



# Cabinet Economic Development Committee

## Summary

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### Government Position on Preferred Direction for Improving Sugar Labelling

**Portfolio** Food Safety

**Purpose** This paper seeks agreement to support the preferred policy direction at the Australia New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (the Ministerial Forum) of:

- committing to further consideration of pictorial representations of sugar on sugary drinks, such as soft drinks; and
- clearly identifying added sugars on labels on all packaged food and drink.

**Previous Consideration** None.

**Summary** At its meeting on 28 June 2019, the Ministerial Forum will be asked to decide on a preferred policy direction on improving sugar labelling on packaged food and drinks. Food Standards Australia New Zealand will then be requested to undertake further investigation in line with the Ministerial Forum's decision.

High energy consumption from sugar may contribute to poor health outcomes, such as obesity and tooth decay, which disproportionately affect those from low socio-economic, Māori and Pasifika backgrounds.

The Minister for Food Safety, as New Zealand's representative on the Ministerial Forum, proposes to support the Forum:

- committing to further consideration of a system for pictorial labelling, such as 'teaspoons of sugar' on sugary drinks, alongside potential changes to the current Health Star Rating labelling system;
- asking Food Standards Australia New Zealand to progress the option of making changes to the current nutrition information panel required on packaged food and drinks, to require the quantification and listing of added sugars.

Any final decisions relating to labelling standards arising from this work will be brought back to DEV for agreement.

These proposals are part of a wider package of work relating to sugar in food and drinks that will be considered over the coming months (eg the independent five year review of the Health Star Rating system in Under consideration).

<b>Regulatory Impact Analysis</b>	A Regulatory Impact Statement will be submitted to DEV when final decisions are sought.
<b>Baseline Implications</b>	None.
<b>Legislative Implications</b>	If a mandatory standard is agreed by the Ministerial Forum, it will be brought into New Zealand law by the Minister for Food Safety issuing a notice under the Food Act 2014.
<b>Timing Issues</b>	The Ministerial Forum is meeting on 28 June 2019. The table on <b>page 2</b> sets out the likely timeline for changes to sugar labelling.
<b>Announcement</b>	A public communique will be issued once a decision is made by the Ministerial Forum. At that point, the Minister for Food Safety will make an announcement. The announcement is likely to generate publicity and public comment.
<b>Proactive Release</b>	This paper will be proactively released, subject to any appropriate redactions and after the Ministerial Forum meeting on 28 June 2019.
<b>Consultation</b>	<p>Paper prepared by Food Safety. MBIE, Education, Treasury, Health, Pacific Peoples and MFAT were consulted. DPMC and TPK were informed.</p> <p>The Minister for Food Safety indicates that the Minister of Finance was consulted, and that New Zealand First, the Green Party and the Labour Party were also consulted.</p>

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### **The Minister for Food Safety recommends that the Committee:**

- 1 note that high energy consumption from sugar may contribute to poor health outcomes, such as obesity and tooth decay, which disproportionately affect those from low socio-economic, Māori, and Pasifika backgrounds;
- 2 note that improved labelling helps consumers to make more informed choices and be more aware of the amount of added sugar in the food and drinks they consume;
- 3 note that at the upcoming Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Ministerial Forum) on 28 June 2019, the Forum will be asked to agree to a preferred direction for improving sugar labelling on packaged food and drinks;
- 4 note that Food Standards Australia New Zealand will undertake further investigation in line with the Ministerial Forum's preferred direction;
- 5 agree that the Minister for Food Safety support the Ministerial Forum committing to further consideration of a system for pictorial labelling, such as 'teaspoons of sugar' on sugary drinks, alongside potential changes to the current Health Star Rating labelling system;
- 6 agree that the Minister for Food Safety support the Ministerial Forum asking Food Standards Australia New Zealand to progress the development of the option of quantifying and listing added sugars in mandatory nutrition information panels;

- 7 note that any final changes to labelling standards arising from this work will be brought back to Cabinet for agreement, prior to any final decisions by the Ministerial Forum;
- 8 note that these changes are part of a wider package of work over the coming months looking at sugar in food, including changes to the Health Star Rating system to likely recommend harsher treatment of sugar in all foods, and the potential restriction of 'percent sugar-free' claims seen on alcoholic drinks;
- 9 Under consideration 

Janine Harvey  
Committee Secretary

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