



Labelling Review Response Secretariat
Department of Health and Ageing
MDP 115
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

May 19, 2011.

Re: Oilseed Industry response to “Labelling Logic”

To whom it may concern,

Please find following comments and suggestions in relation to “Labelling Logic- Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy” from the Australian Oilseeds Federation. The Australian Oilseeds Federation (AOF) is the peak industry body for the Australian oilseeds value chain embracing consumers of food, feed, health and industrial products.

The AOF welcomes this Review and the final Report, recognising that it provides a once in a generation, comprehensive review of the issues and opportunities related to food labelling. While inevitably the recommendations touch many aspects related to fats and oils, this submission is limited to those recommendations which have the most direct impact on the industry and consumers of edible oil-based end products.

Recommendation 12: That where sugars, fats or vegetable oils are added as separate ingredients in a food, the terms ‘added sugars’ and ‘added fats’ and/or ‘added vegetable oils’ be used in the ingredient list as the generic term, followed by a bracketed list (e.g., added sugars (fructose, glucose syrup, honey), added fats (palm oil, milk fat) or added vegetable oils (sunflower oil, palm oil)).

This recommendation would add clarity/transparency and therefore could contribute to improved consumer understanding of ingredient labelling, which is a positive aspect. However, if accepted, this recommendation would create inflexibility in the supply chain, and invariably a cost burden to industry, and ultimately, consumers.

In the case of vegetable oils, it is currently possible to group vegetable oils and to clearly label all component oils according to the requirements of Std 1.2.4 Clause 4 and the Table to Clause 4: http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/srcfiles/Standard_1_2_4_Labelling_of_Ingred_v121.pdf.

While this does not apply to sugars, the AOF requests that Review Response Secretariat consider that in the case of vegetable oils, this matter be addressed through best practice guidance for labelling.

Recommendation 13: That mandatory declaration of all trans fatty acids above an agreed threshold be introduced in the Nutrition Information Panel if manufactured trans fatty acids have not been phased out of the food supply by January 2013.

The oilseed industry is both surprised and perplexed by this recommendation.

Studies conducted by FSANZ in 2007 and 2009¹ reported that trans fat intake in Australia was estimated to be 0.5% of energy, **half the upper limit** recommended by the World Health Organisation. This follows a concerted effort by industry over the preceding 15 years to significantly reduce manufactured trans fat in the food supply (in 1994, Noakes and Nestel estimated that trans fats contributed 2.0-2.5% of the dietary energy of Australian adults²). From the 2009 FSANZ Review, Industrial trans fats comprised just **one-eighth of one percent** of dietary energy. Ruminant sources contribute about 70% of total trans fat in the modern Australian diet.

Even if it were technically achievable to completely eliminate manufactured trans fat from diet (which in itself is very doubtful with today's technology), this still would leave the primary source of trans fat in the diet being animal based, the avoidance of which would have unintended consequences on key nutrient intakes such as calcium and vitamins A&D.

The AOF urges the Review Response Secretariat to abandon this recommendation as it stands. A suggested alternative recommendation for consideration would be:

That mandatory declaration of all trans fatty acids above an agreed threshold be introduced in the Nutrition Information Panel.

The agreed limit would be one that did not disadvantage fat-based products from ruminant animals (cheese, full cream milk, etc).

Recommendation 30: That any detection of an adventitious genetically modified event be followed by a period of monitoring and testing of that food or ingredient.

This recommendation, if implemented, risks imposing significant monitoring costs on the system (whether borne by industry or government) for occurrences which are inevitable, given the massive volumes moved globally through the grains supply chains.

As the "Labelling Logic" Report recognises, Australia already has one of the most stringent adventitious presence (AP) levels in the world. While the food industry operates to 1%, the grains industry operates to an even tighter specification of 0.9%. On a practical level, Australia moves more than 20 million tonnes of wheat through the supply chain every year, with GM canola inevitably sharing much of the wheat supply chain infrastructure (elevators, silos, trucks, etc). It is impractical to expect that, despite best intentions to clean equipment, that not one GM canola seed (<2mm in diameter) will not be present somewhere at some time in a shipment of wheat (perhaps 20,000 tonnes). It is for these occurrences that AP levels are set, and accepted globally as being realistic, cost effective and achievable.

¹ Food Standards Australia New Zealand. *Trans fatty acids in the New Zealand and Australian food supply: Review Report (2007)*. and Food Standards Australia New Zealand. *Intakes of trans fatty acids in New Zealand and Australia: Review Report – 2009 assessment*. www.foodstandards.gov.au

² Noakes M, Nestel PJ. Trans fatty acids in the Australian diet. *Food Aust* 1994; **46**: 124-29

The AOF strongly urges the Response secretariat to retain the existing AP requirements as detailed in the Food Standards Code. (Standard 1.5.2, clause 4 (e)).

Recommendation 50: That an interpretative front-of-pack labelling system be developed that is reflective of a comprehensive Nutrition Policy and agreed public health priorities.

Recommendation 51: That a multiple traffic lights front-of-pack labelling system be introduced. Such a system to be voluntary in the first instance, except where general or high level health claims are made or equivalent endorsements/trade names/marks appear on the label, in which case it should be mandatory.

While recognising these and related recommendations are contentious, and not evidence based, arguments against such a system are best left to experts in this area. However, should such a system be developed, it is critical that fats and oils that provide essential nutrients, and yet are consumed in small quantities, are not penalised through this scheme. While fats and oils do have a high calorific content, they are generally consumed in small quantities. Yet, these relatively small quantities provide major sources in the Australian diet of key nutrients, specifically, omega 3 and omega 6 essential fatty acids, vitamin A and Vitamin D. Indeed, margarine spreads provide the most significant source of dietary vitamin D in the Australian diet. Any initiative that would serve to reduce intake of these key nutrients through discouraging foods providing these nutrients would have unintended consequences to the national diet.

Should the 'traffic light' scheme be a final recommendation of the Response secretariat, we urge that development of such a scheme consider the impact of key nutrient delivery foods, such as fats and oils, to ensure that the consumption of nutritionally beneficial oils (unsaturated oils) is not disadvantaged.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

If you would like to discuss any of these matters further, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Denis M'Gee
Chair- Technical Committee
Australian Oilseeds Federation.