

MEDIA RELEASE

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Senate inquiry supports stronger protections for meat category brands

The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) has welcomed the findings and common-sense approach handed down today in the report by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport legislation Committee Inquiry into meat definitions and other animal products.

RMAC Independent Chair John McKillop said it is unacceptable that highly processed plant-based protein made from imported ingredients are allowed to be labelled as Australian meat and was pleased to see that following careful consideration of all the issues, the Senate Inquiry has agreed. This is a great outcome not only for the red meat and livestock sector, but also other traditional meat protein sectors including pork, chicken meat and seafood.

“The Inquiry’s recommendations will go a long way in helping to restore truth in labelling for Australian consumers, while ensuring animal and manufactured plant-based protein industries can compete on a level playing field,” Mr McKillop said

“The red meat and livestock industry’s reputation for product quality is renowned around the world. Our 75,000 businesses and Australia’s 445,000 red meat employees and 24 million domestic consumers of red meat, and millions of export consumers that support them, continue to be a major contributor to Australia’s economy and a lifeblood for our rural and regional areas.

“By concluding that the current regulatory framework for the labelling of plant-based protein products is inadequate and decisive action is needed, the Committee supports the protection of consumers, as well as the brand and reputation of traditional animal proteins like ‘beef’, ‘lamb’ and ‘goat’.

“The recommendations handed down in today’s report vindicate industry’s long held view that minimum regulated standards are required to prohibit plant protein product manufacturers from referencing traditional animal proteins like ‘beef’, ‘lamb’ and ‘goat’, and using livestock images on plant protein packaging or marketing materials.

“The Committee has also put the debate on consumer confusion to bed, concluding that Australian families are being deceived by misleading labels and descriptions used by plant-based companies.

“It’s now abundantly clear that Australia’s regulatory and enforcement framework requires urgent strengthening. The practice of denigrating meat products through misleading advertising must be stopped. The red meat and livestock industry therefore calls on Food Standards Australia and New Zealand and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to implement the recommendations outlined in the report as quickly as possible,” Mr McKillop said.

Key amongst the 9 recommendations are:

- the Australian Government develop a mandatory regulatory framework for the labelling of plant-based protein products (Recommendation 1),
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand initiate a review of section 1.1.1—13 (4) of the FSANZ Code and recommends exempting its application to named meat, seafood and dairy category brands (Recommendation 4), and

- the ACCC develops a National Information Standard that defines and restricts the use of meat category brands to animal protein products. This standard should include guidance on the use of livestock imagery for labelling and marketing of plant-based protein products (Recommendation 6).

“The red meat and livestock industry welcomes these recommendations and commends the Committee, Committee Chair Senator Susan McDonald and Deputy Chair Senator Glenn Sterle in particular, for its comprehensive work on this important issue,” said Mr McKillop

Background

RMAC is Australia’s only policy leadership and advisory forum made up of producers, lot feeders, processors, manufacturers, retailers and livestock exporters, representing the entire supply chain from paddock to plate.

RMAC members are the following prescribed industry representative bodies under the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997* (AMLI Act):

- Australian Livestock Exporters’ Council,
- Australian Lot Feeders’ Association,
- Australian Meat Industry Council,
- Cattle Council of Australia,
- Sheep Producers Australia, and
- Goat Industry Council of Australia

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