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Centre

# **Food policy in Australia:**

## The role of different Federal Government organisations

December 2021

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## Contributors and acknowledgements

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### Acknowledgment of country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the University of Sydney acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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# Introduction

The food system is complex and interconnected. Food goes through the stages of production, processing, transport, consumption, and disposal, with each stage having economic, environmental, health, social, and political dimensions. [1]

For this reason, policies from a range of sectors are relevant to food system functioning and outcomes. These include policies specific to food, as well as those on agriculture, transport, health, and the environment. [2]

Various groups and stakeholders have called for more holistic, national-level food policy in Australia. However, existing efforts have so far failed to produce policy adoption and implementation. The Australian National Food Plan, one such attempt, was developed over a two-and-a-half-year time period, led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry - DAFF (currently known as the Department of Agriculture, Water, and Energy - DAWE). However, the plan was ultimately shelved due to changes in government and the competing visions of the stakeholders involved. [3] The first and only Australian National Food and Nutrition Policy was developed in 1992, with more recent attempts at developing an updated version also stalling around 2014. [4, 5] At the time of writing in 2021, the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030 had recently been adopted, while a National Obesity Strategy was still being developed.

While policy progress has been slow, Australians continue to feel the impact of complex food systems challenges such as food insecurity, diet-related non-communicable diseases, and environmental sustainability. [6] Despite being a food secure nation, there remain groups who face a high risk of food insecurity, including younger Australians, individuals with lower educational attainment, asylum seekers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, disadvantaged households, and people who are unemployed. [7, 8] At the same time, many Australians are eating unhealthy diets, characterised by excessive consumption of ultra-processed foods high in harmful fats, sodium and added sugars. [9, 10] Consequently, two-thirds of Australian adults are currently

overweight or obese. [11] Consumption patterns also influence the ecological footprint of food systems and currently, the agriculture sector contributes approximately 13% of total greenhouse gas emissions each year. [12] Research suggests that Australians are aware of the importance of good health, but not of the environmental impacts of their consumption habits. [13]

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted the food system, bringing changes in overseas trade, agricultural workforce availability, individual eating habits, and accessibility to food in rural areas. For example, despite efforts by the agri-food system to adapt, it is expected that exports of livestock and grain stock will decline by approximately 10-20% in 2020-21. [14] The introduction of measures prohibiting residents in some states from leaving their homes (with some exceptions) (often referred to as being in 'lockdown' in Australia) also led to changes in consumer spending on food, with higher expenditure on food for home consumption, and lower expenditure on restaurants and takeaway. [15] Stay at home orders promoted online shopping for groceries, reducing access to labelling information more readily available when consumers are purchasing products in store. Rural and remote communities also experienced a reduced food supply and access to affordable and nutritious food during lockdown periods, likely increasing rates of food insecurity in these communities. [16]

Currently, no document exists that summarises the role of various Federal Government departments and agencies in making food policy in Australia. The aim of this report is to map the departments and agencies involved, how they work together to create and implement food policy, and how they divide and respond to food policy challenges such as improving nutrition, preventing non-communicable diseases, and promoting sustainable food systems.



Our conceptualisation of the role of each department and agency is based on information contained in key documents produced by each of these entities (current as at February 2021). Accordingly, it may differ from other views of the importance of each entity to food policy developed through different research methodologies, for example.

This report shows that despite the importance of food policy to public health, the national economy, and the everyday lives of consumers, there is no single department or national framework that underpins or coordinates food-related activity in Australia. A unified federal policy framework would allow food-related activities and initiatives to be underpinned by the same set of goals and reduce the likelihood of policies/activities contradicting or undermining each other. For example, agricultural policy might subsidise methods of farming that increase the emissions that climate policy is trying to reduce, or food companies might make health claims that contradict the advice given by national dietary guidelines. Thus, food policy has the potential to be improved if duplications and contradictions are eliminated. One way forward may be the development of a coordination mechanism and/or clear leadership from one federal department or agency.

This report can help stakeholders understand the roles and responsibilities of various government departments in relation to food, and can be used to identify possible areas where it can become better connected. It can also inform recommendations for how a holistic, national food systems approach to food policy can be developed.

## Methods

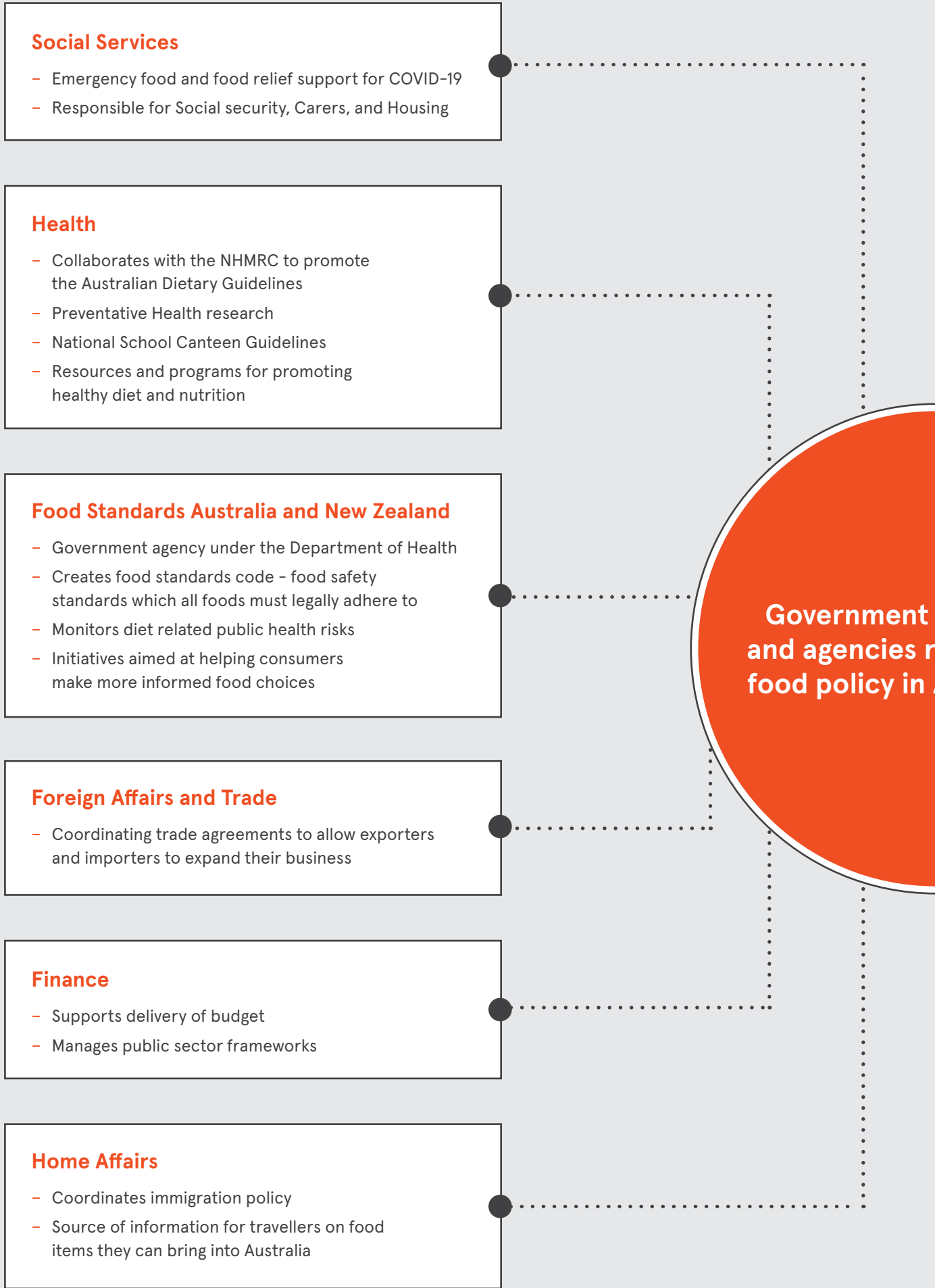
The methods used for this report were based on a Food Research Collaboration (FRC) report prepared by the Centre for Food Policy at City University London in England. [17] Following the methodology used in that report, the following steps were taken:

1. Identifying all Federal Government departments, using the government directory website [18];
2. Analysing each department's website, Annual Report and Corporate Plan to identify the department's food related policies and initiatives; and
3. Determining which agencies within each department's portfolio conducted food related policy activity

For each department, the following information was gathered:

- The size and structure of the department;
- Official areas of policy responsibility and goals;
- Key food-related laws/policies/strategies/ projects;
- Organisational structure and governance; and
- Response to COVID-19 (specifically in relation to food)

The diagram below summarises the main food-related activities of each Federal Government department. The following sections of the report describe the key departments with food-related policy responsibilities, followed by a table summarising the responsibilities of departments that play a less central role in food policy making, based on the documentary analysis that we undertook for this report (Figure 1). One limitation of the report may be that it omits food-related activities undertaken by federal government departments and agencies that are not mentioned in the documents we examined.



Above: Map of Government departments and agencies responsible for food policy



## departments responsible for Australia, 2021

### Treasury

- Main work relating to food done through the ACCC
- *Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)* - ensures fair trading practices for food suppliers
- Codes of conduct for Dairy, Horticulture, Grocery, and Wheat
- Determines a definition of food for the purpose of identifying whether it is GST-free

### Agriculture, Water and the Environment

- Agriculture policies and programs
- Water management
- Managing export regulatory system
- Managing forestry and fisheries, food waste, grains research and development

### Education, Skills, and Employment

- Food and nutrition in school education (K-10)

### Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

- Main work relating to food done through NMI
- Identifying and measuring food allergens and pollutants
- Measurements relating to food provenance and fraud

### Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

- Investments in infrastructure that optimise agricultural freight system
- Working with DAWE to assist producers in exporting perishable goods during COVID-19

# Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment

The Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment (DAWE) was formed in February 2020. It combines functions that were previously assigned to the Department of Agriculture and the Environment, and the Department of the Environment and Energy. [19]

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## Goals

DAWE aims to enhance 'Australia's agriculture, unique environment and heritage, and water resources'. [19]

In their 2019-2020 corporate plan, DAWE stated the following objectives:

- Assist industry to grow to a \$100 billion agricultural sector by 2030
- Manage biosecurity risks to Australian agriculture
- Support the sustainable management and productive use of Australia's water sources
- Advance Australia's strategic, scientific and environmental interest in the Antarctic and the Southern Ocean [19]

## Policy responsibilities

DAWE manages a wide range of policy areas including: waste management, improving the status of threatened species and ecosystems, maintaining biosecurity, and managing national parks and gardens. [19]

## Main food-related policy areas

DAWE's food related policy areas include:

- Agriculture and drought management
- Water management
- Forestry and fisheries
- Animal welfare
- Export regulatory system
- Grains research and development
- Waste reduction and environmental management
- Regulation of imported foods
- Improving market access and maximising opportunities for agricultural exports
- Fostering research and development collaboration to promote innovative practices in the agricultural sector
- Delivering policies and programs to support profitable and resilient agri-businesses
- Supporting the economy recovery post COVID-19

Table 1 below describes key food-related activities undertaken by DAWE in 2021 (or prior), as identified from the documentary analysis. Table 2 provides an overview of the legislation that underpins DAWE's food-related work, while Table 3 sets out agencies with food-related responsibilities within DAWE's portfolio.

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Table 1. DAWE: Main food-related policy activities undertaken in 2021 (or prior)

Policy activity	Details
Agricultural Workforce Strategy	This strategy aims to ensure that the agricultural industry has a consistent source of skilled and developed workers, and that farmers have access to a well-equipped workforce depending on need. It will also address which areas of the agricultural sector require access to a migrant workforce. [20] The strategy was still undergoing consultation and was not yet in place at the time of writing.
National Traceability Framework	This framework is a tool to guide Australian agricultural industries and food producers in improving traceability systems and promoting Australian exports in international markets. The framework sets out a common vision, principles for traceability systems, and the roles and responsibilities of industries, governments and other stakeholders. [21]
Manual of Importing Country Requirements (Micor)	DAWE maintains this manual as a resource for exporters of Australian agricultural products. It provides guidance on importing country requirements for meat dairy, plants, fish, live animals, and eggs. [22]
Indonesia Australia comprehensive economic partnership (IA-CEP) DFAT and DAWE	The IA-CEP is overseen by DAWE and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and provides an opportunity for Australia and Indonesia to strengthen agricultural ties and enhance export capabilities. Under this agreement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over 99% of Australian goods exports enter Indonesia duty free</li> <li>- Indonesia issues import permits for products such as live cattle, citrus, potatoes and feed grains. [23]</li> </ul>
Observer summary reports	DAWE administers a system that provides an independent observer to monitor and report on activities carried out in export programs to ensure the health and welfare of animals, in compliance with regulation on the health and welfare of live animal exports (see the Australian Standards for Export of Livestock in Table 2 below). [24]
Next Export Documentation System (NEXDOC)	NEXDOC is a web-based system aimed at improving export regulation. It seeks to improve product integrity and traceability, and implementation of market requirements across the export supply chain. [25]
Modernising Agricultural Trade program	This program updates the systems that support agricultural trade, and aims to improve how trade is regulated. It has three key themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- protecting Australia's clean, green brand</li> <li>- improving information for exporters</li> <li>- Information Communication Technology (ICT) modernisation. [26]</li> </ul>
Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness Plan	This plan aims to support Australian farmers and their families facing prolonged drought conditions. It does this by building resilience in communities so they are able to withstand drought in the long term through a range of programs such as: the Farm Household Allowance program (income support for farmers experiencing hardship), the Rural Financial Counselling Service, and measures to help farmers manage their cash flow. [27]
Educating Kids About Agriculture: Kids to Farms Grant Program	This was a targeted competitive grant program with total value of \$5 million. The program provided grants to state farming bodies (also known as state farming organisations) to sponsor school visits to farms and other primary production worksites for school children to learn about agriculture production, sustainability practices and land stewardship. [28]
Access to Industry Priority Uses of Agvet Chemicals Grants Program	This program helps farmers gain improved access to safe and effective agricultural and veterinary (Agvet) chemicals and supports collaboration between growers, producers and the chemical industry. It also aims to improve prioritisation of grants according to the needs of Australian agriculture. [29]
Carbon Farming Initiative	DAWE works with the Department of Science, Energy and Resources to reduce the regulatory burden associated with forestry expansion in higher rainfall areas. The voluntary carbon offsets scheme is a part of this initiative, and allows land managers to earn carbon credits by changing land use or management practices to store or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. DAWE also conducts risk-based assessments to determine whether the planting of trees would be likely to have a material adverse impact on the availability of water. [30]

Table 1. continued

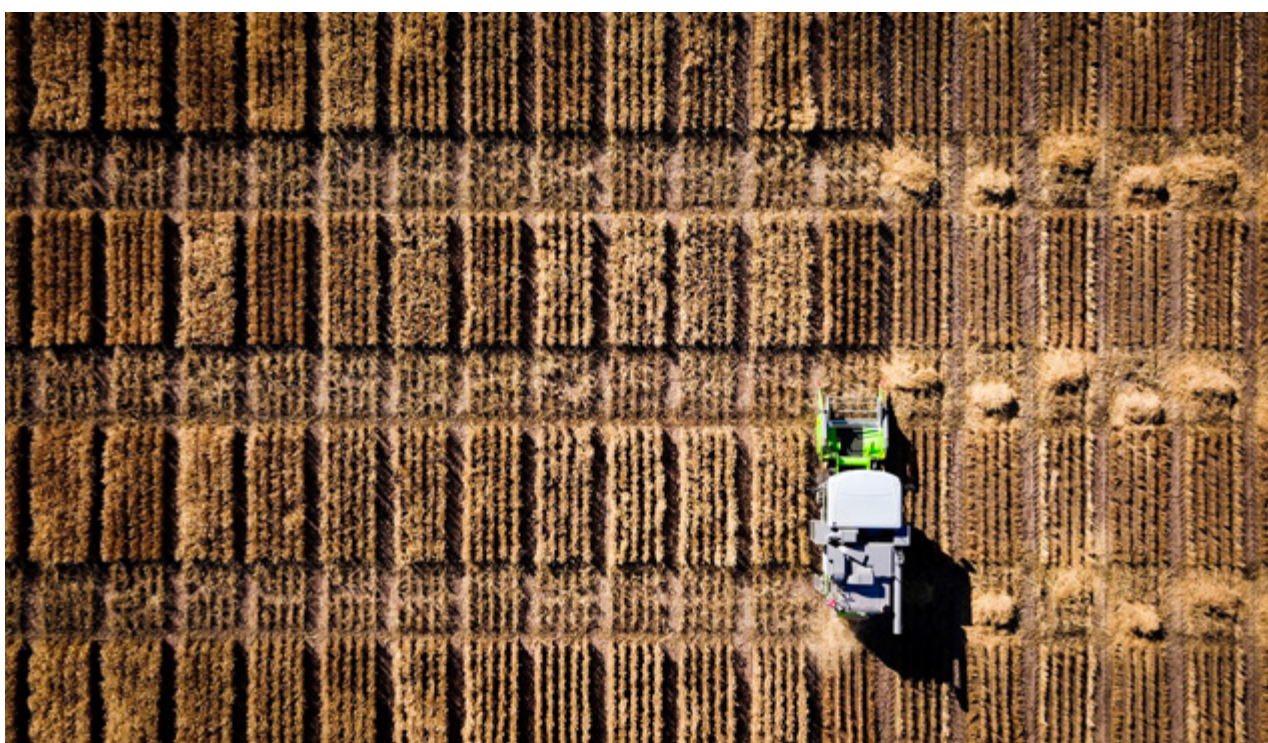
Policy activity	Details
Agricultural Stewardship Package	This program aims to incentivise improved on-farm land management practices and promote farming efforts, and develop a system for farmers to be rewarded for their efforts in delivering biodiversity and sustainability services. [31]
Commonwealth Fisheries Resource Sharing Framework	DAWE is working with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to develop a Commonwealth fisheries resource sharing framework. The framework will outline how the Commonwealth Government approaches the sharing of fishing resources across commercial, regional, and Indigenous sectors. [32]
Imported Food Inspection Scheme (IFIS)	<p>The IFIS is an inspection program through which imported food is inspected by DAWE to ensure that it meets Australian public health and safety requirements, and is compliant with Australia's food standards. All imported food must comply with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requirements of the <i>Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i></li> <li>- Guidelines stated in the <i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Cth)</i></li> </ul> <p>DAWE takes a risk-based approach to regulating imported food and works closely with other authorities (such as FSANZ) to monitor food entering Australia. Under the IFIS, food is categorised as either risk food or surveillance food. Foods that pose a medium to high risk to public health are classified by FSANZ as risk foods and require stricter controls. Surveillance foods are considered to pose a low risk to human health and safety and are subject to fewer controls.</p> <p>Imported foods rely on an honorary system, in that the importer undertakes to comply with the Australian standards. Consignments are randomly tested (only 5% of imported foods are tested by DAWE). [33]</p>
Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA)	<p>Under the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i>, surveillance foods from New Zealand are exempt from the imported food inspection scheme as these come under the TTMRA. Only foods classified as high-risk foods are subject to the IFIS at the Australian borders. [34]</p> <p>Equivalence determination of food safety systems covering seafood, dairy products, uncooked pig meat, chicken meat, coconut, pepper, paprika, peanuts and pistachios have also been reached. This enables these products to be brought to Australia under the TTRMA without border inspection. [33]</p>
Biosecurity Import Conditions System (BICON)	BICON is used by importers to determine whether a food commodity intended for import in Australia is: permitted, subject to import conditions, requires supporting documentation, requires treatment, or requires an import permit. It is the responsibility of the importer to comply with the Department's import conditions when importing into Australia.
Food Import Compliance Agreements (FICA)	The FICA agreements fall under the IFIS and provide food importers with an alternative assurance and audit arrangement to the inspection and testing of their products. Under the agreement, food importers receive formal recognition of their food management system by the Department and as a result, have reduced rates of intervention in their supply chain. [35]
National Food Waste Strategy	<p>The strategy provides a framework to support collective action to halve Australia's food waste by 2030. It also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), and helps to fulfil Australia's obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as it aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the diversion of food waste from landfill. The strategy has four main priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy support: identifying areas to target for investment, establishing a voluntary food waste reduction program, and undertaking legislative reform to reduce food waste</li> <li>- Business improvements: identifying areas for improvement and normalising the minimisation of food waste in business practices. [36]</li> <li>- Market development: identifying the nutritional composition of food waste to develop new markets, and encouraging behaviour change in the food industry workforce, and in consumers. [36]</li> </ul>

Table 2. Food-related Legislation underpinning DAWE's policies

Legislation	Details
<i>The Export Control Act 2020 (Cth)</i>	<p>The Act was created to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on agricultural exports during the initial phases of outbreak of coronavirus (passed in Feb 2020). DAWE worked with Austrade to implement the government's International Freight Assistance Mechanism. The Act also underpins the operational requirements stated in the <i>Export Control Rules 2020 (Cth)</i> and ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exported goods meet importing countries' requirements</li> <li>- Compliance with relevant government and industry standards</li> <li>- Traceability through the exports supply chain. [37]</li> </ul>
<i>Export Control Rules 2020 (Cth)</i>	<p>The Rules outline the operational requirements agricultural exporters must meet to export specific commodities from Australia, and are based on regulations for commodities under the <i>Export Control Act 1982 (Cth)</i> and <i>Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997 (Cth)</i>. The rules will commence in March, 2021 and replace the current legislation under the <i>Export Control Act 2020 (Cth)</i>. [37]</p>
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth) (EPBC Act)</i>	<p>The EPBC Act provides the basis for legislative reform to streamline environmental regulation and maintain strong environmental protection standards. This includes regulating the chemicals used by the agricultural industry. [38]</p>
<i>Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i>	<p>All imported food must comply with the requirements of the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i>. The applicable standards are specified in the <i>Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code (Cth)</i>. [39]</p>
<i>Imported Food Control Order 2019 (Cth)</i>	<p>Subsection 43 (1) of the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i> allows the Governor General to make regulations creating a food inspection scheme for imported food items. These regulations also give authority to the Minister for Agriculture to create orders on which types of food items should be inspected and/or analysed. [40]</p>
<i>Imported Food Control Amendment Act 2018 (Cth)</i>	<p>The <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992 (Cth)</i> was amended in 2018 to improve the monitoring of imported food for compliance with the <i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Cth)</i>. The Amendment imposed the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing importers' accountability for food safety and the sourcing of safe food</li> <li>- Improvement in the monitoring and management of food safety risks</li> </ul> <p>The Act requires some foods to have a food safety management certificate. In cases where there is an emerging risk to human health, the amendment states that the rate of inspection of food should be temporarily increased. Importers are legally responsible under the <i>Imported Food Control Act 1992</i> for ensuring that imported foods products comply with the <i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Cth)</i> and the <i>Country of Origin Food Labelling Standard 2016 (Cth)</i></p>
<i>Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth)</i>	<p>All imported food suppliers must comply with the biosecurity conditions for their imports. Restrictions apply to raw foods and certain processed foods brought to Australia for private use (transported through airports or mailed). Restricted items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- eggs and egg products</li> <li>- dairy products</li> <li>- uncanned meat</li> <li>- seeds and nuts</li> <li>- fresh fruit and vegetables</li> </ul> <p>Imported foods are monitored for compliance with the <i>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Cth)</i> depending on whether they are classified as a risk food or a surveillance food.</p>
Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS)	<p>The ESCAS form part of DAWE's regulatory framework for the export livestock industry. All livestock exporters must comply with the regulations that underpin the ESCAS, and suppliers must also have an ESCAS for all feeder and slaughter livestock (but not breeder livestock).</p>
The Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL)	<p>The standards set out the minimum animal health and welfare requirements for the livestock export industry, and are enforceable under the <i>Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997 (Cth)</i>. [41]</p>

Table 3. Role of other food-related agencies within the Agriculture, Water, and the Environment portfolio

Agency	Details
Grains Research and Development Corporation (GDRC)	The GDRC is a Statutory corporation founded under the <i>Primary Industries and Development Act 1989 (Cth)</i> , funded by levies paid by grain growers and the Australian Government. [42] Its purpose is to invest in research, development and extension to improve the profitability for Australian grain growers. This includes investment in research projects to deliver improved farming practices.
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)	The FRDC is a statutory corporation founded under the <i>Primary Industries and Development Act 1989 (Cth)</i> , funded by the Australian Government and contributions revenue from Commonwealth and state-based fisheries. Its purpose is to plan and invest in fisheries research, development and extension, and it aims to ensure that research is undertaken to promote sustainable aquaculture practices.
Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)	<p>ABARES is DAWE's primary research arm, and provides policy advice to the Department and other government agencies. [43] Its activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data collection via fisheries, farm, and forestry surveys</li> <li>- Forecasting of the price, production, and value of Australian agricultural output</li> <li>- Conducting research on issues relevant to Australian agricultural, forestry and fisheries policy and industries</li> </ul> <p>Research topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural overview, Australian crop reports, trends in horticulture and grains output [44]</li> <li>- Food demand trends in Australia - examining which aspects of the policy framework contribute to Australia's high level of food security</li> <li>- Biosecurity research – risks and impacts of on-shore security threats to Australia</li> <li>- International and trade research – providing an ‘analysis of key global policy issues of importance to Australian agriculture and Australia's position in bilateral and multilateral trade agreement negotiations’. [45]</li> </ul>



## Size and structure

DAWE comprises approximately 7,000 employees. The Secretary of the Department is the accountable authority and is responsible for its efficient operation. The secretary chairs the following groups:

- National Biosecurity Committee
- National Management Group for Nationally Coordinated Emergency Responses to Pest and Disease Incursions
- Agriculture Senior Officials Committee
- Environment Senior Officials Committee [46]

## Board

The Executive Board is responsible for overseeing implementation and improvement of the Department's business operations, building capability, and promoting collaboration between business areas, other agencies, and stakeholders (see Figure 1).

The Agriculture, Water, and the Environment portfolio is comprised of 5 ministers:

- Minister for Agriculture, Drought, and Emergency Management
- Minister for the Environment
- Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia
- Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries
- Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management

## Response to COVID-19

The pandemic has impacted the DAWE workforce, areas of policy responsibility, and program delivery. DAWE has supported the agricultural sector to maintain domestic food security and supply of Australian made food products to overseas trade partners, and has also supported exporters by minimising disruptions to export activities by building strong relationships with trading partners. DAWE recognises the need for post COVID-19 policies that will support the recovery of the agricultural sector. [19]



# Department of Health

The Department of Health works with its agencies and other stakeholders to support Australia's health and aged care system, and sporting outcomes. [47]

## Goals

The Department's vision is: 'Better health and wellbeing for all Australians, now and for future generations'. [48]

## Policy responsibilities

The health portfolio outcomes are related to:

- Health System Policy, Design and Innovation
- Health Access and Support Services (this includes Preventative Health programs)
- Sport and Recreation
- Individual Health Benefits
- Regulation, Safety and Protection
- Aging and Aged Care

## Main food-related policy areas and activities

The Department of Health undertakes a range of diet-related programs and initiatives, summarized in Table 4 (current as of February 2021). One of the main functions of the Department in relation to food policy is providing dietary advice to the general public. This advice is based on the research conducted by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), and is the basis for many of the Department's activities.



Table 4. Department of Health main food related policy activities

Policy Activity	Details
Boosting Preventative Health Research Initiative	<p>This was a \$10 million initiative that supported low-cost interventions aimed at preventing chronic illnesses such as heart disease, type two diabetes, respiratory disease, arthritis, and cancer. [49]</p> <p>The Initiative was managed by The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre (TAPPC), which is a national collaboration of researchers, policy makers, and practitioners who work to understand lifestyle-related chronic health problems. [50] Projects under this initiative included: tackling childhood obesity with big data and dynamic simulation modelling; using health promotion to reduce the burden of obesity before and in pregnancy; and improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander food security and diet. [51]</p>
Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative	<p>This initiative will provide \$260.4 million over 10 years (2019–2029) for research projects that investigate risk factors contributing to chronic diseases. [48] Exercise and nutrition are some of the Initiative’s funding priorities. [52]</p>
Eat for Health Program – Australian Dietary Guidelines	<p>The Australian Dietary Guidelines were the result of a joint initiative between the Department of Health and the NHMRC. [48] The Guidelines provide dietary recommendations to promote healthy eating, and aim to reduce the burden of preventable diet-related illnesses. [53] The current Guidelines were released in 2013 and are accessible via the ‘Eat for Health’ website. At the time of writing, they were under review by the NHMRC.</p>
Healthy Weight Guide	<p>This is an interactive website which aims to help the public achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Individuals can register for free and keep track of their measurements (e.g. weight, BMI, waist measurement etc.), set goals, and plan their meals and physical activity. The website is aimed at adults, but contains information for various age demographics. [54]</p>
National Healthy School Canteens Guidelines	<p>This project was a part of the Australian Better Health Initiative (A health information campaign aiming to address the risk factors that lead to obesity). It comprises national guidance and training to help canteen managers make healthier food and drink choices for school canteens. These guidelines are based on the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. [55]</p>
Health Star Rating System	<p>The Health Star Rating System is a front-of-pack labelling system that rates the overall nutritional profile of packaged foods. The rating can range from 0.5 to 5 stars. [56] A higher number of stars is meant to indicate a healthier choice to consumers. The rating system was developed by the Federal and State governments in collaboration with industry, public health, and consumer groups and has recently been subject to a five year government review that resulted in minor updates. As the system is voluntary, manufacturers and retailers can choose which products they wish to display Health Star Ratings on, if at all. [57]</p>
Healthy Food Partnership	<p>The Healthy Food Partnership is ‘a collaborative effort across the food industry and public health sector to tackle obesity by making healthy food choices easier and more accessible’. It is based on the key themes of: reducing portion sizes of food products; communication and education; and product reformulation. [58] The Partnership has established a Reformulation Program that aims to set targets for maximum sodium and saturated fat levels in major food categories. [59]</p>
Eat for Health (website)	<p>The website contains the Australian Dietary Guidelines, in addition to advice on how the Guidelines can be implemented, and resources such as posters and brochures that can be used by educators and the general public.</p>
Nutrient Reference Values	<p>The Nutrient Reference Values were a joint initiative by the NHMRC, the Department of Health, and the New Zealand Ministry of Health. They comprise a set of recommended nutrient intakes, which are designed to help dietitians and other health professionals assess the dietary requirements of individuals and population groups. The Nutrient Reference Values are also used by the food industry for food labelling and formulation. [60]</p>
Get up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood guidelines/resources	<p>A set of resources and guidelines which are designed to be used in early childhood settings by families and educators to support a consistent, national approach to childhood nutrition and physical activity. [61]. The resources are based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Infant Feeding Guidelines</li> <li>- The Australian Dietary Guidelines</li> <li>- The National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0 to 5 years.</li> </ul> <p>Resources include books for directors, carers, and staff members of early childcare settings, and families. The ‘Cooking for Children’ book gives advice on supporting healthy eating in children, specific guidelines on food servings, and lists of foods that should be incorporated into children’s diets depending on the age of the child. [61]</p>

## National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

The main food related agency that comes under the Department of Health portfolio is the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The NHMRC is an independent statutory authority established under the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992 (Cth)* (NHMRC Act). Under this Act, the NHMRC is required to pursue activities that aim to promote uniformity of health standards across the states and territories, and promote medical and public health research and training throughout Australia. Other functions under this Act include issuing guidelines and advising the community on matters pertaining to improving health, and preventing, diagnosing and treating disease. [62] The NHMRC's food-related activities include developing or contributing to the:

- Nutrient Reference Values: a set of recommendations for nutritional intake, based on current literature (see Table 4 above) [63]
- Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Infant Feeding Guidelines
- Discretionary Foods and Drinks Review [64]
- Australian Drinking Water Guidelines
- Public Statement 2017: Water Fluoridation and Human Health in Australia

## Size and structure

The Department of Health has an average staffing level of 3885, and forms part of the Health Portfolio, which also includes 18 agencies. Australia's federal food regulatory agency – Food Standards Australia New Zealand – (FSANZ) also forms part of the Health Portfolio. Due to its importance in food policy making, it is described in a separate section below.

## Board

The Department of Health is headed by the Secretary of the Department. It also has four senior governance committees that provide advice and make recommendations to the Executive. These committees are:

- The Executive Committee
  - Provides strategic direction and leadership to ensure outcomes documented in the Corporate Plan are achieved
  - Operates in an advisory capacity to the Secretary
- The Audit and Risk Committee
  - Provides independent advice to the Secretary on the Department's financial and performance reporting, and on its systems of risk oversight and internal control
- Performance Assurance Committee
  - An advisory body that reports to the Executive Committee
  - Considers the ongoing delivery of programs, and the implementation of new programs
- Investment and Implementation Board
  - Provides advice to the Executive Committee on effective management and ongoing viability of the Department's high-risk projects [47]

## Response to COVID-19

The Department was responsible for delivering a \$2.4b package to 'protect the health of Australians', which included the expansion of Medicare-subsidised telehealth services. [65] In relation to food, the Department created a webpage informing consumers about COVID-19 and food safety, how they can eat healthily during the restrictions, and meal preparation suggestions for reducing trips to grocery stores. [66]



# Food Standards Australia and New Zealand

## The Australia and New Zealand joint food regulation system

The food regulation system is a bi-national arrangement involving both the Australian and New Zealand governments. It is led by the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum), which sets the food policy framework for Australia. The Forum comprises federal ministers of health from both Australia and New Zealand and the health ministers of the Australian states and territories. Forum members must sign off on all final food standards and can request to reject, amend, or review draft food standards. The Forum also has the authority to request that FSANZ review its approval of a standard. [67] At the time of writing, the Forum was working on the following areas: reducing foodborne illness; maintaining a robust food regulation system; and supporting public health objectives to reduce overweight and obesity. [68]

The Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) is a subcommittee of the Forum. It is responsible for 'coordinating policy advice to the Forum and ensuring a nationally consistent approach to the implementation and enforcement of food standards'. [69] The FRSC also establishes Strategic Planning Working Groups (SPWG), which map out the steps required when developing a specific policy.

The Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation (ISFR) is a subcommittee of the FRSC. The Committee includes health ministers at the federal and state levels and members of the Australian Local Government Association. The ISFR produces industry guidelines and tools to 'help jurisdictions achieve consistency in implementing food standards'. [70] It also provides advice to and consults with FSANZ. Figure 1 below summarizes the role of the Forum, the FRSC, the ISFR and FZANZ in food regulatory policy.



Figure 1: The food regulation system and involvement of organisations

## Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) is a non-corporate commonwealth entity and falls under the Health portfolio. It was established by the Australian and New Zealand governments under the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 (Cth)*. This Act is currently under review. [71]

### Goals

FSANZ's vision is that 'Consumers have a high level of confidence in the safety of food'. The FSANZ 2019-20 Annual Report states the following four goals:

- A high degree of consumer confidence in the quality and safety of food produced, processed, sold or exported from Australia and New Zealand
- An effective, transparent and accountable regulatory framework within which the food industry can work efficiently
- The provision of adequate information relating to food to enable consumers to make informed choices
- The establishment of common rules for both countries and the promotion of consistency between domestic and international food regulation measures without reducing the safeguards that apply to public health and consumer protection.

## Policy responsibilities

The objectives of FSANZ in developing or reviewing food regulatory measures are outlined in Section 18 of the FSANZ Act. [72] Table 5 lists these objectives and shows how they are applied by FSANZ in setting or varying standards relevant to the processing, preparation, labelling, and safety of food products. These standards are contained in the federal Food Standards Code, which is included in state-based food legislation, and is enforced by state- and territory-level agencies (in conjunction with local governments). When developing and administering food standards, FSANZ is required to:

- Base the standards on risk analysis and available scientific evidence
- Promote consistency between domestic and international food standards
- Aim towards achieving an efficient and internationally competitive food industry
- Promote the fair trading of food

Table 6 describes the other key activities undertaken by FSANZ, outside developing food standards, while Table 7 describes legislation relevant to FSANZ.

Table 5. Overview of FSANZ activities in response to legislative objectives

Objective	How FSANZ applies the objectives to the development of food standards
Protecting public health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Considers short-term and long-term risks when developing food standards</li> <li>- Provides technical advice to policy-development processes that consider diet-related aspects of public health or food safety</li> <li>- Monitors diet-related public health and food safety matters to respond to emerging issues</li> <li>- Collaborates with other jurisdictions and organisations to support them in meeting their diet-related public health and food safety objectives. [72]</li> </ul>
Providing adequate information relating to food to enable consumers to make informed choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting mandatory food labelling standards to protect public health and safety, and collaborating with industry and regulatory partners to ensure that food labelling standards are enforceable</li> <li>- Supporting government public health initiatives so that consumers can make more informed and healthier food choices</li> </ul>
Preventing misleading or deceptive conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborates with other agencies (e.g., the ACCC) to ensure that food labelling does not violate Australian Consumer Law and other consumer protection legislation</li> <li>- Developing an evidence base to increase consumer knowledge of manufacturer health claims. [73]</li> </ul>

Table 6. Food related activities undertaken by FSANZ

Activity	Description
Responding to food incidents	<p>A food incident occurs when there is a possible or confirmed risk associated with the consumption of food within the food supply chain. It can be identified from food recalls, multi-jurisdictional outbreak investigations, intelligence from industry and/or government counterparts. [74]</p> <p>The Bi-National Food Safety Network coordinates the response to food incidents and comprises FSANZ, DoH, DAWE, and the food enforcement agencies of all Australian states and territories. FSANZ has a central role in the response as it coordinates activities, collates and shares information, and develops public statements.</p> <p>If a food product needs to be removed, FSANZ coordinates recalls in consultation with the food business and state/territory governments. However, as FSANZ has no enforcement powers, it cannot order or force a recall; only Australian states and territories have the power to mandate, force, or order a recall. [75] Recalls are usually initiated by businesses, who notify their local food enforcement agency.</p> <p>FSANZ has also developed a recall plan template that businesses can use to ensure a prompt response to a food recall. [75]</p>
InfoBites	A series of documents made for food and hospitality businesses that contain key information on food safety standards (as mentioned in the Code), and advice on how to reduce food safety risks.
Nutrition Panel Calculator	A tool to help manufacturers calculate the nutrient content of their food products and to create a nutrition information panel. [76]
Information webpages for consumers	A series of webpages on the FSANZ website on topics of interest to consumers, e.g., additives, chemicals in foods, food allergies, food issues, genetically modified foods, etc. [77]
Dietary Exposure Assessments	These assessments estimate how much of a food chemical the population (or a sub-group of the population) consumes. This is done through 'dietary modelling' techniques. Dietary Exposure Assessments measure the exposure to food chemicals that are inadvertently present in food, and Dietary Intake Assessments measure the intake of nutrients and/or other biologically active substances which have a health or nutrition purpose. [78]
International engagement	<p>FSANZ collaborates with other international food safety and regulation agencies. This occurs through the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Forum seeks to build robust food safety systems in the Asia Pacific region and is co-chaired by FSANZ and China</li> </ul> </li> <li>- The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Codex produces food standards, guidelines and codes of practice that are internationally recognised</li> <li>- FSANZ is the Australian government representative and leads the Australian delegation on selected Codex Committees, and also contributes technical and scientific input</li> </ul> </li> <li>- World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FSANZ participates in WHO and FAO expert consultations and meetings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Monitoring nutrients in the Australian Food supply	<p>FSANZ works in collaboration with other groups to monitor nutrients in the Australian food supply and create nutrient databases, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Australian Food Composition Database: Australia's nutrient reference database which includes a dataset of 54 core nutrients for basic foods (e.g., bread, milk, pizza etc.).</li> <li>- The Australian Food and Nutrient (AUSNUT) Database: a series of survey-based databases that are used for the national food, dietary supplement and nutrient intake estimates. [79]</li> </ul>
Monitoring the safety of the food supply	<p>FSANZ monitors the safety of the food supply, and creates reports of emerging and ongoing food related issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitoring is done through the IFSR and the Australian Total Diet Study (ATDS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IFSR – FSANZ and the IFSR work together to monitor and enforce food standards</li> <li>- ATDS – looks at consumers' dietary exposure to pesticide residues, contaminants, and other substances found in food. [80]</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Table 7. Legislation involving FSANZ

Legislation	Details
<i>Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991 (Cth)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This Act was responsible for establishing FSANZ, and also sets out its functions (including the development of food standards) [81]</li> <li>- It aims to ensure uniformity in implementation of food standards across all states and territories [82]</li> </ul>

## Food Standards Code

The Food Standards Code falls under the FSANZ Act, and includes standards for food additives, food safety, labelling, and foods that need pre-approval. The Code is divided into four chapters, summarized in Table 8 below.

Table 8. The chapters of the Food Standards Code

Chapter	Description
1. Introduction and standards that apply to all foods	<p>This chapter contains information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labelling requirements and regulations regarding nutrition and health-related claims</li> <li>- Substances added to or present in food</li> <li>- Contaminants and residues</li> <li>- Foods requiring pre-market clearance. For example novel foods (non-traditional foods that require an assessment of safety and public health), foods produced using gene technology, irradiation of food [83]</li> <li>- Microbiological limits and processing requirements</li> </ul>
2. Food Standards	<p>This chapter contains standards for specific food groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vinegar and related products;</li> <li>- Salt and salt products; chewing gum; and miscellaneous standards for other foods.</li> <li>- Infant food formula products; formulated supplementary foods; and food for special medical purposes (food intended to be used under medical supervision) [84]</li> </ul>
3. Food safety standards (Australia only)	<p>The objective of the food safety standards is to ensure that only safe and suitable food is sold in Australia. [85]</p> <p>The chapter is broken into three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpretation and application</li> <li>- Food safety requirements                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food safety programs, practices, and general requirements</li> <li>- Food premises and equipment</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Food safety programs for food service to vulnerable persons                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requires businesses that process food for vulnerable persons to implement a documented food safety program. [86] This includes businesses who provide food for aged care recipients, hospital patients, and children in childcare centres.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4. Primary Production Standards (Australia only)	<p>This chapter is broken into three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preliminary provisions for primary production and processing standards</li> <li>- Wine production requirements                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food safety programs, practices, and general requirements</li> <li>- Food premises and equipment</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Primary production and processing standards for poultry meat, seafood, meat, dairy products, egg and egg product, and seed sprouts</li> </ul>

## Size and structure

FSANZ has a total of 108 ongoing employees. [87] As FSANZ is a science-based agency, their staff consists of experts from a wide range of disciplines, such as nutrition, food technology, mathematics, public health, social science, and regulatory analysis. These disciplines work in conjunction with human resources, economics, and ICT staff members. [88]

## Board

Under the FSANZ Act, the FSANZ board is appointed by the Australian Federal Minister for Health in consultation with the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation. The Board comprises 11 part-time members and one full-time CEO. Members are drawn from the NHMRC, the food industry, and other government organisations, and have expertise in food science, and safety, consumer policy, medical science, international trade, and food production. [87] Figure 2 shows FSANZ's organisational structure.

## Response to COVID-19

The Media and food businesses requested FSANZ to provide information regarding the transmission of COVID-19 through food. In response, FSANZ established a web presence by creating a separate webpage for consumers and food businesses containing information about COVID-19 and food safety. This included advice on COVID-19 and transmission through food and food packaging, and take-away, donated food, and food delivery services. FSANZ also used its social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) to respond to misinformation about COVID-19. [88]

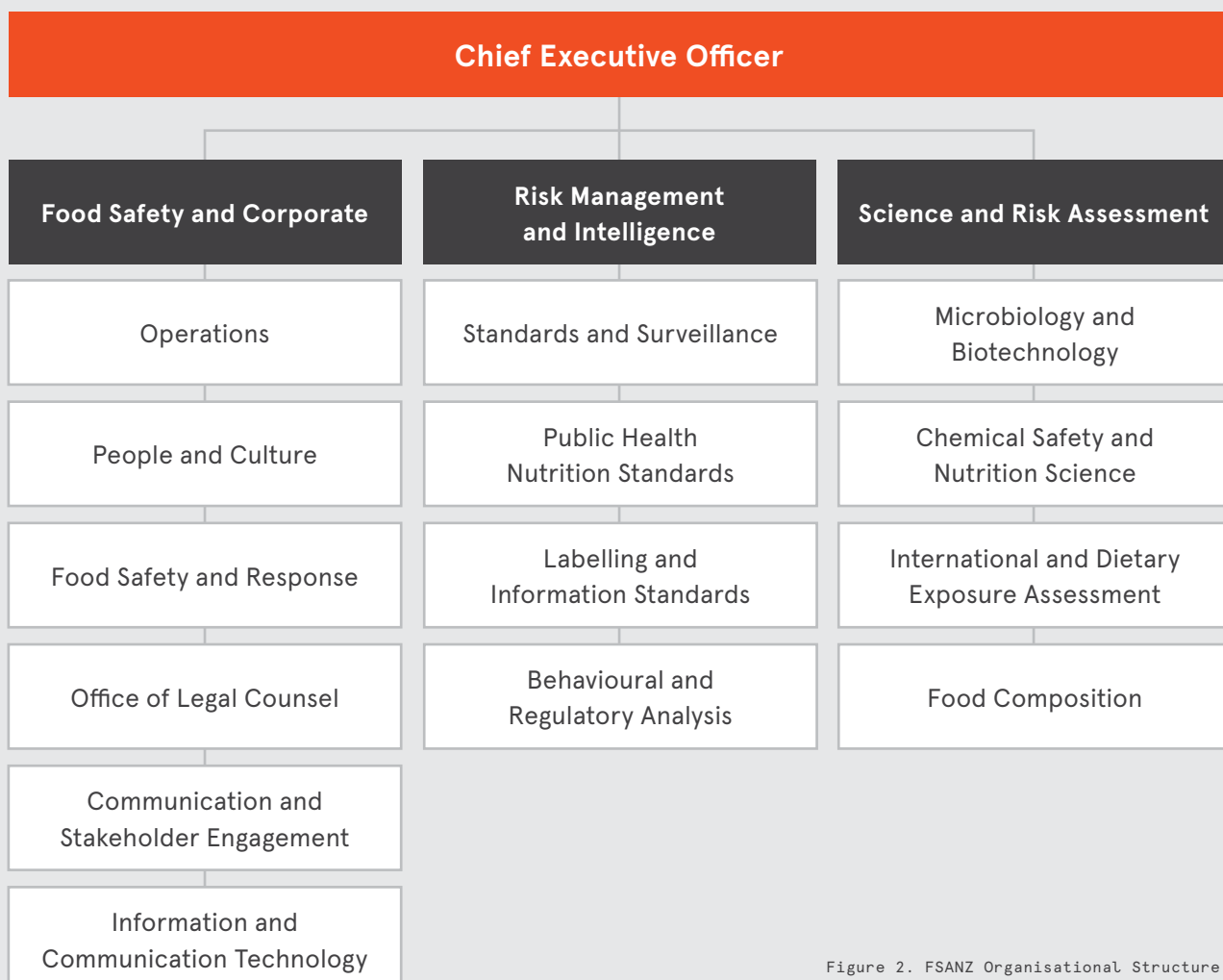


Figure 2. FSANZ Organisational Structure. Source: FSANZ 2019-2020 Corporate Plan

# Department of the Treasury

The Department of the Treasury is the government's key economic advisor. The Treasury also advocates for the multilateral trading system, pursues new trade opportunities, and represents Australia's interests by engaging with international institutions. [89]

## Goals

The treasury's purpose is to support and implement policy decisions so that they are consistent with achieving strong, sustainable economic growth and fiscal settings. [90]

## Policy responsibilities

The Department does not directly have any food-related policy responsibilities. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is the main entity under the Treasury portfolio that carries out activities related to food policy (as described below). The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) also falls under the Department of the Treasury, and determines the definition of food for the purpose of determining whether the product is GST-free. The ATO website also provides a GST food classification flow chart to allow consumers and businesses to work out whether a food or beverage is taxable or GST-free. [91]

The Infrastructure Project and Financing Agency (IPFA) also plays a role in food policy albeit a smaller one. The IPFA supports the government in making decisions on nationally significant infrastructure projects and programs through the provision of independent commercial and financial advisory services, including to the Agriculture sector. [92]

## Main food-related policy and activities

The ACCC is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority and was established to protect the rights of consumers and businesses. [93] Among its functions, the ACCC oversees and enforces mandatory industry codes that are prescribed under the *Consumer and Competition Act 2010 (Cth)* (CCA), [94] some of which are relevant to the food industry. The ACCC also takes action (including in collaboration with Food Standards Australia New Zealand – see below) to ensure that food advertising, labelling, and promotion is not misleading or deceptive. The ACCC's legislative activities are described in the table below (Table 9).

## Size and structure

The Treasury portfolio comprises 17 entities, and the Department has an average staffing level of 1092. [103]

## Board

The Department has a main secretary, and five deputy secretaries who oversee the following groups: Macroeconomic, Fiscal, Revenue, Markets, and Corporate and Foreign Investment. [104]

## Response to COVID-19

The Department provided (and continues to provide) advice to the Government on its economic response to COVID. It also analysed real-time data and economic projections of the impact of COVID. Further, the Department established the Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit, which informed the development of the Government's \$198 billion COVID-19 Response Package. [104] This program encompassed economic support for businesses and employers, including those in the food production, processing, and retail sectors.

Table 9. Food-related legislation and codes relevant to the ACCC's work

Legislation	Details
<i>Consumer and Competition Act 2010 (Cth)</i>	The Act's purpose is to 'enhance the welfare of Australians through the promotion of competition and fair trading and provision for consumer protection'. [95] The ACCC is responsible for enforcing the Act's provisions. The Act contains the Australian Consumer Law (which applies nationally and in all states and territories), and covers product safety and labelling, unfair market practices, price monitoring, industry codes, industry regulation, and mergers and acquisitions. [96]
<i>Country of Origin Food Labelling Information Standard 2016 (Cth)</i>	<p>This standard is made under section 134 of the Australian Consumer Law and sets out requirements for country of origin labelling for food that is sold in Australia (including imported foods). These requirements do not apply to food that is sold outside of Australia. The labelling requirements depend on whether food has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grown, produced or made in Australia</li> <li>- Grown, produced or made in another country</li> <li>- Packaged in Australia</li> <li>- Packaged in another country [97]</li> </ul> <p>The Standard provides the definition of what constitutes food grown, made, and/or produced in another country, and specifies how food that has been made in Australia with imported ingredients should be labelled. It also sets out how water is to be accounted for when determining the country of origin.</p>
<i>Competition and Consumer (Industry Codes—Dairy) Regulations 2019 (Cth)</i>  (Dairy Code of Conduct)	The Code came into effect on 1 January 2020 and '...applies to dealings between a dairy farmer and any corporation that purchases milk directly from them including supermarkets, milk brokers, and cooperatives'. [98] It requires processors and farmers to deal with one another in good faith. Failure to do so is considered a breach of the Code and is subject to penalties, including the ACCC issuing a penalty for the breach of an infringement notice, or taking court action. [56] Processors are required to purchase milk under a milk supply agreement which must comply with the Code, and must publish their milk supply arrangements form on their website by the deadline given by the ACCC.
<i>Competition and Consumer (Industry Codes—Horticulture) Regulations 2017 (Cth)</i>  (Horticulture Code of Conduct)	This is a mandatory industry code that came into full effect on 1 April 2018, and aims 'to improve the clarity and transparency of trading arrangements between growers and traders in the horticulture sector' by creating a regulatory framework for buying and selling horticulture produce. The Code requires the adoption of horticulture produce agreements between traders and growers, with penalties applying to trade that occurs without an agreement. Its provisions include a requirement of a payment period to be specified in which the trader must pay the grower and that all parties to act in good faith in their dealings. The Code also provides for ACCC investigations and compliance checks. [99]
<i>Competition and Consumer (Industry Codes—Food and Grocery) Regulation 2015 (Cth)</i>  (Food and Grocery Code of Conduct)	<p>This is a voluntary industry code that was developed to ensure that dealings between food retailers, wholesalers, and suppliers are fair and do not inappropriately disadvantage suppliers. It was developed in response to public concerns about the conduct of retailers and wholesalers towards their suppliers, and is an industry-led initiative that was jointly developed by Coles, Woolworths and the Australian Food and Grocery Council (a supplier representative organisation). [100]</p> <p>As the Grocery Code is voluntary, it only applies to retailers or wholesalers that have chosen to be bound, by giving written notice to the ACCC (which is responsible for enforcing the Grocery Code). A signatory can also withdraw from the Grocery Code by writing to the ACCC. Suppliers are automatically protected by the Grocery Code when dealing with a signatory. [100]</p> <p>The following companies are bound by the Code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ALDI (retailer) (signed up on 15 June 2015)</li> <li>- Coles Supermarkets Australia (retailer) (signed up on 1 July 2015)</li> <li>- Woolworths Limited (retailer) (signed up on 1 July 2015)</li> <li>- Metcash Food &amp; Grocery Pty Ltd (wholesaler, signed up on 30 September 2020). [100]</li> </ul>
<i>Competition and Consumer (Industry Code—Port Terminal Access (Bulk Wheat)) Regulation 2014 (Cth)</i>  (Wheat Port Code of Conduct)	The Code regulates the conduct of port terminal service providers to ensure that exporters of bulk wheat have fair and transparent access to port terminal services. [101] It replaces the previous wheat port access regime under the <i>Wheat Export Marketing Act 2008 (Cth) (WEMA)</i> .
Unit Pricing Code	<p>The Unit Pricing Code is a mandatory industry code under the <i>Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)</i>. It applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grocery retailers with more than 1000 squares metres of floor space who sell the minimum range of food-based grocery items and</li> <li>- Online retailers who sell the minimum range of food-based grocery items. [102]</li> </ul> <p>Retailers subject to the Code must display a unit price for all grocery items (unless the item is exempt). The unit price for a grocery item must be: prominent, legible, unambiguous, and in close proximity to the selling price for the grocery item. [31]</p>

# Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER) falls under the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio.

## Goals

The Department aims to 'support economic growth and job creation for all Australians'. [105]

The 2019-2020 corporate plan lists five key purposes:

- Investing in science, technology and commercialisation, and growing innovative and competitive businesses, industries, and regions
- Supporting a strong resources sector and growing a stronger Northern Australian economy
- Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and developing clean energy technology
- Supporting reliable, secure and affordable energy
- Supporting small and family businesses

## Policy responsibilities

The Department does not have many direct food-related responsibilities, although some of its priorities and initiatives would impact the economic functioning and sustainability of the food system. For example, the Department's actions on climate change include helping the land and agriculture sector to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the changing environment. [106] The Department's main direct role in food policy is through its research arm: The National Measurement Institute (NMI).

## Main food-related policy areas and activities

The NMI is the Australian Government's national authority on measurement. It is responsible for administering the regulatory framework for measurement, and for developing and maintaining national measurement standards.

The NMI works with the food sector on activities related to food safety, nutrition and labelling, by supporting research and good governance, and aiding regulatory compliance. The NMI also works with academia, the government, and industry to identify and measure:

- Food allergens
- Pollutants in food
- Nanomaterials and packaging quality
- Function and safety of food-related products (e.g. transfer of chemicals from materials to food).

Emerging work of the NMI includes:

- Measurements in novel areas such as food provenance and fraud
- Improvement of methods that allow accurate measurements of the vitamin and amino acid content of food
- Analysis methods to ensure the quality and compliance of hemp foods and medicinal cannabis
- Addressing ongoing food safety risks to consumers through rapid response solutions [107]





The NMI conducts bioanalysis of foods and raw materials, including the screening of stockfeed to minimise the risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The Institute also works in the area of food allergens and is involved in developing and refining specialised methods for identifying various types of allergens across a broad spectrum of foods.

Additionally, the NMI has responsibilities in the food sector such as: administering laws on food weights, and testing food for bio-toxins, food borne viruses, and chemical and veterinary residues. The Institute meets these responsibilities by assisting food producers, growers, and retailers to meet measurement requirements, and advising government regulators, enforcement agencies and standards bodies (see Table 10). [108] The Institute also ensures that Australia’s international reputation in food measurement, safety, and trade is upheld by taking part in the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling. Table 10 below lists the Federal Government entities and industry bodies assisted by the NMI, as well as its key food-related programs.

### Size and structure

The DISER portfolio comprises 18 entities and has an average staffing level of 3093. The portfolio includes five ministers:

- Minister for Industry, Science and Technology
- Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction
- Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia
- Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
- Assistant Minister for Northern Australia.

Table 10. Organisations assisted by the NMI, and its food-relevant programs

<b>Government and industry bodies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment</li> <li>- Imported Food Inspection Program</li> <li>- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines</li> <li>- Office of Gene Technology Regulator</li> <li>- National Health and Research Council</li> <li>- Food Standards Australia and New Zealand</li> <li>- Defence Science and Technology Group</li> <li>- Food Innovation Australia</li> </ul>
<b>Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Residue Survey</li> <li>- Imported Food Inspection Scheme</li> <li>- Australian Milk Residues Analysis survey</li> <li>- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) nutritional and food safety studies</li> </ul>

## Board

The Department’s accountable authority is the Secretary, and its responsibilities are divided among five deputy secretaries, as shown in Figure 3 below.

## Response to COVID-19

The Department carried out many activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One of its key functions was securing the ongoing supply of medical resources for frontline workers by facilitating the manufacturing of personal protective equipment, critical medical supplies, and ventilators.

Via the emergency management response taskforces, the Department worked alongside states and territories, energy market bodies, and the energy industry to ensure a stable energy supply for Australia. The Department also worked with industry and governments to ensure that border restrictions would not prevent workers from travelling to remote mine sites and offshore oil and gas facilities, and that supply chains for critical equipment would remain operational.

The Department responded to business needs by expanding the business.gov.au Contact Centre. This was done so that information on government assistance would be more accessible to businesses impacted by COVID. [109]

Figure 3. DISER Executive structure. Source: DISER Corporate plan 2019-20

Deputy Secretary Elizabeth Kelly, PSM	Deputy Secretary David Williamson	Deputy Secretary Mike Lawson, PSM	Deputy Secretary Sean Sullivan	Deputy Secretary Jo Evans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AusIndustry- Industry Capability and Research</li> <li>- AusIndustry- Support for Business</li> <li>- Digital Economy and Technology</li> <li>- Questacon- The National Science and Technology Centre</li> <li>- Small and Family Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industry Growth</li> <li>- Science and Commercialisation Policy</li> <li>- COVID Response Taskforce</li> <li>- Industry Capability Taskforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Policy</li> <li>- Analysis and Insights</li> <li>- National Measurement Institute</li> <li>- Anti-Dumping Commission</li> <li>- Northern Australia and Major Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources</li> <li>- Energy</li> <li>- Energy Security and Efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International Climate Change and Energy Innovation</li> <li>- Climate Change</li> <li>- Corporate and Digital</li> <li>- Corporate COVID Response</li> </ul>



## Table 11. Other Federal Government Departments and their food-related responsibilities

Department	Responsibilities
Department of Defence	<p>The key purpose of the Department of Defence is to 'Defend and protect Australia and advance its strategic interests'. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) workforce is comprised of 59,760 members. [110]</p> <p>The Defence Science and Technology (DST) Group provides the ADF with advice on how to meet the nutritional needs of defence personnel. It has partnered with the Centre for Food Innovation (CFI), to conduct research on food processing and packaging technologies that can produce 'fresh-like, shelf stable food'. Another area of interest is the testing and evaluation of specialised foods for high performance activities.</p>
Department of Finance	<p>The Department of Finance assists the Australian Government to achieve its fiscal and policy objectives. The Department's priorities include: advising on expenditure, managing public sector frameworks, and delivering cost-effective services. [111] Other activities/responsibilities include: Supporting the delivery of the Australian Government Budget and creating the financial framework for Australian Government Agencies. [112]</p> <p>It is also responsible for administering the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)</i> (PGPA Act). Under this Act, the <i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Charging for Regulatory Activities) Order 2017 (Cth)</i> applies to FSANZ. 'The Act guides the duties of officials, planning and budgeting, grants and procurement, charging and cost-recovery, engaging with risk, [and] reporting on financial and non-financial performance'. [113]</p>
Department of Veterans' Affairs	<p>The Department of Veterans' Affairs falls under the Defence Portfolio, and provides support, services and information for veterans and their dependants; war widows; serving and former serving ADF members; Australian British Nuclear Test Participants; members of the Australian Federal Police, and students, teachers and historians. The Department offers dietetic services to veterans to assist them with their health and nutritional needs. Veterans are eligible for up to 12 sessions in one year. [114]</p>
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	<p>The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet provides advice and addresses issues to promote effective design and implementation of Government policies, [115] with priority given to issues important to the Prime Minister. The Department also provides advice on agriculture-related matters, and works with DAWE in 'delivering on the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper and on strong outcomes for Australian farmers and agricultural businesses'. [116]</p>
Department of the Senate	<p>The Senate is one of the two houses of the Australian Federal Parliament, and consists of 76 senators (twelve from each state, and two from each territory). The Department provides '...the Senate, its committees, the President of the Senate and senators with a broad range of advisory and support services related to the exercise of the legislative power of the Commonwealth'. [117]</p>
Department of The House of Representatives	<p>The members of the House of Representatives are chosen at a general election, where each member represents a geographic area of Australia. The Department provides support to services and facilities for members in Parliament House, undertakes activities to promote the work of the House in the community, and is responsible for the conduct of Parliament's international and regional relations. [117]</p>
Department of Home Affairs	<p>The Department of Home Affairs is responsible for strategic coordination and policy in relation to immigration, citizenship and multicultural affairs, domestic and national security arrangement, law enforcement, emergency management, and social cohesion. [118] Through their website, the Department informs the public and incoming travellers of changes in regulations pertaining to food that must be declared. [119]</p>

Department	Responsibilities
Department of Social Services	<p>The Department of Social Services (DSS) falls under the social services portfolio, which comprises five different ministers. The Department is responsible for a wide range of policies, payments, and programs that improve the wellbeing of individuals and families. [120] The Department has four main focus areas: Social Security, Family and Communities, Disability and Carers, and Housing. [121] The DSS works in partnership with the community sector to ensure that food relief organisations are adequately funded to supply food items to emergency relief providers, who deliver the items to individuals and families in need. [122] It was also responsible for overseeing the \$50m relief package to support bushfire affected communities, which included \$40m for emergency relief and food relief services.</p>
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	<p>The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications was formed in February 2020. The Department is responsible for transport connectivity, regional development, providing governance frameworks in the territories, enabling efficient communications connectivity, and supporting creative and cultural sectors. Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investments in infrastructure that promote the productive capacity of the national freight system.</li> <li>- Overseeing inland rail projects – It is projected that 2 million tonnes of agricultural freight will switch from road to rail, in order to reduce reliance on roads for the transportation of goods given the increasing domestic demand for freight. [123]</li> <li>- Working with Austrade and DAWE to support the air freight industry to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, and to assist producers in exporting perishable products overseas.</li> <li>- Commencing the National Water Grid Authority, which has a leading role in the implementation of the National Water Grid. The National Water Grid will promote agricultural opportunities in new regions, and increase water security in established agricultural areas. [124]</li> </ul> <p>The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)– Australia’s broadcasting and telecommunications regulation – falls within the Department. Its role includes developing and administering standards (the Australian Content and Children’s Television Standards 2020) for the creation of dedicated children’s programming, as well as on the amount and type of advertising that can be shown during those programs. Standard 27(1) prohibits advertisements containing false or misleading information about the nutritional value of a food product. ACMA also oversees the regulatory scheme that facilitates co- and self-regulatory instruments on advertising, including on food advertising to children.</p>
Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)	<p>DESE works to ensure ‘Australians can experience the wellbeing and economic benefits that quality education, skills and employment provide’. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is the agency under the Education, Skills and Employment portfolio that develops the Australian National Curriculum. Implementation of the Curriculum is the responsibility of state and territory authorities. [125] The Australian Curriculum addresses student learning regarding food and nutrition through the Health and Physical Education subject. Students start to learn about food and nutrition from years 1-10, and the connection between food and wellbeing is presented throughout different stages of schooling. [126]</p>
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	<p>The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) deals with Australia’s interests at an international level and provides foreign policy and trade advice to the Federal Government. In relation to food policy, seeking improved market access for Australian agricultural exporters is a core part of Australia’s international trade policy agenda. This is critical to the economic performance of the food system as approximately 65% of agriculture production in Australia is exported to overseas markets. [127] An open and transparent global food trading system also helps strengthen global food security and allows food resources to be distributed to where there is high demand. Among its functions, DFAT coordinates Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that are consistent with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) guidelines. FTAs reduce and eliminate certain barriers to international trade and investment and allow Australian exporters, importers, and producers to expand their business into foreign markets. These trade agreements also inform the regulations created by DAWE for imported foods. Currently, Australia has 14 FTAs. [128]</p>

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