



Submission: A1092 – Irradiation of Specific Fruits & Vegetables

October 2014

The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the national association of the dietetic profession with over 5700 members, and branches in each state and territory. DAA is a leader in nutrition and advocates for better food, better health, and wellbeing for all. DAA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the public consultation A1092 – Irradiation of Specific Fruits & Vegetables by Food Standards Australian New Zealand.

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DAA interest in this consultation

DAA aims to ensure there is a safe and nutritious food supply in which the community has confidence. Fruits and vegetables are core foods recommended by the Australian Dietary Guidelines.¹ The most recent National Nutrition Survey indicates Australians are not eating the amounts of fruit and vegetables recommended for adequate nutrition and long term health.² Therefore, maintaining and improving access to safe, affordable fruit and vegetables for all Australians is important for the health of our population.

Accredited Practising Dietitians encourage people to eat fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy balanced diet. It is important that measures to ensure the safety of fresh fruit and vegetables are implemented in such a way to enable people access to these foods.

Recommendations

DAA supports the variation to Standard 1.5.3 to permit the use of irradiation on the requested fruits and vegetables.

DAA recommends consumer education is needed to promote awareness of irradiated foods, the benefits of irradiation and how health risks related to irradiation are managed.

Discussion

Based on the information provided by FSANZ, the irradiation of the listed fruits and vegetables appears to present a low risk to the health and safety of the public.

According to the most recent National Nutrition Survey, the most commonly eaten fruits on the day before the survey were: pomme fruit including apples (average consumption 164g); stone fruit including apricots, nectarines, peaches and plums (average consumption 151g); and tropical fruit (average consumption 89g).² The cost-benefit analysis indicates there will be a potential flow on cost to consumers from using irradiation as an alternative to other processes. However, DAA also acknowledges that there is a public benefit to this cost by controlling damage to these foods from insect pests. The latest nutrition survey results indicate people may not be meeting recommendations for fruits and vegetables, so it is important that increased costs should not make fruits and vegetables prohibitively expensive for any population of Australians.

DAA supports the mandatory requirements under Standard 1.5.3 to label irradiated foods as this will provide information to allow people to make informed purchase decisions. However, DAA considers it essential that it should be accompanied by consumer education, to reduce fears that irradiated foods carry any radiation.

References

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Australian Health Survey: Nutrition First Results - Foods and Nutrients, 2011-12*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014.