

## The VITAL Journey

### Australia & New Zealand

FAAM 17 – 19 February 2011

Venice, Italy



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# VITAL Journey Agenda

- VITAL – The complete package
- VITAL Journey – Background
  - Where we started
  - Industry & Consumer group collaboration
- VITAL Review 2010 & 2011
- Scientific Expert Panel Meeting
- Next Steps & Timeline

# VITAL – The Complete Package

- Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling
- VITAL is a process for determining the requirement for precautionary labelling
  - It is a process, decision tree, grid (action levels) and a calculator
  - Promotes consistent labelling across industry by prescribing when a precautionary label statement is to be applied and when it should be avoided
- VITAL was developed *BY* industry *FOR* industry and is adopted on a voluntary basis



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# VITAL Journey - Background

- Formation of the Allergen Bureau, established in 2005
- An initiative of the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) Allergen Forum/working group
- Allergen Bureau is funded by membership from the Australian & New Zealand food industry
- Industry group worked with lead consumer groups to develop VITAL
  - Anaphylaxis Australia and the Coeliac Society

# VITAL Journey - Background

- Allergen labelling needs to mean something to the allergic consumer it must be:
  - Relevant, consistent and easy to understand
  - VITAL supports one labelling approach
- Australian & New Zealand food industry continue to support VITAL implementation

**Collaboration is key for VITAL sustainability**

## **VITAL Review Overview**

- VITAL Review initiated in 2010 – International interest
- A Scientific Expert Panel was convened to review the science underpinning the action levels in the grid
- Government Feedback & Support
  - FSANZ
  - Review of Labelling Law & Policy -VITAL recommendation
- Consumer Communication Strategy

## **VITAL Review – The Complete Package**

- Review of the VITAL Procedure, Grid (Action Levels) and Decision Tree
- Review VITAL tools:
  - VITAL calculator,
  - Frequently asked Questions, worked examples and other supporting information
- VITAL calculator - a sub project of the VITAL review
  - Working with GS1 to produce a sustainable tool that is web based, easy to use with a global footprint

# VITAL Scientific Review

- Objective was to review and discuss Action Levels in the VITAL Grid
- Scientific Expert Panel Meeting (Sydney, 19 & 20 January)
- Panel Members are:
  - Dr Steve Taylor (FARRP)
  - Dr Joseph Baumert (FARRP) supported by Mr Benjamin Remington (FARRP)
  - Dr Geert Houben (Program Manager Food Safety, TNO. NL)
  - Dr Rene Crevel (Allergy & Immunology, Unilever)
  - Dr Katie Allen (Paediatric Gastroenterologist/Allergist, Royal Childrens Hospital, University of Melbourne), supported by Ms Jennifer Koplin
  - Dr Simon Brooke Taylor (Food Safety & Risk Analysis Consultant, Allergen Bureau)





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# VITAL Scientific Review

- The Panel established principles to be used in selecting Action Levels;
  - scientifically & clinically sound, defensible and transparent
- Current Action Levels VITAL
  - appropriate based on available science at that time
- Portion/Serving Size
  - allergen protein expressed as a concentration in 3 serving sizes
- Exquisitely allergic consumers will not be accounted for in the VITAL grid, continue to assume they do not eat processed foods



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## VITAL Scientific Review

- Level of Acceptable Risk, protection for the vast majority of allergic individuals,
- Action levels should be set with highest degree of safety determined by available data
  - Increasing availability of clinical data enables the model to be applied with increasing confidence
  - Drive research to fill the data gaps
- Potentially opens up choice to a larger number of 'safe' foods
  - Consistent approach across industry
  - Precautionary labels will only be applied when appropriate
- Plan is for the Grid action levels to be subject to ongoing review

## **Feedback - Government**

- Food industry is addressing allergen labelling and precautionary labelling well
- Satisfied that there is a consistent and collaborative industry approach
- No justification for a regulatory outcome at this stage
- Independent review of food labelling law and policy recommended that VITAL be explored as a supplementary model for precautionary labelling

## Consumer Communication Strategy

- Working with Anaphylaxis Australia to develop a communication plan targeted at the allergic consumer
- Advise consumers of our message:  
  
“Don’t eat products which contain a precautionary statement with an allergen to which you are sensitive”
- Strategy in draft form and will be released and rolled out in the coming months



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## Summary – VITAL Journey

- VITAL has been a successful and positive collaboration between industry and consumer groups
- VITAL review encompasses:
  - Procedure & Decision Tree
  - Action Level Grid – Independent Scientific Review
  - VITAL calculator
- The scientific expert panel continue to deliberate on the work started at the January meeting and we appreciate their support
  - As it underpins the credibility of the system and ensures the program sustainability
- Completion of the VITAL review is expected at the end of 2011



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# Thank you

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