



MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, November 14, 2025 (Embargoed until 12:01 am)

Mandatory Health Star Ratings now on the agenda as packaged food industry misses deadline for voluntary uptake

Time is up for food manufacturers to comply with a scheme providing transparent nutritional information on the front of packaged foods, with the government now considering mandatory Health Star Ratings in the wake of unmet voluntary targets.

The latest research by The George Institute for Global Health has revealed that Health Star Ratings uptake across the industry in 2025 was just 37 per cent – substantially below the final 70 per cent target set by the government. Compliance has stagnated, with just a 1 per cent increase compared to last year but has fallen from a peak of 40 per cent in 2019.

Food Ministers, who will meet today to discuss industry progress among other matters, have previously signalled their intent to make the labels mandatory if industry failed to meet 70 per cent uptake by November 14, 2025.

The George Institute, together with health promotion foundation VicHealth and the Food for Health Alliance, have welcomed this move in the wake of the packaged food industry's consistent failure to comply with these voluntary targets.

"The government's targets were extremely generous, yet the multibillion-dollar packaged food industry has not even come anywhere close to meeting them," said Associate Professor Alexandra Jones, Lead of the Food Governance Program at The George Institute.

"This is an abject failure by the industry that suggests a blatant disregard for Australian consumers who buy their products -- simple nutrition information shouldn't be optional. Shoppers have a right to clear information that helps them quickly and easily understand the healthiness of what's available on supermarket shelves.

"Time is well and truly up, and we now look forward to the government announcing the next steps towards making Health Star Ratings mandatory.

"Preparatory work has been underway since July 2024 to make Health Star Ratings mandatory if the uptake targets were not met. Allowing for the usual processes, we should be on track for Ministers to approve the regulatory standards by November 2026. We urge Food Ministers to commit to this timeframe to avoid any further delay in consumers receiving transparent nutritional information.

Introduced in 2014, the Health Star Rating system was designed to be a simple, front-of-pack labelling initiative to help consumers cut through marketing spin and compare the healthiness of similar packaged products on supermarket shelves. Ratings range from half a star to five stars, with more stars indicating a healthier choice.

VicHealth's Chief Executive Officer, Professor Anna Peeters said the findings highlighted an opportunity to strengthen food labelling in Australia.

"Introducing mandatory Health Star Ratings is an important step to ensure all Australians have access to clear, consistent and reliable nutritional information," Professor Peeters said.

"In Australia, ultra processed foods contribute 42 per cent of the population's daily energy intake and more than 60 per cent of supermarket shelf space is taken up by discretionary foods.

"This is an opportunity for government, industry and the community to align on creating a fairer, more transparent food system that supports health and wellbeing."

Food for Health Alliance Executive Manager Jane Martin said a move to mandatory Health Star Ratings was a sensible next step.

"Food companies have been exploiting the Health Star Rating system for years by cherry picking which products they label – typically favouring their higher rating products.

"With so many manufacturers using the Health Star Rating system as a marketing tool or avoiding it altogether, it's critical that Australia moves to a mandatory labelling system."

"Mandating the system will not only support Australians to buy healthier options, but also push food companies to improve the nutritional quality of their products, which is a win for public health."

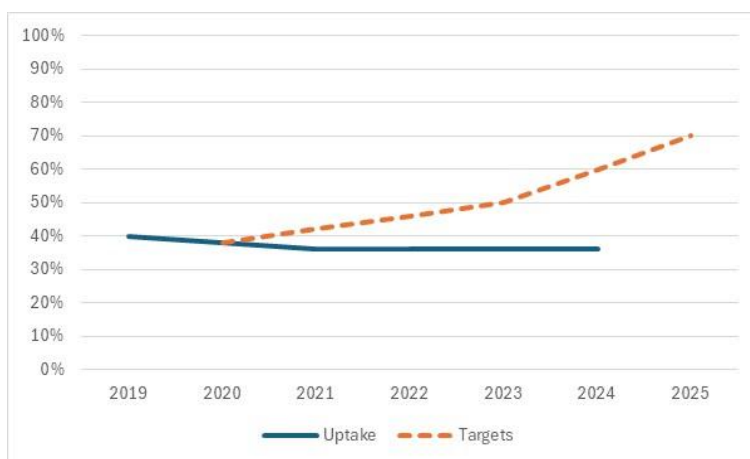


Fig 1: Health Star Ratings uptake by food manufacturers versus federal government targets (data was not collected in 2020). Source: The George Institute, November 2024

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