

9 February 2026

Members of the Food Ministers' Meeting
C/O Food Regulation Secretariat
Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
Via email: FoodRegulationSecretariat@health.gov.au

Leading public health and consumer groups stand by to support Food Ministers in mandating Health Stars without delay

On Friday 13 February 2026, Food Ministers will have the opportunity to take the next critical step in mandating Australia and New Zealand's front-of-pack Health Star Rating (HSR) system. With independent data suggesting Health Stars uptake remained at only 37% in 2025,¹ we expect government figures presented to Ministers this week to confirm that voluntary targets have not been met.

We therefore call on Food Ministers to act by requesting that FSANZ prepare a proposal for a food standard mandating the Health Star Rating. With substantial preparatory work already completed by FSANZ, the process should move forward expediently, with a draft standard ideally returned for approval by March 2027.

We understand that Food Ministers are also considering what regulatory form a mandatory Health Star should take. We believe that a food standard remains the most feasible, timely and appropriate vehicle. The process to mandate Health Stars should not be delayed to trial untested regulatory alternatives such as a code of practice.

There is a significant evidence base to support Health Stars

The World Health Organization recognises interpretive front-of-pack nutrition labels as a powerful and cost-effective strategy for addressing diet-related disease. More than 50 countries have now adopted such labels, including 19 countries where labels are mandatory.²

Research shows consumers strongly back making the scheme mandatory, with 82% supporting Health Stars on all packaged foods.³

Experience also shows industry can make widespread labelling changes when required. Following the introduction of mandatory Country of Origin Labelling for Australia in 2018, over 90% of products updated their labels within 3 years.⁴ This suggests limited uptake of Health Star Ratings is driven by their voluntary nature, rather than by relabelling or redesign costs.

With strong scientific evidence and broad community support, now is the time for Food Ministers to act. Making the Health Star Rating mandatory will ensure all Australians and New Zealanders benefit from consistent, easy to understand nutrition information—supporting healthier choices, driving improvements to the food supply, and contributing to long term reductions in chronic disease.

We urge you to seize this opportunity to protect public health and strengthen Australia and New Zealand's food labelling system.

¹ FoodSwitch data, 2025, unpublished, The George Institute for Global Health

² Obesity Evidence Hub, 2025, FOPNL, <https://www.obesityevidencehub.org.au/collections/prevention/front-of-pack-nutrition-labelling>

³ Ilchenko, E., R. Jinnette, and B. Morley, 2024, Shape of Australia 2023 Survey: Final Report, Cancer Council Victoria

⁴ Jones, A., et al., 2024, Voluntary versus mandatory food labels, Australia. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 102(10): p. 691-698.

Statement endorsed by the following Australian and New Zealand organisations and representatives:

