

How are food additives regulated?

The *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Code) prescribes levels for food additives, processing aids, vitamins and minerals, and the purity of these substances. Additives can only be added to food in order to achieve an identified technological function according to good manufacturing practice.

To prescribe permitted levels of use, by way of a draft standard or a variation to an existing standard, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) carries out a risk assessment to characterise the health effects of these substances, and to estimate our potential exposure to them through the diet. Prior to incorporation of the relevant standard in the Code, all new food additives, processing aids, vitamins and minerals must be assessed by FSANZ, and approved for use by the FSANZ Board. If approved, the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council is notified.

Food additives

Food additives may not be used in food unless specifically listed in **Standard 1.3.1 – Food Additives**. A food additive is any substance not normally consumed as a food by itself and not normally used as an ingredient of food, but which is intentionally added to a food to achieve one or more specified technological functions. These include, for example, antioxidants, emulsifiers, colourants and preservatives.

Permitted uses of food additives by food type are listed in Schedules 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the standard. For example, the schedule permits “sausage and sausage meat containing raw, unprocessed meat” to contain sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites (preservatives) to a maximum permitted level of 500mg per kg.

The presence of food additives in a food must be declared in the ingredient list on the label on the food according to the food additive labelling provisions listed in Schedule 1 of Standard 1.2.4 together with the specific additive name or code number. For example, acid (330), or acid (citric acid).

To find out more about food additives, download the User Guide to Standard 1.3.1 on the FSANZ web site. See **Further Information** below. A separate publication on the web site is “Food Additives Shoppers’ Guide” which provides information on food additives for consumers.

Processing aids

Processing aids are regulated under **Standard 1.3.3 – Processing Aids**. Processing aids are substances used in the processing of raw materials, foods or ingredients to perform a technological purpose relating to treatment or processing but do not perform a function in the final food. In the course of manufacture of a food, processing aids must be used at the lowest level necessary to achieve a function in the processing of that food irrespective of any maximum permitted level specified.

Unless expressly permitted in Standard 1.3.3, processing aids must not be added to food.

Labelling of processing aids is generally not required, however the presence of any allergens or genetic modification must be declared. Processing aids are not usually present in the final food product. For example, processing aids are used to filter some beverages. The substances used in the filtration process do not usually remain in these beverages.

Vitamins and Minerals

Standard 1.3.2 – Vitamins and Minerals regulates the addition of vitamins and minerals to foods and the claims which can be made about the vitamin and mineral content of foods. Other Standards in the Code regulate the addition of vitamins and minerals to specific foods such as special purpose foods standardised in Part 2.9, the addition of iodine to certain salt products in Standard 2.10.2, the addition of thiamin to flour for bread-making in Standard 2.1.1, the addition of Vitamin D to table edible oil spreads and margarine in Standard 2.4.2, the addition of vitamins to formulated caffeinated beverages in Standard 2.6.4 and certain claims permitted elsewhere in the Code.

A vitamin or mineral must not be added to a food unless specifically permitted by, and in a form specified in the Code.

Claims about the vitamin and mineral content of foods must not be made except under specific restricted conditions. For example, a claim that a food is good source of a vitamin or mineral may be made if a reference quantity of the food contains no less than 25% of the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) or estimated safe and adequate daily dietary intake (ESADDI) for that vitamin or mineral. Claims about the presence of a vitamin or mineral in a food can only be made if the Code specifically permits or the vitamin or mineral is listed in Standard 1.3.2, is a specified type of food and a reference quantity of the food contains at least 10% of the RDI or ESADDI for that vitamin or mineral. Where a claim is made about the presence of a vitamin or mineral in a food the Standard also prescribes specific information that must be included on the label of that food.

User Guide to Standard 1.3.1

A User Guide to this standard has been developed to help manufacturers, retailers and importers interpret and apply the standard. Food officers may also find the user guide helpful to interpret the standard. User guides are available electronically on the FSANZ website and in hard copy – see **Further Information** below.

Further information

Electronic versions of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, User Guides and Fact Sheets can be obtained from the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au or www.foodstandards.govt.nz

Hard copies of the Code and the complete set of User Guides may also be purchased from Anstat on 03 9278 1144. Hard copies of Fact Sheets are available from FSANZ's Information Officer in Australia on 02 6271 2241 or in New Zealand on 04 473 9942.

Businesses may currently obtain specific advice on standards in the Code through the Industry Advice Helpline on 1 300 652 166 (Australia) and 0 800 441 571 (New Zealand) or by e-mail at advice@foodstandards.gov.au

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This document is intended as a guide only: legal requirements are contained in the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, other relevant food legislation and other applicable laws. The information in this document should not be relied upon as legal advice or used as a substitute for legal advice. You should exercise your own skill, care and judgment before relying on this information in any important matter.