

Consultation Paper – Labelling Review Recommendation 17: Per serving declarations in the nutrition information panel

Submission to FSANZ regarding proposed changes to Nutrition Information Panels on behalf of the Dietitians NZ Renal Special Interest Group

A considerable component of a renal dietitian's time is spent educating patients with kidney disease about nutrients in the food they eat. The use of Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) by consumers to determine nutrient content has increased over recent years.

The NIP is central to their understanding about nutrients in processed food, for example sodium in tinned fish. The content per 100g provides the patients with information on percentage sodium and is useful when comparing similar foods, whereas the content per serve gives them a better idea of how much nutrient they are actually eating. They are often unaware of what a 100g portion of food looks like in relation to the portion size they are eating.

The 'per serve' column adds context and perspective enabling an individual to interpret their food choices. If a patient needs to compare food the serve size information is vital, for example a thin scrape of marmite may be acceptable yet the amount of sodium per 100g of marmite indicates a very high sodium food. In contrast tinned fish may have less sodium per 100g but exceed recommendations when portion size is taken into account.

Additionally, 'per serving' information allows accumulative consideration of a nutrient or Kcal across a day's or week's intake. The NIP, including 'per serve' column, helps in the practical application of nutrition and label reading education to consumers.

Clear nutrition labelling is an indispensable part of helping consumers make informed food choices. The proposed labelling changes do not assist those who have poor health and nutrition literacy and believe they will reduce their ability to interpret labels. The 2007 NZ Health Literacy survey showed that over 50% had low health literacy levels.

We feel strongly that consumers need more information on labels, not less, to allow best and informed food choices. If there isn't a column specifically for nutrients per serve on the NIP as a mandatory recommendation, then the labels or packaging would need to state basic information about serving size or weight so consumers can calculate for themselves the actual amount of nutrients they are eating.

On behalf of: Dietitians NZ Renal Special Interest Group

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