



FOOD STANDARDS
Australia New Zealand
Te Mana Kounga Kai - Ahitereiria me Aotearoa

Allergens Review Update

Allergen Bureau Conference

March 2009

Dr Hikmat Hayder and Ms Luisa Trevisan
FSANZ



Review of the regulatory management of food allergens

- **Requested by the ANZ Food Regulation Ministerial Council**
- **Issues paper released for consultation in March 2008**
- **Targeted consultation ANZ:**
 - Food industry (AFGC/NZFGC & AB)
 - Jurisdictions
 - Allergy support groups
 - Allergy specialists (ASCIA)
- **Feedback received – 19 submissions**



Issues to be considered in the review

New allergens

- Consider lupin

Label information

- Presentation and clarity

Current list of allergens

- Terminology and definitions

Exemption of derivatives

- Currently isinglass

Allergen thresholds

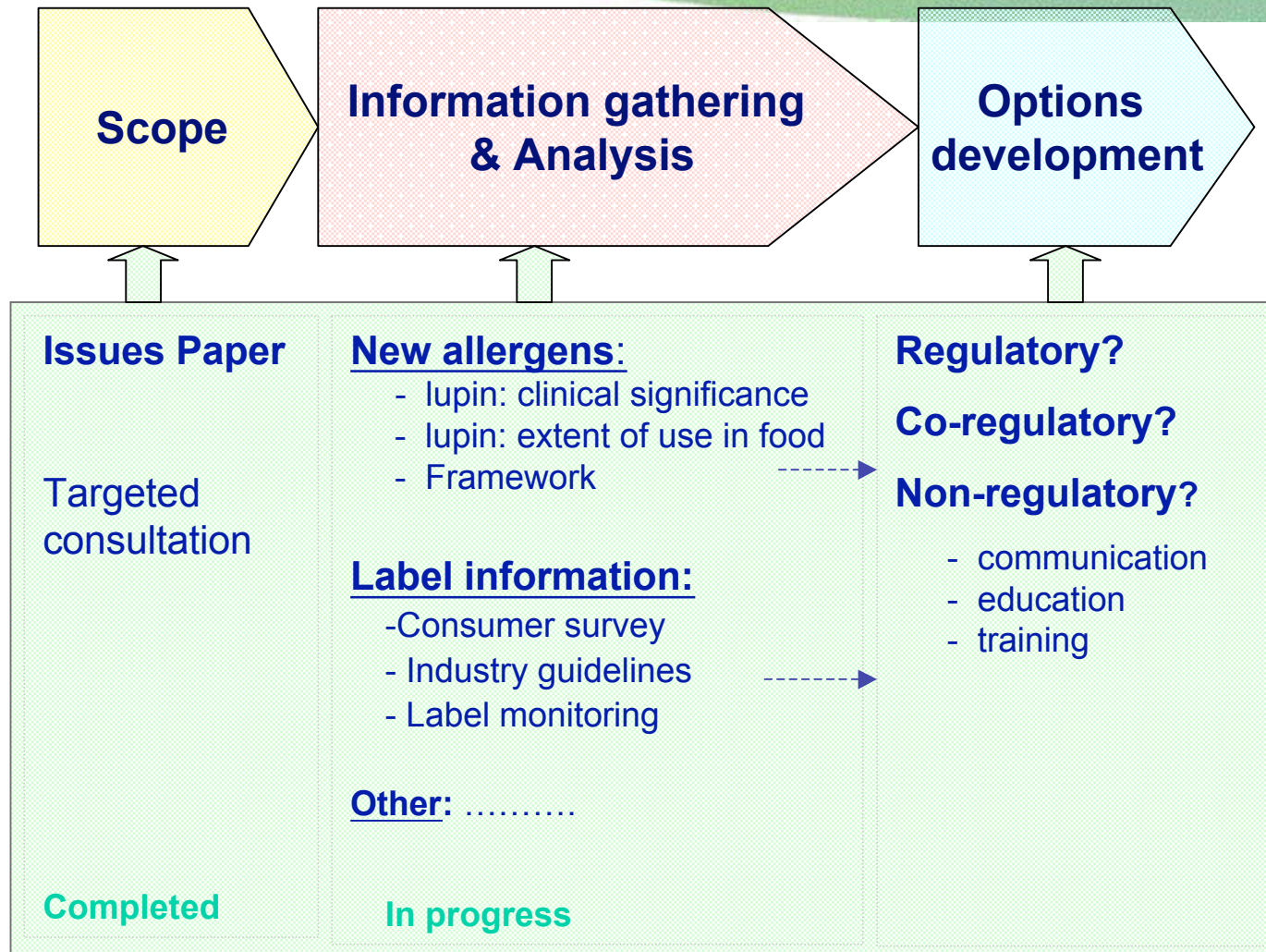
- International research in progress

Food exempt from bearing a label

- Role of jurisdictions



Review Stages



New allergen: Lupin

- Important crop in Western Australia
- Increasingly used in food products
 - Nutritional value:
 - High protein and high dietary fibre
 - Low oil and no starch
 - Functional properties
- Allergic reactions to lupin have been reported in Australia





information gathering activities:

- **Extent of use of lupin in the food supply:**
 - Lupin in food – Student project UNSW supervised by Prof Ken Buckle (Alison Woo - BSc Thesis 2008)



Lupin in the food supply: Alison Woo Thesis 2008, UNSW



Lupin declared in ingredient list





Lupin in the food supply Alison Woo Thesis 2008, UNSW





Current information gathering activities:

Lupin:

- **Clinical significance:**
 - 3 cases reported in medical literature-Australia
Smith et al., MJA 2004; 181 (4): 219-220
 - Unpublished reports from allergy clinics in Australia
 - Research on clinical significance including cross-reactivity with peanut



Current information gathering activities: Consumer Survey

Quantitative Consumer Survey on Allergen Labelling:

- 1st Survey – published in 2004
- 2nd Survey
 - Currently in progress



Follow-on Quantitative Consumer Survey on Food Allergen Labelling 2008/09

Luisa Trevisan
Project Manager



" He can't be all bad if he still
likes peanut butter. "



Background

- FSANZ Evaluation Strategy 2001-03 and 2004-08
- The 2003 Benchmark Survey set out to
 - Assess **knowledge and awareness** of consumers ‘at risk’ of an allergic reaction, and their carers of the food labelling provisions that cover allergens
 - Understand their **existing behaviours** in food selection
 - Identify if a **lack of understanding** of allergen labelling contributes to the **occurrence of allergic reactions**
- **Self completion**, written survey questionnaire, 1166 distributed, 510 returned (44% response rate)



Background – 2003 Benchmark Survey

Key findings of relevance:

- **Food labels used extensively** to manage allergies
- Respondents had noticed **changes** in the way allergens were listed on foods:
 - ‘May contain’
 - Bold print
 - Warnings about nuts
 - ‘Made on same product line or equipment’, ‘Made in same factory’ or ‘Same premises’
 - Blanket statements ‘contains dairy / seeds / nuts...’



Background – 2003 Benchmark Survey

Key findings of relevance (cont.):

- **Labelling** (i.e. unlabelled/ incorrectly labelled product) had been a factor for a small percentage of occurrences of **repeat allergic reactions**



Background – 2003 Benchmark Survey

Labelling issues that **affected respondents' ability to identify suitable foods:**

- Lack of understanding of some ingredients due to complexity or lack of clarity e.g. 'emulsifiers'
- Perceived overuse of 'may contain'
- Derivation of some ingredients e.g. source of vegetable oils
- Unlabelled ingredients, changes to ingredients without notice
- Location of the information on the label

Final report at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au>



2008 Follow-on Survey

- Methodology replicates that of 2003 benchmark survey, **to enable valid comparison of results**
- Will be able to gain insight on how consumers currently view label information in relation to allergens (compared to 2003)



Expert Project Team

- FSANZ
- Food industry – AFGC and NZFGC
- New Zealand Food Safety Authority
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIa)
- Auckland City Hospital (home of the Manufactured Food Database)
- Allergy support groups - Anaphylaxis Australia and Allergy New Zealand
- Dietitians Association of Australia and New Zealand Dietetics Association
- FSANZ Fellow (Dr Rob Loblay)

Four teleconferences during 2008



Survey questionnaire



Welcome to the FSANZ Food Allergen Labelling Survey 2006

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is conducting a survey into issues relating to food labelling for people with allergies to certain foods or ingredients. The survey is being administered by TNS Social Research, an independent research agency who have strict policies to protect your confidentiality.

You have been invited to take part in the survey because either you or someone else in your household is understood to have a food allergy. The survey is mainly about how helpful you find labelling information that is provided to you on food products for making suitable food choices. It is not a test of your product knowledge but of how well the food labelling works.

YOUR RESPONSES ARE VERY IMPORTANT AS THEY WILL HELP FSANZ FURTHER IMPROVE FOOD LABELLING STANDARDS IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Who should complete the survey?

The person who is mainly or jointly responsible for grocery buying in the household should complete the survey.

What if I need help?

Friends or family members can help you complete the form or you can call TNS Social Research on 1 800 062 458.

Who should I talk to for more information about the survey?

You can contact Luisa Trivisan at FSANZ on (02) 6271 2249 or email Luisa.Trivisan@foodstandards.gov.au.

What will be done with my answers?

The questionnaires are returned to independent researchers at TNS Social Research, who are bound by the privacy laws of Australia and New Zealand. Your individual answers will not be identified to FSANZ; rather they will be aggregated with responses from other people to provide an overall picture.

INSTRUCTIONS



Please read all the questions carefully and follow any instructions which are provided. Look out for the symbol on the left which provides specific instructions to help you complete the questionnaire. If you are unsure, please feel free to call TNS Social Research on 1800 062 458.

PLEASE DO NOT COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IF...

- You are not the main or joint grocery buyer for this household: instead, please give this questionnaire to the person(s) who mainly or jointly do the food shopping for your household.
- You have already completed this (either a paper version or online) recently.
- You are under the age of 15 years. Instead, please give this questionnaire to someone older in your household.

**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE
USING THE REPLY PAID ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO:**

**TNS SOCIAL RESEARCH
REPLY PAID 3943
MANUKA ACT 2609**

WE VERY MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN THIS RESEARCH



Section B - Managing the allergy -

Q14. Which of the following words tell you that the ingredients that the person with the most serious food allergy needs to avoid, may be present in the food product?

Please tick as many as apply

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Whey | <input type="checkbox"/> | Casein | <input type="checkbox"/> | Thickener | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tofu | <input type="checkbox"/> | Albumin | <input type="checkbox"/> | Textured vegetable protein | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Couscous | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lactose | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tempeh | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ovalbumin | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lecithin | <input type="checkbox"/> | Starch | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tamari | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cornflour | <input type="checkbox"/> | Butterfat | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maltodextrin | <input type="checkbox"/> | Semolina | <input type="checkbox"/> | Anchovies | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Praline | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tahini | <input type="checkbox"/> | Surimi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vegetable Oil | <input type="checkbox"/> | Icing Sugar Mix | <input type="checkbox"/> | Marzipan | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spelt | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lactalbumin | <input type="checkbox"/> | Polenta | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <hr/> | | | |

2003 survey results indicated that 63% of respondents allergic to milk recognised casein as an ingredient they would need to avoid



Questionnaire distribution

To reach the target population of respondents:

- **Hospital** based immunology/ allergy clinics
- **Private** immunology/ allergy clinics
- Major **allergy support groups**

Ethics Committee approval was required for every individual hospital included

20 clinics and **two allergy support groups** in Australia and New Zealand



Project structure

- Award of contract
- Review of survey materials
- Pilot testing of survey materials and pilot report
- Ethics applications
- **Fieldwork**
- **Draft report**
- **Final report**
- **Website publication**



How will we use the survey outcomes?

- **Identify** issues of concern for consumers, with regards to the way allergen information is currently presented on labels
- **Inform** the review of the regulatory management of food allergies
- **Inform** the work being done by the Allergen Bureau



Current information gathering activities:

Label information

- Consumer survey
- Industry Guidelines
- Labelling surveys



Thank You

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