

Groups welcome food labelling review: call for better labelling

Sydney, Monday 26 October: A coalition of groups including Greenpeace, the Food Intolerance Network and Friends of the Earth has welcomed the announcement of an independent review into food labelling at the Food Regulation Ministerial Council meeting on Friday. The groups say Australian food labelling is much weaker than in European countries and that consumers have a right to meaningful information about the foods they are eating.

Consumers in Europe are provided with easy to understand front of pack nutritional labelling and are told whether their food contains additives or products derived from genetically engineered crops. The European Parliament has backed the mandatory labelling of all food derived from nanotechnology. Meanwhile Australian consumers are left effectively eating in the dark.

Louise Sales, from Greenpeace, says many genetically engineered (GE) ingredients are sneaking into our food unlabelled. "Surveys show that 90 percent of Australians want comprehensive labelling of all foods derived from GE crop ingredients. Consumers have a fundamental right to know what is in their food and how it is produced."

Georgia Miller from Friends of the Earth, who is campaigning for the comprehensive labelling of foods containing manufactured nanoparticles, says, "Our current labelling laws are inadequate and do not give consumers the information they need to make informed choices about the food they eat."

Dr Howard Dengate from the Food Intolerance Network says Australian consumers should enjoy the same protection as consumers in the European Union. "All food additives and active ingredients should be clearly labelled. Artificial food colourings that may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children should carry the same mandatory warnings as the EU."

Individuals and organizations have less than a month to send in their submissions to the review, which closes on November 20th. Given the importance and complexities of the issues involved, the groups believe that the one month public submission period should be extended.

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Notes:

The announcement can be viewed at:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/mediareleases/mediareleases2009/23october2009jointcommuni queaustraliaandnewzealandfoodregulationministerialcouncil/index.cfm>