

News releases - John Rau

Two national codes cracked

John Rau

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The State Government has welcomed a national approach to free range egg and country of origin food labelling to help consumers make more informed purchasing choices.

Consumer and Business Services Minister John Rau said a national standard for free range egg labelling has been agreed to by Consumer Affairs Ministers in Canberra today.

“South Australia welcomes a national, consistent approach to free range egg labelling”, Mr Rau said.

“The South Australian Government is happy to continue to work with local producers on an industry managed scheme for low density producers.

“The absence of a nationally enforceable definition for free range eggs has caused confusion to consumers, while egg producers have not been able to build their business with certainty due to current labelling practices.

“When South Australian shoppers buy their free range eggs, they want to be assured they are getting what they pay for and the environment from which it comes.

“Actual stocking densities will now be required to appear on cartons purporting to contain ‘free range’ eggs. Consumers will know that the eggs they are buying are from a farm with say 1000 or 1500 hens per hectare or a farm with 10,000 hens per hectare and can then make the choice.”

A new information standard under the Australian Consumer Law for eggs labelled as free range will:

- provide a definition of ‘free range’ based on birds having meaningful and regular access to an outdoor range;
- require the prominent disclosure of outdoor stocking density; and
- set a maximum outdoor stocking density of 10,000 birds per hectare.

Today’s meeting also saw an agreement reached about a revised approach to country of origin food labels.

Mr Rau said new, easy to find visual information consisting of a kangaroo logo and bar chart, along with a mandatory description will make it simpler for consumers to find out where the food was made, produced, grown, and the proportion of Australian ingredients for most food products.

“These new reforms will provide consumers with more reliable and less ambiguous origin information for food and will deliver businesses greater clarity about the claims they can make,” he said.

Additionally, in keeping with a nationally consistent approach, a review of the Australian Consumer Law throughout 2016 will assess whether the current law is working effectively and what could be improved.

An Issues Paper released for public consultation today encourages consumers, businesses, advocacy groups, lawyers and other interested parties to have their say on the single national consumer law that commenced on 1 January, 2011.

Feedback on the Issues Paper will inform the development of an interim report that will be released for consultation.

Submissions close Friday 27 May, 2016. To download the paper please visit:
www.consumerlaw.gov.au