

2. PURPOSE OF THE FSANZ FOOD LABEL MONITORING SURVEY

The Australia New Zealand food standards system is a cooperative arrangement between the Australian Government, the Australian States/Territories and the New Zealand Government to develop and implement uniform food standards. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is an independent, binational statutory body, responsible for developing, varying and reviewing standards and for developing codes of practice within industry for food available in Australia and New Zealand. These standards and codes of practice cover labelling, composition and contamination issues. After a two-year transition period, the joint *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code Volume 2* ('the Code') has been in full effect in Australia since 20 December 2002 and in New Zealand since February 2003.

In order to evaluate how well food regulatory measures were working, FSANZ first developed an Evaluation Strategy in 2001. In particular, the aim of the strategy was to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of key food regulatory measures¹ by assessing the long-term impact for stakeholders and to provide evidence to inform future decisions on food regulation.

As part of the FSANZ Evaluation Strategy 2001-2003 (FSANZ, 2001a), baseline research on the consistency of labels on packaged foods with labelling provisions was undertaken in a pilot FSANZ Label Monitoring Survey (Phase 1). Data from this pilot have already been presented (FSANZ, 2004a). The pilot project was undertaken in two stages during 2002-2003.

As part of the FSANZ Evaluation Strategy for 2004-2008 (FSANZ, 2004b), a second Phase (Phase 2) of label monitoring surveys were undertaken. The first of these surveys was conducted in 2005; this was followed by the current survey in 2006. Both of the Phase 2

¹ Key food regulatory measures related to labelling included mandatory nutrition labelling, percentage labelling, allergen labelling and date marking. FSANZ established a Data and Evaluation Steering Committee to provide expert guidance and peer review in the development and implementation of the Evaluation Strategy. The Evaluation Strategy is available on the FSANZ website

surveys were intended to provide an extension of information from the baseline surveys conducted on labels collected in Phase 1, and can be used to make some general observations about changes to information provided on food labels over time. However, due to differences in the methodology used for Phase 1 and 2 surveys, there were limitations with respect to comparing the data from the two Phases. Both the 2005 and the current survey used the same methodology, therefore comparisons between 2005 and 2006 data can be made.

According to the requirements of the Code, the label on a package of food for retail sale generally must include the following core information:

1. Prescribed name or, where no name is prescribed, a name or a description of the food sufficient to indicate the true nature of the food
2. Lot identification
3. Name and business address in Australia or New Zealand of the supplier
4. Mandatory warning and advisory statements and declarations specified in Standard 1.2.3 and any other warning and advisory statements specified elsewhere in the Code
5. Allergen information
6. Ingredient declaration
7. Date marking
8. Directions for use or storage where, for reasons of public health and safety, consumers need appropriate directions for use or storage of the food
9. Nutrition information panel (NIP)
10. Percentage labelling (characterising ingredient/s and component/s)
11. Country of origin on products made and sold in Australia, (not including food products sold in New Zealand).

This core information formed the basis for identifying specific label elements for assessment in both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 surveys. Sampling and assessment of food labels in the current survey was designed using the same approach as the previous surveys; a nationally representative sample of product lines or stock keeping units (SKUs) within each food category of interest was collected in both Australia and New Zealand, and label elements were assessed using a system similar to that used for the Phase 1.