

Food Safety Update

Food Act 2006

This newsletter provides information for the food industry, regulators and the general public about recent developments in food standards, food legislation and other food safety matters.

Health Star Rating System

The Health Star Rating is a front-of-pack labelling system that rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged food and assigns a rating from ½ a star to 5 stars. It provides a quick, easy, standard way to compare similar packaged foods. The more stars, the healthier the choice.

The Health Star Rating system was developed by the Australian, state and territory governments in collaboration with industry, public health and consumer groups and was implemented from June 2014 on a voluntary basis by the food industry over the next five years, with a review of progress after two years.

To explain how to read the star rating, the nutrient icons, and how positive and risk nutrients can be considered when choosing a packaged food, the Commonwealth Department of Health have developed a video. The video and other resources can be accessed at

healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/campaign-resources

Preparation of fruits and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables should be an important part of your daily diet. They are naturally good and contain vitamins and minerals that can help to keep you healthy. Consuming a wide variety of fruits and vegetables will provide the most health benefits and protection against disease.

Raw fruit and vegetables are great for our health but they can be contaminated from the soil they are grown in or by people handling them before they have been purchased. The recent outbreak associated with salad greens highlights the necessity to ensure all fruits and vegetables are handled correctly.

Tips for safe handling of all fruits and vegetables include:

- Check the quality of fresh produce from the supplier to ensure that it is clean, undamaged and fresh. Damaged produce can allow pathogens to enter the product.
- Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetable like lettuces, cabbage before washing.
- Brush off any visible soil from vegetables and wash under running water and dry any fruit or vegetables just before you use them. If you wash them and then store them they may begin to grow moulds.
- After handling visibly dirty vegetables, like potatoes with soil on them, food handlers should ensure they wash their hands, knife and chopping board before handling other food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before use especially if consuming them raw.
- Once whole fruit and vegetables are cut up they should be covered and stored in the fridge.
- Discard cut up fruit after two to three days in the fridge.
- Always wash hands before handling and preparing food.

Country of Origin Labelling reforms

In March 2016, Commonwealth, state and territory ministers with responsibility for consumer affairs agreed to a proposal for country of origin labelling (CoOL) reform to give Australian consumers clearer information about where their food comes from.

From 1 July 2016, a new mandatory CoOL Information Standard will commence under the Australian Consumer Law. It will apply to the retail sale of food in Australia, but will not apply to food delivered or sold to the public for immediate consumption in places like restaurants, cafes, take-away outlets, schools, fundraisers or provided by caterers.

There will be a two year transition period allowing businesses to update labels within their existing production processes and labelling cycles. The current food labelling requirements contained within the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) will remain in place during the transition period. At its completion, the Code will be amended to remove its country of origin labelling requirements.

The ACCC has also released information for consumers and business about the new food labelling framework and the Information Standard on its website, including some FAQ's: You can view these at:

- For consumers - www.accc.gov.au/consumers/groceries/country-of-origin
- For business - www.accc.gov.au/business/advertising-promoting-your-business/country-of-origin-claims
- FAQ's - www.accc.gov.au/business/advertising-promoting-your-business/country-of-origin-claims/country-of-origin-faqs

Subscription requests

If you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe to the Food Safety Update newsletter email distribution list, please email your request to Food Safety Standards and Regulation at foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au.

FSANZ also has a free electronic subscription service that sends alerts about newsletters and other news items, allowing you to keep up with the latest developments in food regulation. To subscribe, go to www.foodstandards.gov.au/media/pages/subscriptionservice.aspx.