



FOOD STANDARDS

Australia New Zealand

Te Mana Kounga Kai – Ahitereiria me Aotearoa





FOLATE SEMINAR • 27 JULY 2005 • SYDNEY

Mandatory folate fortification as a regulatory option

**The Hon Rob Knowles
Chair, Food Standards Australia New Zealand**



The beginnings...

- 1995: voluntary addition of folic acid to certain general foods first permitted and continues to present time.
- 1998: folate/NTD health claim permitted on approved individual foods and continues to present time.



Ministerial Policy Guideline

- May 2004: Food Regulation Ministerial Council issues policy on Fortification of Food with Vitamins and Minerals.
- Policy gave separate consideration to mandatory and voluntary fortification.



Mandatory fortification policy principles, providing...

- Demonstrated significant public health need.
- Most effective strategy to address health problem.
- Consistent as far as possible with national nutrition policies.
- Fortification does not result in unsafe intakes.
- Fortification delivers effective amounts.



The FSANZ process

- FSANZ receives application or raises a proposal.
- FSANZ prepares an Initial, Draft and Final Assessment.
- Two rounds of public consultation are normally held.
- Approval by the FSANZ Board.
- Gazettal of the new food standard if no request for review by Ministerial Council.



Progress with P295

- May 2004: Ministerial Council asks FSANZ to consider mandatory folate fortification (Proposal P295).
- October/November 2004: Initial Assessment Report released for 8-week period of public consultation.



Initial Assessment of P295

- THREE management options offered:
 - mandatory requirement to fortify;
 - extension of voluntary permissions;
 - more promotion of supplements, dietary advice.
- 71 submissions received, 34 in favour of mandatory fortification and 16 preferring an extension of voluntary fortification.
- 3 submitters favoured the promotion/advice option on its own, but 26 wanted it linked to the other options.



Policy advice

- December 2004: FSANZ decides to seek further policy advice from the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) on the process for:
 - determining whether mandatory fortification is the most effective public health strategy
 - health monitoring and review in the event that mandatory fortification proceeds



The next steps...

- April 2005: FSANZ commissions four expert reports on benefits and risks.
- June 2005: FSANZ's provisional benefit/risk report submitted to FRSC.
- October 2005: Ministerial Council to provide further guidance on mandatory fortification.
- Post October 2005: FSANZ to proceed to Draft Assessment and further round of public consultation.



Provisional assessment – benefits

- For target group, reduction in neural tube defect conception ranges from 8-44%.
- Folate probably protects against cardiovascular disease, and possibly some cancers and mental decline.



Provisional assessment – risks

- Restrict folic acid intake to below 1 mg/day – NHMRC to draft adult upper limit.
- Unlikely masking of vitamin B12 deficiency.
- Low risk of multiple births.
- Conflicting evidence of increased risk of cancer.
- Folate-drug interactions not significant.



Copyright

© *Food Standards Australia New Zealand 2005.*

This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. Apart from any other use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved. Requests for further authorisation should be directed to info@foodstandards.gov.au