

Food Sector Role Statement

Developed by members of the Corporate Nutrition Interest Group

Introduction

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) are recognised professionals with the qualifications and skills to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. APDs are qualified to advise individuals, groups and organisations on nutrition-related matters.

APDs have university training accredited by Dietitians Australia, undertake ongoing professional development and commit to evidence-based practice. They comply with the [Dietitians Australia Code of Conduct for Dietitians & Nutritionists](#) and commit to providing quality service.

APD is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Disability Insurance Agency and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. It is a recognised trademark protected by law.

Purpose of this role statement

- To define the role an APD may fulfil when working in the food sector
- To promote the knowledge and expertise of an APD, broadly and in the area of the food sector and beyond [National Competency Standards](#)
- To advocate for dietetic services in the food sector

Knowledge and skills in this area of practice

Entry level dietetic competencies ensure all APDs can conduct assessments, diagnose nutritional issues, and develop, monitor and evaluate interventions. Within a particular practice area, APD skills and knowledge will range from entry level to highly skilled.

The food sector is a field within Corporate Nutrition that relates to APDs who work for food and beverage manufacturers or retailers, or for organisations that support food businesses in areas such as product development, regulations, marketing and communications.

The following skills and knowledge are required to work in the food sector practice area:

Knowledge

- Food and nutrition-related policies and regulations including the Food Standards Code, Australian Consumer Law and nutrition-related public health policy.
- Front of Pack labelling systems and their application (e.g. Health Star Rating).
- Food manufacturing and the commercial aspects of the food system.
- Food science and technology, gastronomy and the culinary arts, (e.g. how ingredients influence the taste, quality, price and shelf life of a food or beverage).

- Insight into the local and global food environment including customer attitudes and behaviours, dietary trends and new product innovation.
- The environmental impact of dietary patterns and foods.

Skills

- Build advocacy for health by working with management to influence business priorities and embed health within key business activities.
- Develop nutrition strategies that aim to support Australians in making healthier choices.
- Provide scientific and regulatory advice on product development, marketing and communications.
- Prepare industry position statements, submissions and briefings on health and nutrition policy and regulatory issues.
- Translate nutrition research into meaningful insights that can be used to educate internal teams and the public.
- Engage and collaborate with a broad range of internal and external stakeholders to take action on identified nutrition and food supply issues.

Activities entry level APDs would conduct

- Review packaging, promotional and advertising material for compliance with the Food Standards Code and the Australian Consumer Law.
- Support internal teams in making new and existing products healthier.
- Conduct nutrition analysis of food products and recipes.
- Develop nutrition communication materials for internal and external communications.
- Review and summarise relevant scientific research on population health, food manufacturing and the retail environment.
- Plan and implement nutrition education sessions, tools and resources that support employees in making healthier choices at home and in their workplace.

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct

- Lead internal and collaborative advocacy to raise the profile of health and ensure it is an organisational priority.
- Develop, implement, manage and evaluate health and nutrition strategies.
- Lead health and nutrition communications across traditional and digital media channels.
- Ensure food and beverage product innovation and reformulation is aligned to Government and/or internal nutrition targets and guidelines.
- Develop evidence-based, legally compliant nutrition and health claims and substantiation.
- Engage and collaborate with external stakeholders and organisations on policies, programs and strategies to improve population health.

Any individual practitioner should refer to the [Scope of Practice Decision Tool](#) to determine if a task is within their scope of practice.

Activities APDs working in this area of practice do not usually undertake

- Individual patient clinical consultation

Appendix A – Background

Dietitians in the food sector work closely with manufacturers and retailers to influence how food and beverage products are made, sold and promoted. Through this work dietitians have the opportunity to drive significant change by embedding health in business strategies, improving the nutrition content of everyday foods and promoting educational messages that help Australians make healthier choices.

The examples given below highlight the benefits of dietetic intervention within the Food Sector.

Australians do not eat in alignment with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and consume excessive amounts of added salt, sugar and saturated fat

APDs working in the food sector lead reformulation initiatives in food and beverage manufacturers, in accordance with Government and/or internal nutrition targets and guidelines. This involves reviewing a product's formulation (or recipe) with the aim of improving the nutritional quality. This is achieved by removing added salt, sugar and/or saturated fat, and where possible adding in more healthy ingredients like fruit, vegetables and whole grains.

APDs in the food sector also work with product development teams on the formulation and nutrition content of new food and beverage products. APDs set nutrition targets that products are required to meet, and advocate for the development of healthier products.

Product labels can be confusing, making it difficult to know which product is the healthier choice

APDs in the food sector help to guide on pack labelling to ensure Australians are able to make informed decisions about the food and beverage products they buy. This may include advocating for and implementing Health Star Rating, a Government front of pack labelling system shown to help Australians make healthier choices. Other labelling initiatives overseen by dietitians can include percentage Daily Intake labelling, portion size guidance, and accurate and responsible nutrition and health claims.

Marketing and communications can influence purchase decisions and the types of foods Australians consume

APDs in the food sector lead health communication strategies for food businesses. They also advocate for greater inclusion of healthier foods in company marketing, as well as the use of educational evidence-based messaging that aims to help Australians eat in alignment with the Dietary Guidelines. APDs also work to ensure that unhealthy food and beverage products are not marketed to children.