

Policy Statement

The Interpretation of Public Health and Safety in Developing, Reviewing and Varying Food Regulatory Measures

SCOPE/AIM

The primary objective of the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation System is to protect public health and safety.

The aim of this Policy Statement is to clarify how public health and safety should be interpreted by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) given the broad definition of public health which covers matters outside the remit of FSANZ.

CONTEXT

The 'Overarching Strategic Statement for the Food Regulatory System' (Overarching Statement) that provides the strategic context for the Australian and New Zealand food regulation system was endorsed in May 2008. The document articulates the scope and objectives of the food regulation system and recognises public health as 'the organised response by society to protect and promote health, and to prevent illness, injury and disability.

The Overarching Statement further acknowledges that food regulation, as one facet of a range of strategies, may play an important role in preventing and reducing disease, illness and disability and that depending on the particular public health issue to be addressed:

- there may be a strong role for food regulation;
- there may be no role for food regulation; or
- food regulation may play a supporting role as a component of coordinated, multi-sectoral and population-wide strategies aimed at diet-related determinants of public health.

INTERPRETATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health and safety in relation to food refers to all those aspects of food consumption that could adversely affect the general population or a particular community's health either in the short term or long term, including preventable diet-related disease, illness and disability as well as acute food safety concerns.

For the purposes of this Policy Statement, FSANZ should utilise the Overarching Statement to clarify the interpretation of public health and safety during the development and review of food regulatory measures.

The work of FSANZ complements the roles of other key public health agencies within Australia and New Zealand. FSANZ takes into consideration both long-term health impacts and immediate health risks in the development and review of food regulatory measures.