



27 September 2019

S19.22

## **Submission to the Ministry for Primary Industries on A strategy for New Zealand Food Safety**

### **Introduction**

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
- 0.2. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Consumer Affairs Committee.
- 0.3. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Climate Change and Environment Standing Committee based on relevant NCWNZ Resolutions and submissions, as well as consultation with NCWNZ branches, individual members and member organisations. The number of responses from our members indicates the high level of interest in this Abortion Legislation Bill.

### **1. Priorities**

- 1.1. NCWNZ has had a long-standing interest in the New Zealand Food Safety Agency, and in the establishment of a robust food safety system that can be trusted by all New Zealanders. New Zealand women are extremely interested in the quality and safety of food on sale in New Zealand and want as much information as possible about what is in food and how it has been produced in order that they can make informed choices about the food they purchase.
- 1.2. In general, therefore, we support the priorities and drivers for change for the New Zealand Food Safety Strategy.
- 1.3. However, in order for consumers to feel confident in making choices about food (priority two), consumers need much more information on labels about what is in the food on sale in New Zealand.

1.4. We would therefore propose to amend priority two to read:

**‘Proactively support consumers to feel confident in making choices about food **by supporting greater transparency and more information on labels about what is in food on sale in New Zealand and how it has been produced.**’**

1.5. In order for consumers to feel confident about making choices about food, consumers need to know what ingredients are in food, where it has come from, and how it has been produced.

1.6. Our present labelling laws do not provide sufficient information for consumers to make informed choices, so we would urge the New Zealand Food Safety Authority to advocate, through Food Standards Australia New Zealand, for much more comprehensive food labelling in New Zealand so that consumers can make informed choices about food.

1.7. Our specific concerns are:

1. The Nutrition label is difficult for ordinary consumers to understand. We would like to see the nutrition label simplified and made easier to understand.
2. The very small size of print on many labels makes them extremely difficult to read.
3. Labels are important not only for consumers wanting to understand what is in their food, but also for many consumers for their health and well-being. People with food allergies or diseases like diabetes are reliant on labels for their very survival.
4. To feel confident about making choices about food, consumers need mandatory country of origin labels on all single ingredient food that is on sale in New Zealand.
5. The Star Rating system that is supposed to identify healthy food for consumers is voluntary and inadequate, and is primarily used by manufacturers to promote food that meets the Star rating criteria. We want the Star Rating system to be mandatory and to be applied to all food that is sold in New Zealand.
6. Consumers want to know what oils have been used in food. At present this is not disclosed on labels.
7. Consumers want to know whether food contains genetically modified ingredients. At present this is not disclosed on labels.

## 2. Summary

2.1. In summary, then, while we support the concept of ‘supporting consumers to feel confident in making choices about food,’ we want to stress that consumers are hampered in making these choices at present by our inadequate food labelling system. We therefore urge the New Zealand Food Safety Authority to proactively lead in advocating for much more comprehensive labelling of food in New Zealand. This would address our concerns outlined above, so that consumers are able to feel confident in making genuine choices about the food they purchase.

2.2. We urge the Authority to amend priority two accordingly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pip Jamieson', written over a large, light-colored oval shape.

Pip Jamieson  
NCWNZ Board

Sue Kedgley  
Convenor: NCWNZ Standing  
Committee for Consumer Affairs