

GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF THE HEALTH STAR RATING SYSTEM FOR BENCHMARKING AND INTERNATIONAL PURPOSES

Statement by the Health Star Rating Advisory Committee, March 2026

The Health Star Rating (HSR) system was designed as a front-of-pack nutrition labelling system for Australia and New Zealand. The system provides a rating between 0.5 and 5 stars, based on:

- Total energy (kilojoules); saturated fat, sodium (salt) and sugar content – consuming too much of these risk nutrients is linked to overweight and obesity, some cancers, heart disease and type 2 diabetes; and
- Fibre, protein, fruit, vegetable, nut and legume content – consuming more of these nutrients and ingredients is good for health.

The intent of the system is to help Australian and New Zealand consumers choose between similar packaged foods. It is designed to support and align with the Australian and New Zealand dietary guidelines and Nutrient Reference Values, and is informed by modelling of the Australian and New Zealand food supply to ensure the system provides meaningful results in the Australian and New Zealand markets.

We are aware that the HSR system has been adopted for use in various other ways both in Australia and New Zealand, and internationally. The following principles aim to provide guidance to organisations and companies who wish to use the HSR system outside of its intended purpose.

Use of HSR for benchmarking

Some companies and organisations have adopted the HSR for benchmarking purposes. For example, this could include calculating an average HSR across a given portfolio of products and comparing it against a target HSR; or tracking changes over time. This could be done for research or reporting purposes.

The HSR system lends itself well to this use, as an average rating can be calculated. However, it is important to recognise that this was not the intended purpose of the system. We recommend that organisations using the system in this way:

- Recognise that the system was not developed to divide food into ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’, but rather to provide an easy comparison between similar foods;
- Include an explanation of the HSR system, that explains it was developed as a front-of-pack labelling tool for Australia and New Zealand;
- Adhere to the [Implementation Guide](#), ensuring that HSRs are not calculated for products that are not allowed to display an HSR in Australia and New Zealand (such as alcohol and some specially formulated foods);
- Regularly check for updates to the HSR [Implementation Guide](#), and update ratings when required.

Use of HSR for international products

We recognise that it may not be practical for some products sold in Australia and New Zealand to be relabelled for overseas markets. However, we are aware of some instances where companies have used the HSR system either on pack or online or in marketing materials, for products that are *not* sold or marketed in Australia or New Zealand.

We advise against using the HSR on products that are solely sold overseas on the basis that:

- The system was designed to provide a point-of-sale visual guide to help consumers compare products and choose healthier options when considering similar foods. As a comparative tool it is not meaningful to consumers if applied in countries where the HSR system is not in general use.
 - o Where applicable, companies should instead adopt the front-of-pack labelling system that is in effect in the country(ies) in which their products are sold.
- The Health Star Rating Unit provides administrative support, including compliance activities, in Australia and New Zealand. The HSR Unit is limited in the support it can provide for HSR use outside of the system's implementation in Australia and New Zealand.

If companies choose to apply the HSR on overseas products, we recommend the following principles be followed:

- Adhere to the [Implementation Guide](#), ensuring that HSRs are not calculated for products that are not allowed to display an HSR in Australia and New Zealand (such as alcohol and some specially formulated foods);
- Include an explanation of the HSR system (for example online), in the local language, explaining that it was developed as a front-of-pack labelling tool for Australia and New Zealand;
- Regularly check for updates to the HSR [Implementation Guide](#), and update ratings when required.

Additional resources

The following resources may provide further relevant context.

- Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (now the Food Ministers' Meeting) [Front-of-Pack Labelling Policy Statement](#)
- World Health Organization [Guiding principles and framework manual for front-of-pack labelling for promoting health diets](#)
- Codex Alimentarius [Guidelines on Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling](#) (Annex 2 to the Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling)