

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



HEALTH GROUPS WELCOME ACTION ON FOOD LABELLING

20 August 2019

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance welcomes the recent decisions to improve food labelling and provide clear and simple health information on food and drinks.

The Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation announced yesterday it would progress added sugars labelling and further consider 10 recommendations to improve the Health Star Rating system. Decisions were also made to provide a nationally consistent approach to energy labelling on fast food menu boards and consider the contribution of alcohol to daily energy intake.

Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance Sharon McGowan said food labelling is an important part of understanding more about the products we consume every day.

"Industry spends vast amounts of money advertising unhealthy foods, so it is essential that nutrition information is readily available to help people understand what they are eating and drinking."

Two in three Australian adults are overweight or obese and unhealthy foods, including those high in added sugars, contribute greatly to excess energy intake and unhealthy weight gain.

Ms McGowan said overweight and obesity is a key risk factor for many chronic diseases.

"We welcome improvements to existing labelling systems to increase consumer understanding and provide an incentive for industry to create healthier products."

The Ministerial Forum also released the independent review of the Health Star Rating system with 10 recommendations for strengthening the system, including changes to how the ratings are calculated, and setting targets and timeframes for industry uptake.

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance has been advocating to improve the Health Star Rating system for years. While the Alliance supports stronger changes to the ratings calculator, Ms McGowan said it was promising to see recommendations enhancing consistency of labels and proposing a mandatory response if voluntary targets are not met.

"Under the current voluntary system, only around 30 percent of eligible products display the health star rating on the label and some manufacturers are applying ratings to the highest scoring products only," Ms McGowan said.

"To truly achieve its purpose and help people compare products, the rating needs to be visible and consistently applied to all foods and drinks."

The recommendations to improve the Health Star Rating system will be considered by Ministers later this year.

Ms McGowan added "We know that unhealthy food and drinks are a major contributor to overweight and obesity, and that food labelling should be part of an overall approach to creating healthier food environments."

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The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) is an alliance of Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; National Heart Foundation of Australia; Kidney Health Australia; and Stroke Foundation. Members work together to collectively support prevention, integrated risk assessment and effective management of chronic disease risk.