

This response is submitted on behalf of the SLOW FOOD HOBART COMMITTEE.

It has been compiled by a member of the Committee.

Slow Food Hobart (SFH) members are consumers who are especially concerned about issues affecting the viability of Australian micro, artisanal, small and medium food producers and processors.

CoOL is not just a Labelling Issue. Enabling consumers to make the most informed choices when purchasing food, often results in more Australian produce being purchased. This has a positive effect on the on-going Food Security of the country, by better ensuring the long term survival of local food producers and processors.

Further taxpayer money should not be spent on educating consumers about the current CoOL framework. The groundswell push for reform has been due to consumers recognising that the information as provided is at times mischievous, and at worst blatantly inaccurate.

The issue of "seasonal ingredients" potentially presents the greatest opportunity for exploiting any loopholes in the framework. To minimise this the "average proportion" of Australian ingredients should be able to be calculated every 12 months, a period which adequately covers the "four seasons".

SFH has concerns about the ability of the ACCC to adequately oversee CoOL once it is moved to the Consumer Law framework, and falls under their remit. The ACCC will likely have to receive increased funding and resources before consumers will accept that it can thoroughly investigate any breaches of the law.

Making additional off-label CoOL information available on-line should not be seen as a way of somehow transferring responsibility for CoOL information from business to the consumer.

The transition to new labels for packaged food should be feasible via a phased approach depending on the product shelf life.

Finally, SFH is disappointed that the proposed CoOL framework as it stands will not apply to the Food Services Sector. This appears to be at odds with on-going initiatives to proactively purchase Australian food eg in School Canteens.