

# ***Irradiated food? Coming to a supermarket near you...***

**On May 24, 2013, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) approved the irradiation of tomatoes and capsicums.**

This is the first time that irradiation has been approved for foods that make up a significant part of our diet... but it won't be the last...

***Irradiation is the process of exposing food or other materials to ionising radiation.***

*Food irradiation is used for shelf-life extension and for neutralising, not removing, contaminants or pests.*

Irradiation decreases the vitamin and nutritional content of food and disrupts its molecular structure, producing free radicals and potentially harmful chemicals such as benzene, formaldehyde and cyclobutanones.



So far, these foods have been approved:

tomatoes	capsicums
herbs	spices
herbal teas	mangoes
mangosteens	pawpaws
carambolas	breadfruits
custard apples	lychees
longans	rambutans
persimmons	

Acknowledging that irradiation depletes vitamin and nutritional content of food, FSANZ has made these approvals on the basis that the foods approved make up only an insignificant part of our diet.

Now, they are approving some of our most commonly eaten fruits.

There are 16 further approvals in the pipeline, including: zucchinis, honey dew melons, rockmelons, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, apricots, plums, peaches, table grapes, and apples.

**Watch out!**

***Inadequate labelling laws make it difficult to know if products have been irradiated.***

**Irradiated tomatoes, capsicums and other produce may start to appear in our shops without labels.**

## Will it be labelled?

Current laws allow shops to use a sign close by to irradiated produce, rather than actual stickers or labels

There is no mandatory wording for the irradiation statement, leaving the messaging up to marketing companies. Neither the word **radiation** nor **irradiation** is required.

The tomatoes and capsicums will be irradiated in Queensland. They may be sold in Queensland but are likely to be sent interstate and overseas. Shoppers in southern states and New Zealand must keep a particular eye out for Queensland tomatoes.

Knowing that people do not want to consume irradiated food, the industry has long pushed for weak labelling laws, such as the ones we have today.

Now alarmingly, Australia is poised to get rid of labelling all together; FSANZ will be undertaking a review of mandatory irradiation labelling in 2014.

**Food Irradiation Watch advises shoppers wishing to avoid irradiated produce to look down at the produce to see if there is a sticker and then look up to see if there is a sign.**

Pet food, therapeutic goods, medicinal herbs and animal feed are also allowed to irradiated. These require no labelling as they are not “food” under Australian law.

## Is it safe?

The science on the safety of irradiated food is controversial.

Claims that irradiated food is safe are misleading as no long-term study of human consumption of an irradiated diet has been carried out.

In 2008, up to 100 Australian pet cats suffered neurological disease linked to eating irradiated cat food.

The Australian government has since banned the irradiation of cat food, but continues to expand the list of foods permitted to be irradiated for human consumption.

This is unacceptable!

- ✓ **Good food doesn't need irradiating.**
- ✓ **Irradiated food does require labelling.**

Refuse to eat irradiate food! Let your supermarket, greengrocer and politician know that you want to eat irradiation free. Join the campaign to make sure irradiated food stays off our kitchen tables!

To find out more:

### Contact Food Irradiation Watch

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