

INFORMATION FOR THE CATERING/HOSPITALITY SECTOR

As a member of the catering and/or hospitality industry you should be aware that Standard 1.5.3 of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Code requires that if foods have been irradiated or contain irradiated ingredients or components, and are available for retail sale in Australia or New Zealand, then the label must carry a statement to the effect that the food/ingredient/component has been treated with ionising radiation.

Therefore, if you are using irradiated tomatoes in any of your dishes, you need to highlight this on your menu.

Standard 1.5.3 provides three examples of how the required statement can be displayed on irradiated food for retail sale. These examples are:

- Treated with ionising radiation
- Treated with ionising electrons
- Irradiated (name of food)

None of these words are compulsory, and food manufacturers can choose a different set of words so long as the statement still indicates that the food has been treated with ionising radiation.

The Radura symbol (Figure 1 below) is a standard international symbol indicating that a food product has been irradiated. The Code does not mandate the display of this symbol on the labels of irradiated food, however there is also no prohibition on its voluntary use. Even if the symbol is used, the food label must still display the mandatory labelling requirements for irradiated foods.



Figure 1: International Radura Symbol

Below are some frequently asked questions that should help you understand the food industry's obligation to their customers, to ensure all irradiated produce from Australia is labelled appropriately and is in accordance with the New Zealand Food Standards Code.

What are you required to do?

As you are a food provider/vendor you are required inform your customers that the tomatoes used in their food has been irradiated.

Why do you need to inform customers that produce has been irradiated?

The Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code – which all food providers– requires all irradiated food to be labelled, or have a label displayed on or close to it, stating that it has been treated by irradiation.

Alternatively, you can highlight irradiated tomatoes have been used by highlighting it on your menu, point of sale and website.

What is irradiation?

All imported tomatoes, including those from Australia, are required by law to be irradiated to kill pests and other diseases that may harm New Zealand's environment. Irradiation is an approved biosecurity treatment used on imported fresh produce, such as tomatoes, to kill bacteria, mould, insects and other pests using radiation.

The irradiation process involves using electrical beams, X-rays, or gamma rays which are generated from the radioactive source Cobalt 60.

According to the Ministry for Primary Industries, irradiated tomatoes do not pose any risk to human health and the nutritional value of the food is not significantly altered.

Are all tomatoes irradiated?

No. Only imported tomatoes, including those from Australia, are irradiated. New Zealand tomatoes are never irradiated. You are only required to label imported tomatoes (and other produce) which has been irradiated.

How do you know if it's been irradiated?

To ensure you're meeting your legal obligations, you should ask your wholesaler whether they have been imported or if they are New Zealand grown. If they are imported, they will have been irradiated. If you are unsure whether your tomatoes have been imported, ask your supplier.

How can you help your customers?

You can help your customers by placing the signs by imported tomatoes. You can reassure them that irradiated tomatoes are safe to eat. If they want more information, you can direct them to the Ministry of Primary Industry's website www.mpi.govt.nz

What's required of retailers?

The Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code – which all retailers must follow – requires all irradiated food to be labelled, or have a label displayed on or close to it, stating that it has been treated by irradiation.

Other sources of information:

- [Labelling requirements for irradiated foods - information for food businesses](#)
- [Food Standards Australia New Zealand](#)
- [Ministry of Health](#)
- [GNS Science](#)
- [National Radiation Laboratory](#)
- [Facts about food irradiation \(PDF\)](#). A series of Fact Sheets from the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation
- Ministry for Primary Industries www.mpi.govt.nz

Ends