

Healthy Food Partnership Executive Committee

Communiqué

23 May 2024 – Meeting 17

The Australian Government, food industry bodies and public health groups met on 23 May 2024 to progress the work of the Healthy Food Partnership (the Partnership), a joint collaboration that supports and encourages Australians to eat well and live healthier lives.

The Partnership is chaired by the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon. Ged Kearney MP and comprises representatives from ALDI, the Australian Food and Grocery Council, AusVeg, Coles, Dairy Australia, Dietitians Australia, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Meat and Livestock Australia, Metcash, National Heart Foundation of Australia, Public Health Association of Australia, Woolworths and the Australian Government Department of Health.

Assistant Minister Kearney acknowledged the importance of the Partnership's work, and efforts of food industry and public health groups on food reformulation, serving size and community awareness activities. Members noted that a quick service restaurant food service forum will be established with a role to help understand the sector, consider potential reformulation targets in this sector, promote appropriate serving sizes and exploring kilojoule labelling on third party online food delivery applications.

The Partnership Reformulation Program was discussed. As the initial implementation period for Wave 1 of the Partnership Reformulation Program is approaching in June 2024 members noted that the Secretariat will prepare a paper to inform discussion on the future and next steps of the reformulation program for discussion in late 2024.

The results of the first 2 years (the mid-point) of Wave 2 of the Partnership Reformulation Program were noted. For sugar, 32% of participating products decreased their sugar content, which equates to the removal of 261 tonnes of sugar from the food supply. For sodium, 15.7% of participating products decreased sodium content. This is equivalent to removal of 3.3 tonnes of sodium (or just over 8 tonnes of table salt) from the food supply. Despite this, there was little progress in the categories museli and snack bars, popcorn, and soft drinks and energy drinks in the achieving sugar and sodium reformulation targets. Most products high in sugars did not meet their relative reduction target within the 2-year period.

Members noted the increase in participating companies and invite additional companies to consider engaging with the Healthy Food Partnership.

Anomalies in reformulation food category descriptions for dry pastries (Wave 1) and ready meals (Wave 2) were discussed and updated definitions will be published on the Healthy Food Partnership website. Draft reformulation targets and food categories for Wave 3 were considered which will be released for public consultation from July 2024.

Members were updated on the progress of Foods for Early Childhood Reference Group. Members discussed the draft concepts and potential recommendations. Given the importance of infant and young child nutrition, the serious nature of the issues raised and the need for a systems approach the Committee recommended this work is elevated to the food regulatory system for further consideration.

Finally, members noted work from the Food Regulation System in the areas of infant foods, industrially produced trans fats. Members discussed the need for greater uptake of the Health Star Rating system and welcomed further development of the system.

Further information about work areas and membership of the working and reference groups is available online at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/healthy-food-partnership>.