

# House of Representatives

# Supplementary Order Paper

Tuesday, 13 May 2014

## Food Bill

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### *Proposed amendments*

Steffan Browning, in Committee, to move the following amendments:

#### *Clause 4*

In *clause 4(e)*, replace “food.” (page 24, line 10) with “food; and”.

After *clause 4(e)* (page 24, after line 10), insert:

- (f) require the introduction of country of origin labelling requirements; and
- (g) require regular monitoring and enforcement of food labelling requirements.

#### *Clause 7*

In *clause 7*(page 27, line 3 to page 39, line 22), insert in their appropriate alphabetical order:

**country of origin requirements** means the country in which the food is grown, harvested, or produced  
**single component foods** means food or food products, whether packaged or unpackaged, either whole or processed, that contain only 1 vegetable, fruit, meat, seafood, nut, grain, seed, or oil, and any other food, although these may also contain water, sugar or its substitutes, salt, or other ingredients used in preserving, colouring, or flavouring

#### *Clause 16*

After *clause 16(2)* (page 50, after line 9), insert:

- (3) The chief executive is responsible for ensuring regular monitoring and enforcement of food labelling requirements.

*New clause 346A*

After *clause 346* (page 324, after line 26), insert:

**346A Regulations about country of origin requirements**

- (1) The Governor-General may, by Order in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister, make regulations providing for country of origin labelling that—
  - (a) provide consumers with accurate information about the country of origin of single component food to enable them to make informed purchasing decisions; and
  - (b) provide information about the country of origin of single component food clearly displayed at the point of sale of the food or food product, whether contained on a label or otherwise connected with the food or food product, to enable consumers to exercise freedom of choice when making purchasing decisions.
- (2) Regulations made under **subsection (1)**—
  - (a) must ensure all packaged single component foods on sale in New Zealand have a statement that identifies the country of origin on the label or which is clearly displayed in connection with the retail display of the food; and
  - (b) must ensure all unpackaged single component foods on sale in New Zealand have a statement that identifies the country of origin, which is clearly displayed in connection with the retail display of the food; and
  - (c) apply to the following—
    - (i) fresh seafood, including prawns, shrimps, crabs, shellfish, cut fish, filleted fish, and seafood that has undergone any other processing including cooking, smoking, drying, pickling, freezing, canning, or coating with another food:
    - (ii) fresh and frozen meat, whole or cut, including meat that has been preserved by curing, drying, smoking, canning, or by other means:
    - (iii) fresh whole or cut fruit and vegetables:
    - (iv) canned, dried, or frozen fruit, and vegetables:
    - (v) nuts, seeds, grains, oil, and any other food, either whole or processed.

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### Explanatory note

The purpose of this Supplementary Order Paper is to enshrine in law consumers' right to know the country from which the food they are purchasing originated, so that they can make informed purchasing decisions. There is already a requirement to identify where footwear and clothing comes from, and this Sup-

plementary Order Paper extends this requirement to fresh fruit, meat, fish, and vegetables, and other single component foods such as grains, nuts, bulk flour, and oil.

The Supplementary Order Paper requires that the country of origin of fruit, vegetables, meats, and seafood, and other single component foods be clearly identified on labels or at the point of sale of the food. The Supplementary Order Paper also requires the country of origin to be identified for single component foods such as bulk flour, grains, and nuts. Single component means that the food contains only 1 vegetable, fruit, meat, seafood, nut, grain, seed, or oil; although it may also contain water, sugar or its substitutes, salt, or other ingredients used in preserving, colouring, or flavouring. Point of sale labelling or signage is cheap and easy to provide, so there would be little or no additional cost in requiring labels or signs to be displayed for single component foods. Multiple ingredient foods are not covered by the Supplementary Order Paper because of the complexity involved in accurately identifying the country of origin of multiple ingredients, and because generic labelling such as “may contain imported or local ingredients” is meaningless to the consumer.

To guarantee to consumers that country of origin labels are accurate and consistent, and are consistently applied across all food retail outlets, it is essential they are underpinned by a regulatory standard, and are mandatory rather than voluntary. In the absence of a regulatory standard, it would be difficult to ensure that unscrupulous or even just careless operators were not providing consumers with false or misleading information. If labelling is voluntary rather than mandatory, retailers and manufacturers can use country of origin labels as a marketing tool, displaying labels when it is in their interests to do so, and failing to do so when it is not. This is why all other food labelling is mandatory, and underpinned by a regulatory standard (such as ingredients labelling and nutrition labelling). Two major supermarket chains have introduced some voluntary country of origin labelling, however there are more than 1 000 retailers selling fresh meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables in New Zealand, and most do not label single component foods regarding their country of origin. Even in supermarkets, hundreds of single component foods are not labelled and there are many examples of misleading country of origin labels.

There are many reasons why consumers want to know which country their food comes from, and why consumers may wish to avoid consuming foods from certain countries. Some consumers want to support local producers and the local economy. Some are concerned about the adequacy of food safety standards in some countries we import food from. Some are concerned about the environmental and other costs of transporting food long distances. Some are concerned about the use of post-harvest fumigation and other treatments on imported produce or the potential residues of pesticides and other contaminants in imported foods. Many consumers assume, in the absence of country of origin labelling, that traditional foods such as meat, fruit, fish, and vegetables are produced in New Zealand. In this situation the lack of country of origin labelling can be regarded as misleading and deceptive. As more and more food is imported into

New Zealand, accurate and consistent country of origin labelling is even more important for consumers.

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