

Health Star Rating System– Anomalies

An anomaly is *a deviation from the common rule, type, arrangement, or form*. For the purposes of the Health Star Rating (HSR) system, an anomaly occurs when:

- the calculated star rating for a product:
 - is inconsistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADGs)/New Zealand Eating and Activity Guidelines (NZEAGs); **or**
 - when used to make comparisons within a food category or across comparable food categories would mislead consumers;
- and**
- the matter was not substantially considered during the 2019 formal five-year review of the HSR system (if new information or developments have occurred the matter can be revisited).

When a true anomaly of the HSR system has occurred, an appropriate resolution will be found.

Context

The HSR system

- The purpose of the HSR system is to provide convenient, relevant and readily understood nutrition information and/or guidance on food packs to assist consumers to make informed food purchases and healthier eating choices.
- The priority focus of the HSR system is packaged food products presented for retail sale through supermarkets and similar retail outlets.
- The HSR system enables valid comparisons between foods within the same category, based on agreed and consistent measures.
- HSRs for foods in most categories are calculated using the HSR Calculator, which analyses the agreed food components: energy, saturated fat, total sugars, sodium, protein, dietary fibre, and fruit/vegetable/nut/legume (FVNL) content, to calculate a star rating.
- Category 1 – *Non-Dairy Beverages* are the exception, these are calculated under a separate calculator which only considers: energy, total sugars and FVNL content.
- The HSR is intended to interpret the balance of agreed food components and guide consumer choice based on the product's nutritional qualities. It is not intended to guide the portions or volumes consumed.
- Following an independent review of the HSR system in 2019, several changes were implemented in relation to the HSR Governance, HSR Calculators and display requirements. A two-year transition period for all food manufacturers and retailers to make the required changes finished on 14 November 2022, with a further 12-month stock-in-trade provision.

Under the HSR system, star ratings should:

- be consistent with the ADGs or NZEAGs (the dietary guidelines); and
- enable valid comparisons between foods based on agreed food components (energy, saturated fat, total sugars, sodium, protein, dietary fibre and FVNL).

Anomaly examples

An anomaly may exist if the HSR Calculator does not produce an appropriate rating. For example, if the composition of plain water is entered into the calculator, it returns a rating of 3.5, due to its lack of nutrients. This does not reflect the advice in the dietary guidelines to drink plenty of water as the first beverage of choice. Because of this, a decision has been made to automatically award plain water a 5 star rating, avoiding the anomaly that would otherwise occur.

Anomaly process

Submission

Submissions will not be considered unless:

- it is evident that the submitter has considered their application/product within the context of the HSR system, above, and
- the submission demonstrates that the potential anomaly meets the above anomaly criteria.

Anomalies should be submitted to the HSR Unit, hsr@health.gov.au, including an outline of supporting evidence.

Consideration

The HSR Unit will review the submission. The HSR Unit may make a decision to reject the submission, with or without further consultation.

If the HSR Unit considers there may be merit in an anomaly submission, it will work to develop a resolution, in consultation with Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), the Health Star Rating Advisory Committee (HSRAC), and/or food regulation officials as required.

Any proposed resolution to the anomaly will be considered by the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC), and at their recommendation, the FMM.

The submitter of an anomaly will be informed of the outcomes of their submission, including reasons for the decision.

A public register of (de-identified) anomaly submissions and their outcomes will be kept on the HSR website.

Background

The development of the HSR system was guided by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (now the FMM)'s *Front of Pack Labelling Policy Statement (2009)* and the Front-of-Pack Labelling (FoPL) Project Committee's *Objectives and Principles for the Development of a front of pack labelling system*. These documents together with FMM policy decisions made during the development of the HSR system provide the basis for assessing potential anomalies.