



Submission to: **Food Standards Australia New Zealand**

In response to:

PROPOSAL P1026 – LUPIN AS AN ALLERGEN


Snr. Sci. Corporate Regulatory

Food Environment & Science
Locked Bag 7,
Central Coast Mail Centre, NSW 2252
Phone: (02) 4348 7777
Fax: (02) 4977 2490


Issue No: 1.0

Issue Date: 28/7/2016

*"Sharing health and hope
for a better life"*

Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 3

Introduction..... 3

General Discussion 4

Detailed Comments on the Proposed Code 4

Conclusions & Recommendations..... 5

Executive Summary

Sanitarium is supportive of measures designed to promote consumer health and safety. Labelling of major serious allergens is an important means of helping ensure a safe food supply for people with common food allergies. With the risk assessment finding that lupins should be classed as a significant new food allergen in Australia, Sanitarium supports Option 3 – Prepare a draft variation to include lupins in the mandatory allergen requirements of the Food Standards Code.

In addition to assisting with ensuring a safe food supply for food allergy sufferers, including lupins to the list of allergens for which labelling is mandatory in Australia and New Zealand will also benefit manufacturers seeking to export products to the European Union.

Sanitarium does however have concerns with the proposed 12 month transitional period from commencement of the variation, should it be approved. There may be significant time needed by manufacturers to further assess documentation on lupins in raw materials, including risk of lupin cross contamination which they may currently be aware of but not including on voluntary allergen summary statements on packaging. A transitional period of at least 24 months is strongly recommended to enable manufacturers time to apply due diligence to the changes to the Food Standards Code and also other voluntary labelling codes of practice.

Introduction

Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing began in 1898 with the vision to help people ‘learn to stay well’. Our mission is to **‘inspire and resource our community to experience happy, healthy lives’**. We have been committed to this philosophy for over 100 years and it is the reason we exist today. Sanitarium also believes that good business is based on trust, respect and community involvement.

Sanitarium has a strong history of educating the community about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. All of Sanitarium’s activities have twin goals in mind - to provide healthy foods that actively improve our community’s health and well-being, and to offer easy-to-understand nutrition information and practical health advice.

Sanitarium Australia and Sanitarium New Zealand are owned and operated by Australian Health & Nutrition Association Limited and New Zealand Health Association respectively. We produce over 150 products and employ approximately 1700 people in our manufacturing and distribution sites throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Sanitarium welcomes the opportunity to comment on the development and evolution of the Australia & New Zealand Food Standards Code. We believe we can provide a unique perspective and give valuable suggestions into the food policy and standards development in Australia and New Zealand.

Information contained in this submission has been drawn from the experiences of Sanitarium, and contains no commercial-in-confidence material – unless otherwise highlighted.

General Discussion

Sanitarium is supportive of measures designed to promote consumer health and safety. Labelling of major serious allergens is an important means of helping ensure a safe food supply for people with common food allergies. With the risk assessment finding that lupins should be classed as a significant new food allergen in Australia, Sanitarium supports Option 3 – Prepare a draft variation to include lupins in the mandatory allergen requirements of the Food Standards Code.

In addition to assisting with ensuring a safe food supply for food allergy sufferers, including lupins to the list of allergens for which labelling is mandatory in Australia and New Zealand will also benefit manufacturers seeking to export products to the European Union. If foods in Australia and New Zealand are required to label lupins as an allergen, similarly to the EU, then export of foods to the EU will be simplified and more economical as domestic labelling may be suitable for use in multiple countries.

Detailed Comments on the Proposed Code

While Sanitarium supports the inclusion of lupins as a major serious allergen in the Food Standards Code, it is felt that there will be an increased burden on manufacturers initially to ensure their labels and allergen management practices reflect this legislation change.

Many manufacturers, including Sanitarium, have been making use of the AFGC Product Information Form (PIF) as a tool to assess suitability of raw materials for some time and information on lupin content and potential cross contact has been part of that tool for a number of years. However, it is possible that some suppliers completing PIFs may not have accurately provided information on lupin content or cross contamination as it is not currently required for mandatory allergen labelling in the Food Standards Code. In addition, suppliers may not have accurate, or indeed any, information from their suppliers on lupins as smaller manufacturers may not be using the AFGC PIF. These factors would need to be considered if lupins were required to be labelled as an allergen. Therefore, it is quite possible that the proposed 12 month transition period for the introduction of mandatory labelling for lupins as an allergen may not be long enough. The transition period needs to enable time for the following:

- for manufacturers to assess whether the information they have on lupins is accurate and reliable.
- Time is also needed to adequately assess cross contamination risks that have been highlighted in the past, particularly by grain suppliers (aside from wheat).
- Time is also needed to roll out any changes to packaging (as a result of being informed lupin is part of a raw material or significantly present as a cross contaminant) in a way that is both most efficient and economical. For products with a long shelf life, such as UHT products and cereals, the changeover will take longer in order to avoid high packaging write-offs.
- Manufacturers may wish to avoid precautionary labelling of lupins and therefore may need to work with their suppliers to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

A transitional period of at least 24 months is strongly recommended to enable manufacturers time to apply due diligence to the changes to the Food Standards Code and also other voluntary labelling codes of practice.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The proposed draft variation to the Food Standards Code, which is part of Option 3 for this Proposal, is supported by FSANZ as means of helping ensure the safety of the food supply for consumers with food allergies. Not only is this Option of benefit for consumers, it will also benefit manufacturers who are currently exporting products to the EU or seeking to do so due to alignment with allergen labelling requirements between the EU and Australia / New Zealand.

As a result of the introduction of new allergen requiring labelling in the Food Standards Code and the need for manufacturers to ensure allergen management practices are effectively including lupins, Sanitarium strongly recommends a transition period of at least 24 months to the new legislation requirements.