchdog function for Health Claims
- a response plan for food related incidents
- a national survey plan

The survey planning is a good example of how information collected nationally can assist regulators in all jurisdictions to identify key compliance issues and make appropriate decisions about resource allocations.

Information gathering that is planned for a predetermined purpose, in this case co-ordination of national regulatory efforts, sounds like a good thing but is easier said than done. The working group on surveys established by ISC has produced the goods and an initial round of survey results have been obtained.

Communicating the results of surveys and research findings that influence our thinking on food safety is a vital part of the regulators' responsibility

I am pleased that the National Coordinated Surveillance Plan is off to a very good start thanks to strong support from Marion Healy and FSANZ as well as members of the working group from agencies attending ISC.

This edition of the newsletter highlights recent activities in this area and indicates the increasing emphasis that this activity is receiving.

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Benchmark Research on the Poultry Meat Industry



FSANZ is currently preparing to implement a new standard in Chapter 4 of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, which will see national food regulation extend across all parts of the food chain, including primary production, processing and retail – in essence from *paddock to plate*. One of these new standards due, to be introduced in 2006, is the Primary Production and Processing Standard for Poultry Meat. This standard will complement the existing Chapter 3 Food Safety Standards.

In order to assist in the evaluation of the implementation of this standard in the future, FSANZ has identified the need for benchmark data on awareness, knowledge and behaviour of poultry meat businesses, government enforcement officers and consumers in relation to food safety issues. These benchmark data will provide FSANZ with information about the poultry meat industry before the standard is implemented in all States and Territories in Australia.

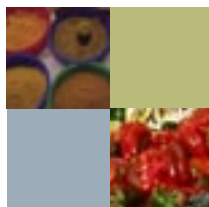
FSANZ identified three key stakeholder groups for the research: the poultry meat industry including poultry growers, processors, and wholesalers and retailers; government enforcement officers at the state and local government level; and consumers. Computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) surveys were conducted for all three stakeholder groups. Questions were asked of all stakeholders about their awareness and knowledge of food safety practices and sources of information on food safety issues.

For the food industry and enforcement officers additional questions were asked on the potential for different stages in the food chain to lead to foodborne illness, on awareness of the FSANZ Food Standards Code (Chapter 3 Food Safety Standards and

the proposed Chapter 4 Standards) and about the regulations and guidelines currently used by each sector. Enforcement officers were also asked about their current responsibilities with respect to the poultry meat industry, where the gaps in regulations were with regards to preventing foodborne illness and how their responsibilities may change once the Chapter 4 Primary Production and Processing Standard for Poultry Meat is implemented.

This report comprises a short Executive Summary of the research project, an Interpretative Summary of the main findings for each of the three stakeholder groups and the main report with the methodology used for each stakeholder group and full results. It should be noted that research findings are based on the telephone surveys report on people's opinions, awareness and knowledge of food safety issues not on actual practices.

The full report is available from the FSANZ website: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/publications/evaluationreportseries/benchmarkresearchonthepoultrymeatindustry/index.cfm>



Microbiological survey of freshly squeezed juices - Victoria

A statewide microbiological survey has shown that freshly squeezed juices, when prepared and handled properly, are safe for the consumer. The survey, conducted to improve knowledge and understanding of the microbiological risk of freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, involved the collection of samples by Environmental Health Officers from 20 councils across Victoria. The 291 juice samples collected between March and May 2004 were analysed for *Salmonella* spp., *Escherichia coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes* and coagulase positive staphylococci. Sample pH levels were also determined.

Overall, the microbiological quality of the juice samples submitted was good, with only one sample being assessed as potentially hazardous. This is very positive news for the growing number of people who consume freshly squeezed juices and for the businesses that are meeting that demand. The 1995 Australian National Nutrition Survey showed that 35 per cent of males and 37 per cent of females surveyed consumed fruit juice type products daily.

While the study results were extremely good, businesses that produce freshly squeezed juices should always adhere to safe food handling and preparation practices, as documented in their Food Safety Program, to prevent any problems.

For further information contact Paul Goldsmith, Food Safety Unit on (03) 9637 4943 or email: Paul.Goldsmith@dhs.vic.gov.au or visit http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/downloads/fruit_juice_survey_report_aug05.pdf for the full report.



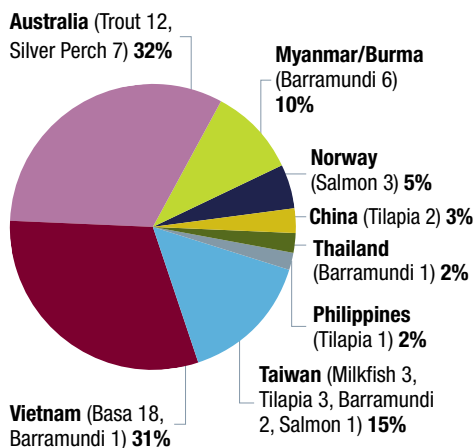
Chemical Residues in Domestic and Imported Aquacultured Fish Survey Article

Australians currently consume around 13 kg of fish per person per year, and total domestic consumption is about 200,000 tonnes per annum. Fish forms a significant component of the total diet, and although its consumption is below meats such as poultry, beef and sheep, it is the only primary product where a significant proportion of that consumed is imported into Australia.

The long-term trend is for per capita consumption of fish to increase in Australia. There is also a significant global trend for the proportion of aquacultured (farmed) fish consumed to increase as opposed to wild caught.

Over recent years there have been reports from overseas regulatory agencies that some aquacultured food may contain residues of antimicrobials. Given these allegations and regulatory findings reported internationally, FSANZ conducted a national survey in cooperation with food regulatory agencies in all Australian States and Territories, primarily to indicate whether there is an issue with non-compliance with the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) regarding the levels of antimicrobial residues present in some farmed fish. This survey was part of the Coordinated Survey Plan.

Graph 1: Total Number of Fish Samples Collected & Analysed by Country of Origin



The survey tested a total of 60 fish samples for 56 chemical residues. Countries of origin of the fish samples purchased included Australia, China, Myanmar/Burma, Norway, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. Fish were sampled based on research of the market so that they were representative of the fish available to consumers in Australia. The variety of fish samples that were collected for analyses included Barramundi, Salmon, Basa, Rainbow Trout, Tilapia, Milk Fish and Silver Perch.

Of the 56 antimicrobials tested, 54 were not detected in any sample. However, trace levels of leucomalachite green and in some cases malachite green that exceeded the specified level of quantification of 0.002 mg/kg were detected in 10 of the 60 fish samples collected. These positive detections were found in 3 domestic fish samples (2 silver perch and 1 trout) and 7 imported samples (all basa) from Vietnam. The residues of malachite/leucomalachite reported were at low levels i.e. all less than 0.14 mg/kg. There was no trace of any other antimicrobial found in these fish samples.

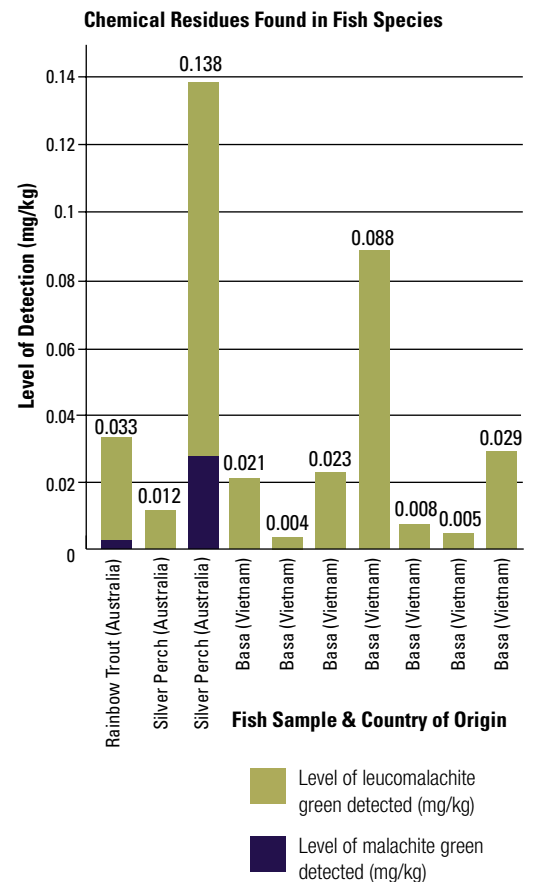
Malachite green is a synthetic dye used to colour textiles and paper and is also used in the ornamental fish trade (e.g. goldfish) for treating fish parasites. It is not registered for use in aquaculture in Australia. Leucomalachite green is formed from the metabolism of malachite green.

FSANZ conducted a risk assessment to determine if the consumption of the antimicrobial malachite green and leucomalachite green, at the levels detected in this survey, posed a threat to public health and safety. The risk assessment concluded that the public health risk associated with low residues of malachite green and leucomalachite green in aquacultured fish is very low.

While overall the findings of the survey indicated that chemical contamination of fish is generally low, the presence of malachite/leucomalachite green in samples identified a compliance issue (the level of non-compliance for both domestic and imported aquacultured fish was similar, around 17%). These findings gave rise to a number of management actions, which included:

- Jurisdictions who had detections in domestically farmed samples all responded with further investigatory and follow up action.
- FSANZ prepared a fact sheet on Malachite green in aquacultured fish for posting on their website (<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>). A full report is available on the study at: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>
- The Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), who have responsibility for imported food under the Imported Food Control Act 1992 initiated random testing of relevant imported fish for malachite/leucomalachite green on 26 September 2005.

Graph 2: Levels of Leucomalachite Green and/or Malachite Green Found in Fish Samples



In summary, a compliance issue in relation to malachite green was identified as a result of the survey and appropriate follow-up actions have been taken by the jurisdictions and AQIS in response to the survey's findings. The lack of detections of any other chemical residues and the conclusion that the low level detections of malachite/leucomalachite green present a very low risk to public health and safety are important findings given there have been overseas reports of unapproved chemical residues being found in fish.



Changing public attitudes towards Genetically Modified Foods

Craig Cormick, Manager of Public Awareness, Biotechnology Australia

Once upon a time it used to be a reasonably simple task to just ask people if they would or wouldn't eat GM foods – and that would be a fair indicator of what you wanted to know. Unfortunately that doesn't work so well any more.

The reasons, which have emerged from some in-depth polling from Biotechnology Australia's latest tracking research study, are that people are becoming more sophisticated in their attitudes and make decisions based on quite complex value chains. The study sought to reach beneath the statistics and determine what drove consumer's attitudes.

So while roughly 50 per cent of the population in Australia will eat GM foods, and roughly 50 per cent won't – these figures will move depending on:

- what benefits are there from eating the food,
- what is the final food type – a health food or snack food,
- how distant is the gene transfer involved,
- who is regulating it for safety,
- was it developed by a company or a public research organisation,
- and, to a lesser extent, the price of the product.

Therefore, if you ask somebody these days if they would or wouldn't eat GM foods, they're more likely to say, 'Well that depends. Are we talking about a cake or a tomato? What genes has it had transferred? And who developed it?'

However, while attitudes have become a little more complex, there is still a low level of understanding of GM food in Australia, with a quarter of survey respondents (25.8%) incorrectly believing that most of Australia's fresh produce is genetically modified. Also, nearly half (46.3%) believed that most processed foods in Australian supermarkets are genetically modified.

There was, however, great variation in the spread of attitudes, ranging from disgust to indifference and with many opinions in the middle that cannot be simply be broken down into for or against. Most participants did express concern about the potential health risks of consuming genetically modified foods and some were sceptical whether the exact nature of the effect of these foods on human health would ever be known.

However the correlation between attitudes and behaviour showed a weaker link than has often been presumed, and the type of foods being considered became crucial as the key indicator. Some respondents stated that they would stop purchasing a product if they found out that it was genetically modified, but most said they would be reluctant to change their buying habits. Some even expressed no intention to cease buying familiar items if they learnt that they were genetically modified, given that they had not noticed any ill-effects to date.

During the focus group sections of the study participants were shown baked goods (e.g. lamingtons and cakes) which contained ingredients (e.g. soy emulsifiers, canola oil) produced from crops that are among the more commonly genetically modified.

Most participants said they would buy and eat the baked goods, even if they contained GM ingredients, as they did not expect the product to be good for them in the first place.

Regarding labelling of GM foods, many people were generally confident that genetically modified foods would have strict labelling requirements. However, none of the focus group respondents in the study could recall having ever seen a label on food packaging indicating the food was GM. Most participants felt that the labelling should be obvious, and not simply in the fine print. In this regard, they made reference to common flavours and preservatives, which were only identified by their codes, which made them difficult to identify.

The study also looked at awareness of, and trust in, regulators. Food Standards Australia New Zealand rated very highly, with awareness levels of 61.3% (prompted) and trust levels of 69.9% amongst that group.

(The study, which is the fourth in a series, was conducted by Eureka Strategic Research, for Biotechnology Australia, and entailed a telephone interview with 1067 people over the age of 18, supported by 13 focus groups.)

Further details can be obtained by contacting Craig Cormick, Manager of Public Awareness, Biotechnology Australia on +61 02 6213-6805 or from: www.biotechnology.gov.au/reports



Survey shows that imported horticulture is safe

Results of a recent AQIS survey assessing the safety of imported horticulture products has confirmed that these horticulture products remain a low risk.

The survey provided a "snapshot" of the status of imported horticultural products, such as baby corn, garlic, asparagus, semi-dried tomatoes and mushrooms, and tested for the presence of any associated pesticide residues or microbiological contamination.

A total of 97 samples were tested.

Pesticide residues were found in only two samples – semi dried tomatoes and garlic but neither presented a public health risk as residue levels were well below the maximum residue levels for these products.

The microbiological contamination results showed no detections of *Salmonella* bacteria but 14 of the 97 samples revealed traces of *E.coli* where 10 of these samples were from the same consignment from one importer.

The survey shows that imported horticultural products are safe. Comparing this result with data from state government surveys of domestic produce indicates that imported produce has microbiological and chemical levels comparable to Australian produce.

The survey results were analysed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), which advised that the results confirm that horticultural products remain a low food safety risk.

The full report can be found at www.aqis.gov.au/foodimport.

Recent research work on Nutrition, Health and Related Claims

FSANZ has recently completed three research projects to assist us in developing a new standard for nutrition, health and related claims and to provide baseline data on the use of nutrition, health and related claims prior to the new standard being put in place. FSANZ will use these results in the future after the standard is implemented to help us evaluate how well it is working.

What do consumers think about nutrition and health claims on food products?

In the first two projects FSANZ commissioned TNS Social Research to work with consumers to find out about their perceptions of foods that carry nutrition and health claims and the benefits that might be provided by consuming these foods on a regular basis. The research also looked at how nutrition and health claims on foods might influence a consumer's decision to purchase specific food products. First we did some qualitative research to find out more about the range of consumer views on these issues. We used this information to develop questions for the second project, a quantitative survey of consumers.

The overall aim of the research was to:

- provide baseline data on consumer views and behaviour towards foods carrying nutrition and health claims prior to the development of a standard to regulate such claims;
- inform an analysis of the benefits and costs of moving away from the status quo (where claims, other than content claims and nutrition function claims, are not permitted) to a system where claims in relation to nutrition and health, if substantiated, are permitted; and
- inform risk management decisions in relation to drafting and implementing regulatory measures as appropriate.

Qualitative research

For the first stage of the research we used qualitative methods to determine the range of attitudes and beliefs that consumers have about nutrition and health claims on foods. Sixty nine in-depth interviews were completed in four major cities in New Zealand and Australia using mock ups of food products with and without various types of claims. A demographically representative sample of adults aged 18 years and over took part, with each person selected based on their responsibility for food purchase and varying levels of self reported 'health consciousness'. The fieldwork was completed at the end of October 2004.

Preliminary findings indicated considerable variability in responses for particular questions however, there were a number of common findings across the study that underpinned participants' responses and behaviours:

- where consumers had existing knowledge about specific nutrients this led to a better understanding of the potential health benefits of consuming foods with a claims about the amount of nutrient in the food (content claim);
- participants were more cautious about new terms used in the claims than old (known and accepted) ones;
- claims with higher perceived risk (or possibly less personal knowledge of) were taken more seriously than those with lower perceived risk;
- claims about a longer term health risk, such as heart disease, was seen to be lower risk and less relevant than claims about immediate or short-term health risk, such as cholesterol lowering;
- fat was perceived differently to other nutrients, and dominated consumer thinking. Fat intake was equated with high health risk and made participants concerned about or wanting to check the fat content of the product;
- the most common approach to seeking further information was to check the nutrition information panel, the ingredients list or to look for special statement on the back of the product. All participants expected to find further information on the back of the product.

The research also explored consumers' views on the length of claims and the use of message devices, which are statements that provide additional information to the claim and include disclaimers, disclosures and advisory statements. Generally consumers preferred short simple messages for the claim itself. For the message device to be effective there needed to be an obvious link with the claim, the research findings indicating that their position on the label in relation to the claim made a difference to consumers' understanding of the intent of the message.

Different types of nutrition and health claims were discussed in the interviews, including nutrition content claims, nutrition function claims and other general level claims, high level claims referencing a serious disease, endorsements (such as the National Heart Foundation tick), implied claims (such as pictures/graphics) and cause related marketing claims (donation from the purchase of the product going towards a worthy organisation). Each consumer was asked to rank sets of claims according to perceived health benefits and influence on intent to purchase.

- [Click here for the full report and summary of findings.](#)

Quantitative research

In the second project, we designed an email survey that was completed by 1044 consumers from a representative sample of the Australia and New Zealand populations in March 2005. The survey further explored consumers' attitudes and behaviour towards products with different types of nutrition and health claims. People taking part in the survey were presented with several sets of photos of label mock ups of a product with different claims and asked a series of questions about the benefits they thought regular consumption of each version of the product would give, who might benefit, how the claim might influence their intent to purchase the product and, in some cases, how useful a disclosure statement about nutrients other than the claimed nutrient was.

The results proved to be interesting, again reflecting the fact that there is a diverse range of beliefs and assumptions about the health and nutritional value of foods, based on consumers' individual knowledge and life experience. Decisions about foods with claims are obviously very complex and in some cases the findings were not straightforward. There was some evidence that consumers also look at other information on the food label to 'verify' any claims made, for example, the nutrition information panel, endorsements and list of ingredients.

Consumers were more aware of general level claims than high level claims, the most frequently seen claim being a function claims (90% consumers aware) and a nutrient content claim (84% aware). However, even though some of the high level claims presented in the survey are not currently permitted (eg whole of diet risk reduction claims, biomarker maintenance claim) consumers did report being aware of and using these types of claims. This may have been due to confusion about the type of claim referred to in the question, material seen elsewhere but not actually on food labels or the use of products carrying an illegal claim.

The results suggest that there was a trend for high level claims that reference a serious disease to communicate greater health benefits compared to the same product with a general level claim. However, there was little difference in intent to purchase the product between products with these two types of claims. however, there was a difference in intent to purchase reported between each product with a claim and the product with no claim.

As in the qualitative research, the influence of endorsements, graphics (implied claims) and cause related marketing claims on intent to purchase and on perceived benefit was also

Recent research work on Nutrition, Health and Related Claims

explored in the email survey. These and more results are available in [the full report](#).

On reading the report, it must be remembered that one of the limitations of this type of study is that the research findings may be dependent on the food used in the exercise or the type of claim selected. For example, we used the National Heart Foundation Tick as the endorsement on a food label. The results obtained on consumers' views of endorsement claims may be due to the fact that the tick is so well known and may not be replicated for other, less well known, endorsements.

What claims are found on food labels?

To assess the changes to the extent and type of claims on food labels the new standard on nutrition, health and related claims might bring we need to know what claims are being used now. FSANZ commissioned AgriQuality to assess claims on labels we had collected in 2003 as part of our ongoing label monitoring survey.

The claims were assessed in two ways: against the claims classification in the proposed Standard for Nutrition, Health and Related Claims and against current

labelling provisions (including Standard 1.2.8, Standard 1.3.2, standards for special foods, the transitional health standard, fair trading standards). Australian labels were also assessed against the Code of Practice on Nutrition Claims in Food Labels and Advertising (CoPoNC) provisions and New Zealand labels against the New Zealand Dietary Supplements Regulations (NZDSR).

A total of 1262 products taken from 14 food categories were assessed. For the assessment against the proposed framework for claims, 43% (542 products) carried nutrition or health claims (42% nutrition claims, 11% health claims, that is, some had both types).

Of 542 products with claims, 75% (405) had nutrition claims only, 1% (6 products) health claims only and 24% (131 products) had both nutrition and health claims.



When the products were assessed against current labelling provisions, the level of consistency was relatively high. Of 542 products with claims, 73 products (84 claims) were inconsistent with standards, CoPoNC or the NZDSR.

There were some differences across food categories, with foods intended for special dietary purposes carrying the largest proportion of claims (26 out of 27 labels had a nutrition claim), followed by edible oils (21 out of 30 labels) and dairy products (77 out of 112 labels). Sugar, confectionery and meat products had the lowest proportion of products with claims.

- Click here for [the full report](#).

It is worth noting that the baseline data presented in this report may not reflect the current market place as the products were purchased in 2003. FSANZ has commissioned a label monitoring survey for 2005 and 2006. The 2005 labels will be assessed for key labelling elements such as date marking, nutrition information panels, country of origin labelling and nutrition, health and related claims. The 2005 survey will provide a more up to date picture of the current level of use of claims that will be available before the Standard for Nutrition, Health and Related Claims is finalised in 2006. ■

Survey of Microbiological Quality of Pork Pies

A Survey by the West Australian Food Monitoring Program

"Not just another pork pie"

Escherichia coli contaminated pork pies were recently identified by the City of Melville local government Environmental Health Services during routine food testing. This resulted in a cross jurisdictional investigation involving the participation of fifteen Local governments and the Western Australian Food Monitoring Program (WAFMP).

The matter is of notable food safety concern considering that pork pies are typically eaten cold and not reheated prior to consumption.

The WAFMP initiated a small screening survey to examine the microbiological quality pork pies within the Perth metropolitan area of Western Australia.

The survey revealed that the majority of pork pies in the Western Australian market place were produced by the manufacturer identified by the City of Melville. Of the 19 pork pies from this manufacturer sampled and tested in the

survey, 16 were found to be contaminated with *E. coli* and 80 percent were of marginal and unsatisfactory microbial quality when compared to *E. coli* limits set in the FSANZ Guidelines for ready-to-eat foods.

Environmental Health Officers from the Town of Victoria Park conducted an investigation of the manufacturer's premises and found that *E. coli* was present in biofilms within the gel injection pump. A setting gel is inserted into the pie (between the meat and pastry) after the pie is cooked and no further processing step is applied to reduce or eliminate microbial contamination. The areas more prone to biofilm development in food pumping equipment surfaces include joints, valves, gaskets and dead ends where water cannot drain away. Equipment surfaces can also corrode with age, forming pits and cracks where bacteria can collect.

The manufacturer conducted a voluntary recall of all pork pies from the market place and ceased producing the product

In conclusion, the survey report identifies pork pies to be a high risk product considering the lack of a processing step capable of eliminating microbial contamination after the insertion of the setting gel and recommends that Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) and Food Safety Auditors (FSA) be mindful of this when carrying out inspections and audits.

The DOH would like to acknowledge the assistance of the following local governments in the investigation and survey including the collection and submission of samples: Belmont, Canning, Cockburn, Fremantle, Gosnells, Joondalup, Melville, Nedlands, Rockingham, Stirling, Subiaco, Swan, Victoria Park, Vincent and Wanneroo.

Further enquiries please contact Neil McSkimming on 08 9388 4912.

Benzoates, sulphites and sorbates in the food supply

Report of the 21st Australian
Total Diet Study

The Australian Total Diet Study (ATDS), formerly known as the Australian Market Basket Study, is Australia's most comprehensive assessment of consumers' dietary intake of a range of food chemicals, including food additives, nutrients, pesticide residues, contaminants and other substances.

The 21st ATDS, carried out by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), has estimated the intake of the Australian population of three classes of preservatives in food – benzoates, sulphites and sorbates.

What are preservatives and why are they used?

Preservatives are food additives designed mainly to improve the microbiological safety of food and to improve shelf-life. As a consequence of this, preservatives may also maintain the palatability and attractiveness of foodstuffs to the consumer. Sulphite, benzoate and sorbate preservatives are widely used throughout the food industry.

How does the 21st ATDS differ from previous studies?

The intention with the 21st ATDS and future studies is to conduct more frequent studies on fewer food chemicals so that over time, a broader range of food chemicals are investigated in a more comprehensive manner. Previous ATDSs looked at pesticide residues and contaminants only, finding that these present a very low public health and safety risk. FSANZ will now investigate those food chemicals for which there are insufficient data, or for which there may be cause for concern that dietary exposure might exceed the reference health standard. For example, for some additives the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) for some population groups may be exceeded. This is the amount of food additive that can be ingested daily over an entire lifetime without any appreciable risk to health and is expressed in units of milligrams per kilogram of bodyweight per day (mg/kg bw/day).

Which foods were sampled for the study?

The food survey conducted for the 21st ATDS sampled 59 types of food for which permissions have been given for preservatives in the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*. In light of State and Territory enforcement data, minced meat was also included in the 21st ATDS, although there is no permission for sulphite usage in minced meat in the Code.

Types of foods sampled included alcoholic beverages (including red and white wine and beer), non-alcoholic beverages (including juice, cordials and soft-drinks), cereal products

(including bread, cake, pasta and muesli bars) cheeses and cheese-based dips, dried fruits and dried fruit products (including dried apricots, apples, prunes and 'fruit fingers'), meat products (including sausages, frankfurts, hamburger patties and strassburg), ice cream toppings, potato crisps and hot potato chips.

Foods were sampled from all Australian States and Territories.

To obtain the most realistic estimate of the amount of sulphites, benzoates and sorbates in the food as it is normally eaten, the sampled foods were prepared to a 'ready-to-eat' state before being analysed. For example, sausages were fried and cordial was made up according to the instructions.

For which age groups were estimates of dietary intake calculated?

The dietary intake estimates were calculated for a range of age-gender groups. The groups comprised young girls aged 2-5 years, young boys aged 2-5 years, school girls aged 6-12 years, school boys aged 6-12 years, teenage girls aged 13-18 years, teenage boys aged 13-18 years, adult females aged 19 years and over and adult males aged 19 years and over. Dietary intakes were also estimated for the entire female and male populations aged two years and over, which we assume to be representative of a lifetime of dietary exposure to the preservatives.

What are the main findings of the 21st ATDS?

The 21st ATDS found that, for the majority of the people in all age groups, there is no public health and safety risk from eating a balanced diet that includes foods prepared using sulphites, benzoates and sorbates.

The results indicate that, for all the population groups assessed, even high consumers of sorbates had a dietary intake well below the ADI for sorbate. However, in some age groups, the eating patterns of some people can lead to a high consumption of benzoates and sulphites, resulting in an intake above their respective ADIs.

For example, the ATDS found that young children who are high consumers of certain sulphite-containing foods (for example, dried apricots, sausages and cordial) have estimated intakes that exceeded the ADI for sulphites. Similarly, young children who are very high consumers of certain benzoate-containing foods (for example, non-cola soft drinks, orange juice and cordial) exceeded the ADI for benzoates, but to a lesser degree than for sulphites. In the modelling used to estimate intake, it was assumed that the same foods were eaten every day.

It is important to note that young children are more likely to exceed the ADI than adults, due to their higher consumption of food per kilogram of body weight.

Should the community be worried about the dietary intakes estimated in the 21st ATDS?

No. The results of the study show that there are no public health and safety concerns for the majority of people who regularly select a balanced diet that includes foods containing benzoates, sulphites and sorbates.

There is also no need for people whose eating patterns lead to high intakes of these preservatives, to be unduly concerned. When conducting the ATDS, FSANZ makes conservative assumptions, which are likely to result in the dietary intake being an over-estimation.

This estimate is then compared to an internationally agreed reference health standard, in this case, the ADI, which is also conservative and includes a 100-fold safety factor.

However, this large margin of safety is reduced for people who have intakes of sulphites and benzoates that exceed the reference standard on a regular basis.

What are the possible health consequences of dietary intake of benzoates and sulphites?

FSANZ is aware that sulphites are of particular concern to those suffering from asthma. This concern is already addressed by the mandatory labelling of all foods with sulphite concentrations of 10 mg/kg or more. The issue of sulphite sensitivity has been considered previously by FSANZ and resulted in the wide distribution of a brochure entitled "For Asthma Sufferers: The Facts About Sulphites in Food" which is available on the FSANZ web site. There is little evidence to suggest that sulphites are a concern for non-asthmatics.

In relation to other potential health consequences, there is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that high dietary intake of sulphites and benzoates can cause adverse effects in people.

Food additives are tested in experimental animals in order to identify any potential adverse health effects. Such studies are normally conducted at dose levels that are considerably higher than the levels normally found in foods. Sulphites, when tested in animals for periods over three months with daily high dose exposure, caused gastric lesions. There was little evidence of toxicity in other organs even at

Benzoates, sulphites and sorbates in the food supply

Report of the 21st Australian
Total Diet Study

higher dose levels. In a similar study with high daily exposure to benzoates, there were only general signs of toxicity, such as lethargy and reduced food intake.

Which foods contribute to high dietary intake of these preservatives?

Some people's eating patterns may lead to a high level of intake of benzoates and sulphites. This can be from eating food that has high levels of the preservatives (for example, dried apricots), or eating large amounts of food that contains moderate or low levels of the preservatives (for example, wine), or a combination of these.

The 21st ATDS found that the foods that contributed the most to the estimated dietary intake of sulphites included dried apricots, sausages, cordial and white wine. Foods that contributed the most to the estimated dietary intake of benzoates were non-cola soft drinks, cordial and orange juice.

What is FSANZ doing to address the problem?

FSANZ has decided to undertake a Review of sulphites and benzoates in the Food Supply (Proposal P298). We will be working with food manufacturers to refine our data and if necessary establish the best way to reduce dietary intake of these preservatives.

The challenge will be to identify permissible levels of usage that lower intake of sulphites and benzoates, while retaining the technological function of the preservatives in the foods or to assist industry to find alternative preservatives and methodologies in some cases. We are seeking input to the review from concerned individuals, consumer groups, public health professionals and industry.

The 21st ATDS indicated that sulphites are being added illegally to minced meat. However, the dietary modelling indicated that this contributed very little to the overall estimated intake of sulphites. FSANZ is working closely with Australian food regulation enforcement agencies to address this problem. State and Territory health departments are responsible for the enforcement of food laws and they conduct regular surveys of meat products to ensure compliance with food additive permissions contained in the Food Standards Code. FSANZ and the enforcement agencies will continue to target meat manufacturers to reduce illegal addition of sulphites to minced meat.

How can people recognise the presence of these preservatives in foods?

You can find out if a food contains these preservatives by looking at the ingredient list on the label. When food additives are added to food, they must be listed in the ingredient list, either by name (e.g. sulphur dioxide) or by function and Food Additive Number (eg preservative [220]).

There are several forms of sulphites and benzoates that are permitted in food. These are:

sulphur dioxide (220)
sodium sulphite (221)
sodium bisulphite (222)
sodium metabisulphite (223)
potassium metabisulphite (224)
potassium bisulphite (228)
benzoic acid (210)
sodium benzoate (211)
potassium benzoate (212)
calcium benzoate (213)
potassium sulphite (225)

How can consumer groups and concerned individuals input into the review of these preservatives?

Background information and details of how to make a submission to the Review of Sulphites and Benzoates in the Food Supply (Proposal P298) can be found on the FSANZ website at: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment/proposals/index.cfm>

Where can I get more information?

On the FSANZ website:

- Australian Total Diet Study
- Dietary Modelling
- Food Additives Booklet
- Food Additive Fact Sheet (Updated June 2005)
- For Asthma Sufferers – The Facts About Sulphites In Food (Updated August 2003)
- Intolerance to Food Additives (July 2004)

Additional contacts:

- Anaphylaxis Australia:
<http://www.allergyfacts.org.au/>
- Asthma Australia:
<http://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/info.html>
- Australian Beverages Council
<http://www.australianbeverages.org/>
- Australian Consumers Association:
<http://www.choice.com.au/>
- Australian Dried Fruit Association:
<http://www.adfa.asn.au/>
- Australian Food and Grocery Council:
<http://www.afgc.org.au/>
- Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology: www.aifst.asn.au/
- Australian Meat Industry Council:
<http://www.amic.org.au/index.php>
- Australian Wine Research Institute:
<http://www.awri.com.au/>
- Dieticians Association of Australia:
www.daa.asn.au/
- Horticulture Australia Limited:
<http://www.horticulture.com.au/>
- National Asthma Council of Australia:
<http://www.nationalasthma.org.au/>
- Nutrition Australia:
<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/>
- Winemakers Federation of Australia:
<http://www.wfa.org.au/> ■

Accuracy of Nutrition Information Panels 2000-2002

A Survey by the West Australian Food Monitoring Program

Health authorities have recognised nutritional content and the ability of consumers to make an informed decision about the quality of the food they are buying to be an integral component in the health of the community. In acknowledgement of this they have agreed to legislative changes allowing manufacturers to make some claims.

Many chronic health conditions such as Obesity, Type I & II Diabetes, coronary and circulatory ailments, Coeliac disease, and certain Cancers have become the focus of Australian national and state health improvement initiatives with improved nutrition as an intervention. People with these chronic conditions are encouraged through health campaigns and promotions, to adopt a holistic lifestyle change and to better manage their diet or to assist in controlling their condition.

Food labelling legislation has undergone significant changes over the last few years, primarily on December 20, 2002 when Volume 2 of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (The Code) came into effect. Standard 1.2.8 of Volume 2 introduced a requirement for most processed food products to bear a Nutrition Information Panel (NIP). There are few exceptions.

Historically, Volume 1 of the Food Standards Code only required Nutrition Information Panels (NIPs) where specific permitted health, or nutrient claims such as low fat, low sodium, high carbohydrate etc. were being made on products. Consumers have relied on the accuracy of this information to make informed product choices about the food they buy.

Previous local surveys conducted by the City of Perth and City of Melville demonstrated a wide variation between values declared in NIP and those found in the packaged product.

The accuracy of the NIP panels was of concern to consumer groups and health authorities. To investigate these concerns the West Australian Food Monitoring Program (WAFMP) Steering Group agreed on a survey to specifically examine the NIPs on food packaging making health or content claims and additional foods that carried a nutrition information panel (though not required by the FSC) but did so for consumer purposes. The survey examined products specifically making claims of low (reduced) fat, low salt, high carbohydrates or no claim – but still carried a NIP to compare results against.

A total of 142 food products were sampled and submitted to the Chemistry Centre of WA for analysis against the declared nutritional information. The samples were from several different food commodity groups, including microwavable dinners, pies and other frozen foods, breakfast cereals, cake mixes, biscuits, muffins and soup mixes. The results were grouped according to the claims made on packaging including the absence of claims.

The majority of the results were within 25% of label declarations across all NIP characteristics, however, significant variation from NIP information was evident in some of the products sampled. Levels of potassium, sodium, carbohydrates and fat were often observed in excess of label declarations, for these nutrients this can represent public health issues and undermine the ability of consumers to be able to choose foods with confidence.

It is expected that where a manufacturer has made a specific claim, for example, a low fat claim, that additional effort is taken and due diligence is exercised to ensure that the nutrient content is accurately represented. However, in the case of low fat claims only 41% of samples tested were within 25% deviation of the stated value.

In addition, some levels of protein, calcium, iron and folates did not reflect label declarations. This may result in an indirect negative public health effect should these nutrients be at lower levels than declared, for example a product containing less folate than claimed may not provide the recommended amount a pregnant woman is guided to consume.

The level of inaccuracies observed in the survey are substantial, particularly in products claiming 'low fat' and are of relevance to both industry and enforcement agencies in Australia and New Zealand.

The report recommends:

1. Manufacturers must ensure that permitted health claims and other values printed on food labels in NIPs are reflective of the content and actual levels in the food.
2. Local Governments should monitor manufacturers in their area of responsibility to ensure that NIP information is regularly assessed by an analyst independent of the company.
3. Further action against companies demonstrating consistently poor NIP accuracy (that is not seasonal variation) should be considered.
4. Future surveys of NIP information by the WAFMP should concentrate on products making permitted health claims in relation to characteristics like low fat, low salt, folate, iron, calcium or other nutrient enriched foods.

The full report can be obtained from:
<http://www.population.health.wa.gov.au/Environmental/resources/Accuracy%20nutrition%20info%20panels%20051024.pdf>

Survey of artificial colours in processed foods

The Food Section of the South Australian Department of Health has completed a survey looking at artificial food colours in 245 samples of processed food and beverages across 18 different food categories.

Food groups included were confectionery, soft drink, cordial, flavoured milks, yoghurt, ice confection, ice cream, fruit drinks, jelly crystals, cheese, biscuits, cakes, margarines/spreads, frozen oven fries, meat/chicken/vegetable pies, extruded snacks, extruded breakfast cereals, toppings, spirits/liqueurs and jam.

The survey demonstrated a high level of compliance with 97% of samples meeting the requirements of the Food Standards Code. A copy of the report is available at <http://www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Food/report-food-colours-june05.pdf>



Food Label Monitoring Surveys

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has been conducting label monitoring surveys to assess the progress on implementation of labelling changes on packaged food products since 20 December 2002. Correct labelling is considered an important aspect for FSANZ to achieve one of its objectives of ensuring consumers have adequate information on food labels to assist them to make an informed choice.

The 2002 and 2003 surveys examined food labels and compared the label information to key labelling requirements of the new *Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code), focusing on those that had changed compared to the old Code. Transitional standards, such as 1.1A.2 Transitional Standard for Health Claims and 1.1A.3 Transitional Standard for Country of Origin Labelling, were not included as, at this time, no changes had been made to these standards.

During the survey period, 2002 and 2003, some foods manufactured complying with the old regulations were still available for purchase. This was because there was a 12 month stock-in-trade provision for foods manufactured prior to 20 December 2002 and a 24 month provision for long life foods (shelf life greater than 12 months). Foods manufactured directly in-store were allowed to continue being labelled as before for twelve months from 20 December 2002.

The pleasing news is that the 2002 and 2003 surveys showed high levels of consistency on products manufactured to the new Code for key labelling requirements. These key requirements were declarations of allergens, usage instructions, ingredients lists, product name and overall legibility of labels. Levels of consistency for other key labelling requirements that were not quite so high but did improve from 2002 to 2003 were: date marking, storage instructions and labelling of characterising ingredients (percentage labelling).

However, the surveys did show that some food manufacturers were still having problems with the correct presentation of the nutrition information panel, as required in the Code. This panel shows the amount of energy, protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugar and sodium (salt) in a product. The reported problems ranged from those assessed as minor ones that were not considered to affect consumer understanding of the information presented, for example, the use of upper case font rather than lower case or missing borders, to those assessed as major inconsistencies, such as panels not indicating that the values given were averages, incorrect values, missing headings or on occasion, nutrients missing or in the wrong order on the panel.

Nutrition information panels are an important public health tool as they enable consumers to make an informed choice about the nutrient content of the product that they are purchasing. It is important that the information on food labels, in particular the nutrition information panel, is correct and in a readable format. FSANZ's previous research with consumers on labelling issues shows that consumers often use nutrition panel information to verify nutrition claims.

What were the new food labelling changes?

The new Food Standards Code, which was gazetted in December 2000 and came into full force for any food sold in Australia and New Zealand after 20 December 2002 (excluding the stock-in-trade provisions), made a number of changes to the labelling of packaged foods. These included:

- Mandatory nutrition information panels on nearly all packaged foods showing average energy content, protein, fat, saturated fat, carbohydrates and sugars, and sodium (salt). The only exceptions to this are very small packages, and foods that have minimal nutrition such as single herbs or spices and tea or coffee.
- The major food allergens, such as eggs, milk, fish, peanuts and other nuts, sesame, soybeans, and cereals containing gluten (eg wheat) and their products must be labelled however small the amount.
- Date marking was clarified to 'Use By' dates, which mean the food cannot be legally sold or consumed after that date for public health and safety reasons, and 'Best Before' dates, where the food may still be sold after the date but may not retain some of the specific qualities for which any claims are made on the product.
- Ingredients must be listed in descending order (by ingoing weight). If the product contains added water, it also must be listed in the ingredients list according to its ingoing weight (making an allowance for any water lost in processing, for example by evaporation or from reconstitution), except when the water makes up less than 5% of the finished product.
- The percentage of the main or 'characterising' ingredient must be listed in the ingredients list, for example the percentage of strawberry in a strawberry yoghurt.

Food manufacturers can check the accuracy of their nutrition panels by referring to the fact sheets and user guides on the FSANZ website or by running the information through the nutrition panel calculator at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/nutritionpanelcalculator/>.

Existing labelling requirements were also retained. These were:

- Labels must be legible and in English.
- Foods must be labelled with an accurate name or description, for example a 'strawberry' yoghurt must actually contain strawberries.
- Labels must have the name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the supplier (manufacturer or importer), as well as the lot identification of the food for food recall purposes.
- Where specific storage conditions are required in order for a product to keep until its 'Best Before' or 'Use By' date, manufacturers must include this information on the label, for example 'this yoghurt should be kept refrigerated'.
- Food additives must be listed in the ingredients list by its class name followed by the prescribed number or specific name in brackets e.g. thickener (414 or gum Arabic).
- In Australia there must be a country of origin statement.
- A food must be labelled as genetically modified if it has altered DNA or protein in the final product. A food label must include the statement 'genetically modified' in association with the food or ingredient if it has DNA or protein in the final product
- A food that has been irradiated must be labelled as having been treated by irradiation (only herbs, spices, herbal infusions and some tropical fruits are currently permitted to be irradiated).

Why has FSANZ conducted these surveys?

FSANZ carried out these surveys to assess progress of implementation of the new food labelling regulations in the Code, the first step being to collect baseline data on labelling on food products.

The surveys did not include an assessment of labelling requirements that had not changed in the Code at that time, such as those for country of origin labelling or use of nutrition and health claims. ▶

Food Label Monitoring Surveys

What was surveyed?

The surveys aimed to examine the labels of 1200 items each year, selected from 14 food categories (approximately 2.5% of the product lines available) from a range of outlets including both supermarkets and small retailer. The food categories were:

- Dairy products
- Edible oils and emulsions
- Ice cream and edible ices
- Fruit and vegetables
- Confectionery
- Cereal and cereal products
- Bread and bakery products
- Meat and meat products
- Fish and fish products
- Egg and egg products
- Sugar, honey and related products
- Food intended for particular dietary uses
- Non-alcoholic beverages
- Mixed foods (eg sauces, dressings, desserts)

The sample was broadly representative of products available for sale in Australia and New Zealand and was based on the level of variety within each food category. There were an estimated 50,000 food product lines available in Australia and New Zealand at the time of the surveys, with different sizes of the same product being listed as separate product lines (70% products were available in both countries).

When were the surveys held?

The 1st stage was carried out in 2002 before the new regulations were mandatory as a benchmark for further measurement and the 2nd stage in 2003 while some long shelf life goods produced under the old regulations were still on the shelf.

What did the surveys find?

Stage 1 of the surveys was held in 2002 and Stage 2 in 2003 and examined labels of products manufactured to the new Code. The survey examined each label against twelve key labelling requirements in that Code. Thirty five percent of labels collected in 2002 (448 labels) and 91% labels collected in 2003 (1153 labels) were fully assessed. The main findings of surveys were:

The surveys showed significant progress made by industry in implementation of the key labelling requirements, such as declarations of allergens, usage instructions, ingredients lists,

Food manufacturers can check the labelling requirements by referring to the fact sheets and user guides on the FSANZ website and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) website. State authorities also provide labelling information. There is more information on the changes at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/whatsinfood/foodlabelling.cfm>

<http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/consumers/food-safety-topics/food-processing-labelling/food-labelling/index.htm>

A shoppers guide to food additives and labelling is also available in book stores for consumer use <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/publications/shoppersguide/index.cfm>

And in New Zealand a Food Additives and a labelling booklet is available free on line at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/consumers/food-safety-topics/food-processing-labelling/food-additives/index.htm> or by calling the NZFSA on 0800 69321.

Other useful websites are given in the additional materials information sheet.

Labelling requirement	Stage 1 [^]	Stage 2 [^]
Overall label legibility	92	91
Allergen declarations*	100	100
Mandatory advisory statements*	100	100
Ingredient declarations*	99	99
Usage instructions*	100	99
Product name*	100	99
Storage instructions	89	93
Date markings	72	80
Compound ingredients	71	70
Characterising ingredients	38	57
Nutrition information panel (Standard NIP only)#	36 major reasons 51 intermediate reasons 1 minor reasons	49 major reasons 55 intermediate reasons 0 minor reasons

[^] Percent (%) labels consistent with labelling standards, for labels required to or voluntarily providing information

* Based on legibility only

The reasons an NIP may have been assessed as inconsistent were grouped into major, intermediate and minor, depending on the potential impact on consumer understanding of the information in the panel (ie major reasons were those NIP components that would have the most serious impact on consumer understanding of the NIP if labelled incorrectly). See below for explanation of results.

Note: Genetically modified (GM) ingredients were declared on one label in Stage 1 and on no labels in Stage 2. No labels in either stage declared treatment with ionising radiation.

product name and overall legibility of labels. Levels of consistency for other key labelling requirements that were lower but improved from 2002 to 2003 were: date marking, storage instructions and labelling of characterising ingredients (percentage labelling).

The survey results also showed that the requirements in relation to the nutrition information panel had presented some problems. The panels were assessed against the prescriptive nutrition information panel labelling requirements in the Code, with inconsistencies classed as minor, intermediate or major. The type of inconsistency was determined by their potential impact on consumer understanding and on consumers' ability to compare two different labels easily, noting that each label could be inconsistent for more than one category.

For standard nutrition information panels, virtually all inconsistent labels (99% of the 346 labels inconsistent for the nutrition information panel in Stage 1 and 100% of the 1063 labels inconsistent for the nutrition information panel in Stage 2) had minor inconsistencies, such as the use of upper case font instead of lower case, lack of borders or punctuation differences. There was an improvement in the proportion of labels with intermediate and major inconsistencies between Stage 1 and Stage 2. Comparing the two Stages, 49% (Stage 1) and 45% (Stage 2) had intermediate inconsistencies, such as incorrect position of a column of information within the nutrition information panel. In Stage 1, 64% panels had major inconsistencies, while in Stage 2, 51% had major inconsistencies, such as values not presented as averages, incorrect units, missing headings or missing nutrients or nutrients in the wrong order. ▶



Food Label Monitoring Surveys

New Subscribers

Food Surveillance ANZ is a newsletter that is published electronically on the FSANZ website. It is NOT available in hard copy. As soon as it is published on the website, an email announcing its publication is sent to subscribers on the Food Surveillance ANZ database, maintained by FSANZ. The email includes a direct link to the newsletter on the FSANZ website.

FSANZ has recently established a facility that will enable new subscribers to register via our website, to receive Food Surveillance ANZ by email. It will also enable existing subscribers to access the records to update the existing information that we hold.

To be added to our email list for notification when subsequent editions are published, or to update information, such as a change to your email address, all you have to do is follow a few simple steps:

1. Log on to FSANZ's website www.foodstandards.gov.au or www.foodstandards.govt.nz
2. Click on 'Information Service' under Quick links on the left hand side of the front page.
3. New subscribers can register by following the prompts.
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FSANZ had an agreement with the contractor that they must notify FSANZ immediately if a product was identified in the label monitoring survey that gave rise to public health and safety concerns, such as incorrect allergen labelling. FSANZ would then contact the relevant enforcement agency. This did not arise during the 2002 or 2003 surveys.

What will happen now?

FSANZ has initiated discussions with key food industry organisations in Australia on the best way to ensure all manufacturers have the correct information on labelling requirements. One of the outcomes of these discussions is a plan to hold a number of joint FSANZ/Australian Food and Grocery Council workshops on food labelling with members of the food industry during 2006. FSANZ will also undertake similar discussions with the NZFSA and the New Zealand food industry.

FSANZ will continue to monitor food labels in 2005 and 2006. The 3rd stage survey commenced in April 2005 when all packaged food must comply with the new rules and a further survey will be undertaken in 2006. The new surveys will include an assessment of nutrition and health claims on food labels as well as the twelve key labelling elements assessed in previous surveys.

A separate survey on the labelling of GM food published by FSANZ in 2004 found all those sampled complied with the Food Standards Code. The survey is available at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/publications/gmlabellingreviewrep2460.cfm>

Copies of the executive summary and full label monitoring report are now available on the FSANZ website at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/publications/evaluationreportseries/foodlabelmonitoringsurvey/index.cfm>. For further information please contact Janis Baines by phone (02 6271 2234) or email (janis.baines@foodstandards.gov.au).

These surveys are not intended for enforcement purposes as compliance and enforcement surveys are the responsibility of the Australian States and Territories and of New Zealand. However, if a trend of non-compliance becomes evident following the 2005 survey, and Australian State and Territory and New Zealand food agencies have not identified similar issues of non-compliance through enforcement activity, discussions between the jurisdictions and FSANZ will explore appropriate action, including consideration of the need to review the current labelling standards. FSANZ, in parallel with many jurisdictions and food industry organisations, is considering the best ways to assist manufacturers get helpful information on labelling requirements. ■

In New Zealand a GM labelling Survey found one products to be non-compliant with the Food Standards Code. This was published in 2003 and is available at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/consumers/food-safety-topics/genetically-modified-foods/compliance-assesment.htm>

In the pipeline...

- The Western Australian Food Monitoring Program has recently completed a survey of the microbiological quality of fresh gourmet lettuce leaves, basil, coriander and parsley products. Watch out for the summary of this survey in a future edition of the newsletter.
- FSANZ is co-ordinating a national survey of domestic horticulture products. This will include both raw and ready to eat produce. More details next issue.
- NSW Food Authority has recently completed a survey on 'Nutritional Information Declarations on Food Labels'. Details will be available in the near future.

• ISC Coordinated Food Survey Planning Workshop - Brisbane

On 17 November 2005 the ISC Coordinated Food Survey Planning Workshop was held in Brisbane to support the bi-national survey planning process by considering and prioritising possible survey activities for inclusion on the ISC Coordinated Food Survey Plan 2006–2009. The Workshop was well attended by representatives from food regulatory agencies in Australia and New Zealand.

The Workshop was successful in identifying a number of key food surveillance issues and prioritising possible national surveys for the 2006-2007 financial years.