

1 June 2021

Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck
Chair, Food Ministers Meeting
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: Senator.Colbeck@aph.gov.au
Copy to: FoodRegulationSecretariat@health.gov.au

Dear Minister Colbeck

Give Australians a fair go to live well

All Australians want to enjoy healthy happy lives and live well. Eating healthy foods is a key way we can achieve this. Most Australians try to eat well but struggle to pick healthy foods from shelves full of processed products that claim all sorts of benefits without being truthful about how much cheap saturated fat, sugar and salt they're packed with. The food regulatory system as it stands is not set up to protect Australians from the confusion faced in supermarket aisles. This is by far the most significant public health issue linked to our food system today.

Right now, the government has a ripe opportunity to pioneer a modernised food regulatory system that ends this confusion and puts Australians first.

The government's commitment to a healthy food system is clear in the latest draft Aspirations for the Food Regulatory System. However, this is not reflected in reform approaches proposed in the draft Regulatory Impact Statement for the FSANZ Act review. In fact, the proposed reform approaches contradict the Aspirations the Food Ministers Meeting and other stakeholders have worked hard to develop.

I ask the Food Ministers Meeting to redirect the FSANZ Act reform options to align with the Aspirations of the Food Regulatory System. Reform options include:

- Enable FSANZ to set strategic priorities to address chronic and diet-related disease.
- Introduction of a practical and timely pathway for stakeholders to request FSANZ review and amendment of the Food Standards Code to address public health issues.
- Comprehensive review of the health claims process to ensure it supports positive long-term health outcomes and informed consumer choice.
- Set statutory maximum timeframes for completion of proposals, to support prioritisation and resourcing of this work. Timeframes should be no longer those set for applications.
- Enable FSANZ to monitor and evaluate how operation of the Food Standards Code aligns with public health objectives, and to amend the Code to support alignment.

Implementation of these reforms will create a modernised food regulatory system that puts the health of our nation first.

I look forward to your consideration of this feedback at the upcoming Food Ministers Meeting. My advisers and I would also be glad to further discuss reform options at our next bi-monthly meeting.

Sincerely



Robert Hunt
Chief Executive Officer