

2017-05/004
T:/D102

16 May 2017

Committee Secretariat
Primary Production
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Tēnā koe,

Re: Consumer's Right to Know (Country of Origin of Food) Bill

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Consumer's Right to Know (Country of Origin of Food) Bill. NZNO strongly supports the legislation which will enable consumers to know the origin of where their food comes from and provide them with the knowledge to choose locally produced food. This will aid consumers to make an informed choice.

In particular, NZNO supports country of origin labelling of food in the context of the worldwide threat to public health of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). A recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) issued a stark warning that without urgent, co-ordinated action by many stakeholders, the world is headed for "*a post-antibiotic era - in which common infections and minor injuries can kill...this is a very real possibility for the 21st century*"¹.

NZNO acknowledges calls by the WHO for combined international action towards solving the problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria of animal origin as an important contributor to the overall phenomenon of resistance to antibiotics. International evidence shows that using antibiotics in agriculture in an unrestricted manner can lead to antimicrobials ending up in the food chain and can contribute to drug-resistant germs. Antibiotic resistance can emerge when bacteria survives after an animal is given a dose of antibiotics and this resistant bacteria is spread to humans via contaminated food². The serious issue is particularly pressing for the meat industry, with chicken and pigs particularly susceptible to diseases which require antibiotics.

NZNO strongly supports country of origin of food labelling as different countries have different rates of antibiotic resistance. This legislation will give consumers the ability to choose safer, New Zealand produced meat where use of antibiotics in agriculture has been restricted, or eliminated.

¹ World Health Organization. (2014). *Antimicrobial resistance. Global report on surveillance*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

² Economou, V. and Gousia, P. (2015). Agriculture and food animals as a source of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria. *Infection and Drug Resistance*, 8 (49-61).

NZNO acknowledges that the prevalence of AMR in New Zealand animals and plants is relatively low. New Zealand is one of the three countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with the lowest use of antibiotics to treat animals³. One reason for such low use is likely to be that New Zealand has strong regulatory controls on use of antimicrobial agents, which limit prescribing and dispensing to the veterinary profession. Other probable reasons are that animal husbandry systems are relatively low in intensity compared to other countries, and that the government and industry continue to invest in initiatives to limit AMR⁴.

However, there is a growing contribution of other countries to the global burden of AMR. A new study of global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals indicates that in fast-growing Asian countries, this will constitute a serious challenge because these countries are currently experiencing the most rapid increase in demand for meat products. In Asia, antimicrobial consumption in chicken and pigs is expected to grow by 129% and 124%, respectively, by 2030⁵. Given the potential costs of inaction, urgent and concerted action is required in all countries to limit the overuse and abuse of antimicrobials in food animal production.

NZNO is therefore strongly of the view that any New Zealander concerned about limiting the threat of AMR to human health should be entitled to identify and purchase New Zealand meat, rather than that imported from overseas. This legislation will enable consumers to have certainty that they are buying products made in New Zealand, where antibiotic use is low. NZNO therefore supports this bill as it will enable consumers to choose safer food.

NZNO strongly supports the bill as it will ensure accurate country of origin of food labelling in the pork industry. NZNO is particularly concerned with misleading labelling in the pork industry that indicates pork is made in New Zealand, but not identifying that this includes imported product, often from countries that do not have suitable regulation of the use of antimicrobials in food production.

The Pork Industry Board (NZ Pork) states that “every week, 700,000kgs of pork is imported into New Zealand from Canada, USA, Australia, Scandinavia and China. 95% of this product is used to make ham and bacon products that are sold throughout New Zealand. Many of these hams and bacons have "Made in New Zealand" proudly on their packaging. Unfortunately, there is a very high likelihood that this ham or bacon is made in New Zealand from imported product”⁶. Two of the countries from which New Zealand imports pork - China and the United States- have been identified as the largest consumers of

³ Hillerton, J. et al (2016). Use of Antimicrobials for animals in New Zealand, and in comparison with other countries. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 65 (2), 71-77.

⁴ Ministry of Primary Industry (MPI). (2014). Antibiotics and resistance fact sheet. Downloaded on 4 /05/17 from <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/whats-in-our-food/chemicals-and-food/agricultural-compounds-and-residues/antibiotics-and-resistance/>

⁵ Van Boeckel, T et al (2015). Global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112 (18, 5649-54.

⁶ New Zealand Pork Industry Board. 100% New Zealand Ham. Why is New Zealand labelling important? Article downloaded on 4 May 2017 from <http://www.pork.co.nz/nz-ham>

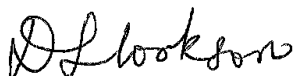
antimicrobials in food animal production, 23% and 13% respectively. This ranking is projected to remain by 2030, with China projected to contribute 30% and the United States 10%⁷.

As health professionals we underline the importance of health literacy – the importance of using appropriate use of language in conveying complex information to the public. In relation to food labelling, we emphasise the importance of enabling consumers to obtain, process and understand basic health information about the food chain in order to make informed decisions about food choices.

In conclusion, NZNO urges the committee to enforce legislation that should allow consumers to determine that they are not buying a product that includes imported meat such as bacon which may be produced in countries where antibiotics are used without restraint. NZNO strongly supports accurate country of origin labelling to enable consumers to purchase locally grown meat where antibiotic use is strictly controlled. By avoiding countries that heavily use antibiotics and choosing New Zealand grown meat, consumers may also be helping humans stay healthy.

NZNO warmly supports the bill and recommends it proceeds.

Nākū noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Cookson', written in a cursive style.

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⁷ Van Boeckel, T et al (2015). Global trends in antimicrobial use in food animals. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 112 (18, 5649-54.

NEW ZEALAND NURSES ORGANISATION (NZNO)

NZNO is the leading professional nursing association and union for nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZNO represents over 47,000 nurses, midwives, students, kaimahi hauora and health workers on professional and employment related matters. NZNO is affiliated to the International Council of Nurses and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.

NZNO promotes and advocates for professional excellence in nursing by providing leadership, research and education to inspire and progress the profession of nursing. NZNO represents members on employment and industrial matters and negotiates collective employment agreements.

NZNO embraces te Tiriti o Waitangi and contributes to the improvement of the health status and outcomes of all peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand through influencing health, employment and social policy development enabling quality nursing care provision. NZNO's vision is *Freed to care, Proud to nurse*.