

Health Star Rating Advisory Committee (HSRAC)

Register of potential anomalies submitted to the HSRAC for consideration

To be deemed an anomaly, the Health Star Rating (HSR) system produces star ratings of individual products or groups of products that are either:

- inconsistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (ADG); or
- do not enable valid comparisons between foods based on the agreed food components (energy, saturated fat, total sugars, sodium, protein, dietary fibre and fruit, vegetables, nut and legumes (FVNL)).

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2014-1	3-Apr-14	The HSR system does not reflect contemporary scientific evidence on replacement of saturated fat with polyunsaturated fat and prevention of cardiovascular disease. Instead of guiding consumers to choose fat and oils that are low in saturated fat and good sources of polyunsaturated fat, they are steered to choose spreads and oils with the lowest fat content.	26-Aug-14	Rejected: after receipt of independent technical advice, application is deemed not an anomaly.	The ADG* promotes both the reduction of fat intake, and a replacement of fat consumed with polyunsaturated forms (as opposed to saturated forms). The HSR Calculator negatively double scores saturated fat content and therefore promotes the reduction of total fat and a shift to unsaturated forms. As a consequence it is not deemed that the HSR Calculator is inconsistent with the ADG.	No further action.
2014-2	10-Jul-14	The HSR system assesses oil and fats solely on their energy, saturated fat, sodium and sugar content, and ignores positive health attributes in fats and oils from natural extraction processes such as antioxidants and other well documented nutritional characteristics. Of particular concern is that the HSR system ignores well documented negative health by-products, such as trans fat, that result when oils are subjected to a refining and hydrogenation process.	26-Aug-14	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly as it is outside the defined scope of the HSR system.	The HSR system assesses foods based on the macro nutrients saturated fat, energy, total sugar, sodium [salt], protein, fibre and FVNL. Other nutrients or processing methods outside of the scope of the HSR system may be promoted to consumers using other means, such as Standard 1.2.7 of the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code – Nutrition, Health and Related Claims (Standard 1.2.7) if this applies.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2014-3	14-Jul-14	Just-add-water' instant drink preparations (coffee, hot chocolate, chai etc) fall into the Category 1 – Beverages (other than dairy beverages), rather than Category 1D- Dairy Beverages as they deliver less than 10% RDI calcium/serve and contain more than 25% of non-dairy ingredients. As a result these products appear to be unfairly represented (as they are categorised alongside soft drinks, rather than milk based coffees and flavoured milks) and renovation by industry is not encouraged as there is no way within this category to increase the star rating unless you add in fibre or protein, which is not what the consumer is expecting or demanding from these products.	26-Aug-14	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	Due to the significantly different nutritional composition between traditional milk based coffees and water based coffee preparations, it has been determined that it is unfair to compare one to the other.	No further action.
2014-4	8-Aug-14	The definition of what is considered a constituent, an extract or as an isolate of FVNL (including coconut, spices, herbs, fungi, seeds and algae).	26-Aug-14	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	Standard 1.2.7 clearly defines mycoprotein as an extract and therefore is not eligible for FVNL points under the HSR system.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2014-5	16-Sep-14	The FVNL % for canned vegetables and legumes is based on as sold, while the compositional data for these products is based on as consumed (drained). Whilst this is consistent with the Food Standards Code characterising ingredient % calculation, it hinders the HSR that can be achieved and does not reflect what is consumed. There is a significant difference in the FVNL % between as sold (52% - 62%) versus as consumed (drained) (approx. 90%) and consequent modifying points.	31-Oct-14	Accepted: application is deemed an anomaly.	The existing Characterising Ingredients and Components of Standard 1.2.10 of the Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code which is referred to in the Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator, was written purely for the purpose of product labelling and does not support the purpose and intent of the HSR system. The HSRAC has determined that it is appropriate to provide an exemption to adopting this calculation method when determining the HSR.	The Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator was updated accordingly and uploaded to the HSR website on 3 March 2015.
2014-6	13-Oct-14	The HSR Calculator rates some "core" dairy foods at the lower end of the rating scale. In contrast some nutrient poor, energy dense "discretionary" foods: cakes, biscuits, chips, jelly, and icy poles are scoring 3 to 5 stars. This is contrary to the ADG and misleads consumers as to the healthiness of foods when comparing between foods particularly between "core" dairy foods and "discretionary" foods.	31-Oct-14	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The HSR Calculator has been technically developed to rate the nutritional quality of the product within their product categories. The categories have been developed in order to support the recommendations of the ADG. Discretionary foods are allowed as part of the ADG, and as the HSR system does not promote volumes or food consumption frequency this issue is not deemed to contradict the ADG.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2014-7	21-Oct-14	Not all plain (nothing added) frozen vegetables score a HSR of 5 stars. This is inconsistent with the ADG which recommends individuals “enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from [the] five food groups everyday [including] plenty of vegetables of different types and colours”.	17-Feb-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	Throughout the development of the HSR system, the Technical Design Working Group and Front of Pack Labelling Project Committee concluded that giving all vegetables a 5 star rating would impact on ratings for other food products and create a lack of differentiation for many processed foods. It would also alter the scores of other products within Category 2 – other foods.	No further action.
2015-1	2-Jan-15	Products that contain both dairy and non-dairy components [such as cheese and crackers], but do not meet the requirements to be categorised as a category 2D food because they contain more than 25% non-dairy food, receive a low HSR score that is not representative of the combined food nor comparable to products that may be considered 'comparable' products.	17-Feb-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	When cheese and crackers are presented in a single package, the crackers usually comprise more than 25% of the product. The HSRAC therefore agreed that the product should not be categorised as a dairy product, rather it falls into Category 2 – other foods.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2015-2	2-Jan-15	By adding positive nutrients such as protein and fibre boosters, to non-core food products such as a processed protein bar, manufacturers can develop products that score a HSR of 5, even when the natural protein and fibre content of the remaining ingredients remains negligible if not zero. This product group scores too highly compared with other similar products/groups ie the product group receives an inappropriate HSR.	17-Feb-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The HSR Calculator was not designed to discern different types of fibre.	No further action.
2015-3	2-Jan-15	One potato chip product scores much higher than all other varieties. This is because the baseline points are just below 13, which means it is the only variety of chip that is eligible to count its protein points for the HSR. By slightly reducing the sodium and sat fat, but increasing the sugar, the product falls just below the baseline points thresholds and when compared to other products it receives an unrealistically high HSR.	17-Feb-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The HSRAC noted that there will be some outliers as a result of products that sit on or near the cut-points for the various nutrients. The example illustrates that by undertaking simple reformulation, a higher HSR is possible within that category.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2015-4	10-June-15	A juice product which appears to be aimed at children scores five stars despite its high energy and sugar content. The label states that the product contains “one serve of fruit” and “no added sugar”. However a single serve is defined as 250mL, equivalent to two serves of fruit according to the ADG, and a single serve contains 25.3g sugar. The rating obtained by the product and, as a result, the message being portrayed to consumers, is contrary to the advice provided in the ADG and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.	17-July-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The product displays an accurate HSR and does not represent an anomaly according to the agreed definition. The matter raised pertains to serve sizes appropriate for children, the marketing of products to children and the potential for these products to be inconsistent with the ADG relevant to children, rather than the validity and accuracy of the HSR system and HSR Calculator outputs. The issue raised should be considered as part of the evaluation of the HSR system at the end of the five year implementation period.	No further action, however, this issue should be considered as part of the evaluation of the HSR system.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2015-5	6-July-15	The system does not recognise that some foods fill special dietary needs and as a result does not provide sufficient differentiation between categories of products. Within the algorithm there is insufficient distinction between types of fats and insufficient weight is allocated to sugar quantities.	2-Oct-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	<p>The HSRAC determined that during the development of the HSR system a very specific decision was made regarding the treatment of fat within the HSR algorithm. It was determined that for the purposes of the HSR system, saturated fat, a high risk nutrient, would be the only type of fat to contribute to HSR baseline points, noting that total fat content would be considered by way of the baseline points allocated for energy content.</p> <p>The Committee also determined that a very considered and purposeful decision was made regarding the role of allergens and foods manufactured for special dietary needs and it was determined that these considerations would be out of scope.</p>	No further action.
2015-6	13-July-15	Bottled water receives five stars whilst bottled flavoured water with a small amount of added sugar (or flavour etc) receives only two stars suggesting that there is greater difference in 'healthfulness' than actually exists.	Submission withdrawn	N/A	N/A	N/A

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2015-7	21-Aug-15	Honey is unfairly treated within the HSR system due to its high level of naturally occurring sugar. Most consumers perceive honey as a “healthier” product and a 1-star score may undermine that perception.	2-Oct-15	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The HSRAC noted that the HSR system was not designed for single ingredient foods and that whilst there is no expectation that the HSR system be applied to such products, they were not excluded from the system. The HSRAC also noted that some suppliers of honey may wish to apply the HSR system, (even if only the energy icon) further supporting the position not to exclude this entire category of product from the HSR system.	The issue will be put forward for consideration as part of the evaluation of the HSR system; and a new frequently asked question, outlining that the HSR system is not designed for some product categories will be uploaded to the HSR website.
2015-8	14-Dec-15	Eggs receive only four stars despite being a natural food and containing essential vitamins and minerals.	Submission withdrawn	N/A	N/A	N/A

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2016-1	2-Feb-16	The HSR Calculator does not reflect the true health nature of beverages that are 'fortified waters' (i.e. water with vitamins, minerals, flavours added).	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	The HSRAC has considered the treatment of beverages and in particular 'flavoured or fortified' waters on several occasions and has determined that it is satisfied that these products: do not present an anomaly; and are receiving appropriate ratings under the HSR system. Whilst water is essential for life, beverages such as these are not and it is not seen as necessary to portray them any differently or more favourably than any other beverage product.	No further action.
2016-2	11-Mar-16	Many fruit varieties and some whole fresh vegetables would receive less than five stars under the HSR system. This puts these products at a disadvantage compared to other 5-star rated products like fruit juices; and implies that fruit juice is healthier than or as healthy as whole fruits and vegetables. This is inconsistent with recommendations in the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	Although it may be applied, the system is not intended for unprocessed or minimally processed fruits and vegetables. Throughout the development of the HSR system, the Technical Design Working Group and Front-of-Pack Labelling Project Committee concluded that giving all vegetables a five star rating would impact on ratings for other food products and create a lack of differentiation for many processed foods. It would also alter the scores of other products within Category 2 – other foods.	No further action.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2016-3	1 Aug 16	Any food with substantial amounts of added sugar, such as breakfast cereals, muesli bars and sweetened yoghurt are scored too high in relation to their HSR.	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	In developing the HSR Calculator, the Front-of-Pack Labelling committees carefully considered the treatment of all nutrients within the HSR Calculator, with due consideration of Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion and the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The HSRAC is satisfied that sufficient technical consideration was applied during the development of the system and that the HSR Calculator is producing technically accurate star ratings for foods across all categories. While the HSRAC feels that the HSR Calculator is technically sound, they have acknowledged that the issue should be considered as a part of the five year review of the HSR system.	No further action, however, this issue will be considered as part of the five year review of the HSR system.

Application number	Date Submitted	Brief description of application (as submitted by applicant)	Date Considered by HSRAC	HSRAC determination	Rationale	Outcome / Next steps
2016-4	30 Oct 16	Some breakfast cereals containing 26.7% sugar have 4/5 health stars which indicates that the weighting/scaling of the different nutrients in the HSR Calculator must be skewed. This misleads consumers into believing that these products are a healthy choice when making comparisons within the breakfast cereal category or across comparable food categories.	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	In developing the HSR Calculator, the Front-of-Pack Labelling committees carefully considered the treatment of all nutrients within the HSR Calculator, with due consideration of Nutrient Profiling Scoring Criterion and the 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The HSRAC is satisfied that sufficient technical consideration was applied during the development of the system and that the HSR Calculator is producing technically accurate star ratings for foods across all categories. While the HSRAC feels that the HSR Calculator is technically sound, they have acknowledged that the issue should be considered as a part of the five year review of the HSR system.	No further action, however, this issue will be considered as part of the five year review of the HSR system.

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2016-5	8 Dec 16	Some products categorised as a dairy food (Category 2D) receive a lower HSR than nutritionally similar dairy-based products which fall into the food category (Category 2).	14-Feb-17	Accepted: application is deemed an anomaly.	HSRAC agreed that this is an anomaly as per the agreed definition, however, additional product data is required in order to fully consider this issue and potential solutions. HSRAC referred the submission to the Technical Advisory Group as a priority issue for it to consider.	Following provision of relevant up to date product nutrient data, HSRAC considered TAG modelling on potential solutions and agreed that consultation with dairy manufacturers is required. A forum with the dairy industry is currently being organised.

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2017-1	5 May 17	The beverages category (Category 1) does not provide enough discrimination to distinguish between beverages with high and low/no levels of sugar. This means that the star ratings applied to beverages do not vary sufficiently to encourage consumers to choose those products with no or lower levels of sugar.	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly	The treatment of sugar within the HSR Calculator and star rating variation within a product category has previously been considered by the HSRAC which resolved that it did not represent an anomaly as per the agreed definition and that no modification to the HSR Calculator was required. However, the HSRAC has acknowledged that the issue should be considered as a part of the five year review of the HSR system.	Submission, including suggested solutions, to be provided to the Technical Advisory Group for consideration as part of the five year review.
2019-1	11 June 19	Ice is the same composition as pure bottled water (which receives an automatic 5 star rating), therefore ice should also score 5 stars.	N/A	Rejected: application is deemed not an anomaly.	Although it may be applied, the system is not intended for low nutritive foods, or single ingredient foods not intended to be consumed alone. Whilst water is not 'nutritive' per se, the policy decision to apply a five star rating was made on the basis that water, unlike any other beverage or non-nutritive product, is essential for life. While ice contains the same composition as bottled water, unlike bottled water, it is not essential for life, or intended to be consumed alone.	No further action.