

FSANZ Section 18 Objectives

The following statements, endorsed by the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Board in 2014, explain how FSANZ applies the three section 18 (“core”) objectives of the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* to the development of food standards.

Public health and safety statement

Principle

Food standards play a role in protecting the health and safety of consumers and make a positive contribution to longer term public health objectives, especially when part of a coordinated set of strategies aimed at improving diet-related contributions to public health.

FSANZ's role

The object of the FSANZ Act is ‘to ensure a high standard of public health protection throughout Australia and New Zealand by means of the establishment and operation of a joint body to be known as Food Standards Australia New Zealand’.

FSANZ:

- protects public health and safety by considering the short-term and long-term risks when developing food standards.
- when making regulatory decisions, adopts an evidence-based approach that applies appropriate methodologies in assessing the short-term and long-term risks to public health and safety.
- monitors developments in diet-related public health and food safety matters in order to respond to emerging issues.
- collaborates with jurisdictions and other food regulatory partners to evaluate the food safety and public health effects of food standards and support their objectives to respond to diet-related public health and food safety issues.
- complements the roles of other key public health agencies within Australia and New Zealand.
- identifies research needs and provides technical advice to policy-development processes that consider diet-related aspects of public health or food safety.

Provision of information statement

Principle

Food labels are a major source of food information. Information is underpinned by a risk-based hierarchy comprising three tiers of food labelling issues, prioritised in descending order of food safety, preventative health and consumer values.

FSANZ's role

- Protects public health and safety when setting mandatory food labelling standards.
- Considers regulatory and non-regulatory actions, including co-regulatory measures, when addressing the food information needs of consumers associated with food safety and preventative health.
- Supports government public health initiatives by assisting consumers to make better informed and healthier food choices.
- Requires information on food labels, particularly food safety elements, to be clear and comprehensible.
- Collaborates with the food industry and regulatory partners to ensure that food labelling standards are enforceable.
- Develops an evidence base to increase knowledge of the relationship between industry responses, consumer understanding and behaviour and food information.

Misleading and deceptive conduct statement

Principle

Statements on food labels and other claims must be truthful and must not mislead or deceive consumers in relation to the safety, composition, nutritional value or stated benefit of the food.

FSANZ's role

- Considers representation issues when developing relevant standards.
- Collaborates with other agencies to ensure that food label information and other claims are consistent with the Australian Consumer Law and other consumer protection legislation.
- Collaborates with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the New Zealand Commerce Commission in their administration of consumer protection laws relevant to food information.
- Develops an evidence base to increase knowledge of consumer understanding of manufacturers' claims and statements associated with food.