

Food and nutrition guidelines: new recommendation with sustainability as a key concern. Mark Lawrence, Deakin University

This presentation reports on two food and nutrition guideline developments into which sustainability is being integrated as a core theme. The first development is at the national level - the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Food Selection Guide. The second development is at the state level - the proposal by the Food Alliance for mandatory minimum standards for healthy and sustainable public sector food in Victoria.

1. NHMRC review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Food Selection Guide

Dietary guidelines are public health recommendations based on the analysis of data from published original research by expert panels. In most countries the guidelines are intended to provide advice for the general population and healthy individuals so that their usual diet contributes to a healthy lifestyle consistent with minimal risk for the development of diet-related diseases. Food selection guides are nutrition education tools that translate scientific knowledge of food composition and reference intakes and dietary guidelines into coherent and practical food selection advice for the general public.

During 2008 – 2011 the NHMRC is reviewing the Dietary Guidelines and Food Selection Guide. A core theme has been to integrate environmental sustainability criteria into the review process. This presentation will describe aspects of this review process.

2. Food Alliance proposal for healthy and sustainable public sector food in Victoria

The Food Alliance is an organisation funded by VicHealth and auspiced by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University with the aim to identify, analyse and advocate for evidence-informed policies and regulatory reform to enable sustainable food security and healthy eating among the Victorian population.

The rationale for advocating for mandatory standards for public sector food purchasing is that the public sector is a large buyer of food and serves those in society who are most disadvantaged such as sick people, those in prison, the young and elderly. Public money purchases food in hospitals, schools, universities, prisons, care homes, childcare centres, for the military and in government departments. The public sector spend has a considerable amount of influence on the market. Its large and stable purchasing power means that by creating a significant demand it can stimulate supply of more sustainable and healthy products. As organisations created to provide for the public good, public sector bodies have a responsibility to tax payers to consider the impact of their purchasing on public health, the environment, economy and wider

society. Victoria has the potential and opportunity to provide leadership in this area.