



17 SEP 2024

J Bruning

By email: fyi-request-27934-8dfeea08@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: SROIA-221

Tēnā koe

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 6 August 2024 for information regarding processed food. A response to each part of your request is provided below:

- a) All memos, policy advice and information you have considered relating to ultraprocessed food as a driver of physical and mental illness since coming into office.*
- b) All plans by your office to investigate diets high in ultraprocessed food as a predominant driver of mental and physical illness.*
- c) How funding will be prioritised to ensure that research including (i) assessment of the current scientific literature on ultraprocessed food and health/multimorbidity can be undertaken; and (ii) the extent of calorific dependence on ultraprocessed in New Zealand by age and ethnic status, may be undertaken.*

This office does not hold any information or advice specific to “ultraprocessed food as a driver of physical and mental illness”. As such your request for this information is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act on the grounds that it is not held.

However, you may wish to refer to the Ministry of Health’s Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults which gives reliable information, built on evidence and expert advice, on healthy eating and physical activity for New Zealand adults:

www.tewhātuora.govt.nz/assets/For-the-health-sector/Health-sector-guidance/Active-Families/eating-activity-guidelines-new-zealand-adults-updated-2020-oct22.pdf.

Specifically, the Guidelines recommend enjoying a variety of nutritious foods every day, choosing mostly whole and less processed food and choosing and/or preparing foods and drinks that are low in salt, saturated fat and with little or no added sugar. They also recommend for adults: reducing sedentary/sitting time, accumulating at least 5 hours of moderate physical activity (or 2 ½ hours vigorous) per week, muscle strengthening activities twice per week, and ensuring sufficient sleep (7-9 hours per night for adults, 7-8 hours for those over 65 years).

d) Please supply the list of all meetings and names of groups and individuals discussing diet and/or nutrition and/or ultraprocessed foods since coming into office.

This part of your request is more closely connected to the portfolio responsibilities of the Associate Minister of Health, Hon Matt Doocey. Therefore, this part of your request is being transferred to his office in accordance with section 14(b)(ii) of the Act.

e) The Ministry of Health does not recognise metabolic syndrome, instead considering: 'The conditions referred to are considered either on their own or as part of a broader cardiovascular disease risk calculation.' As a medical doctor and Minister of Health do you think this perspective reflects the current state of scientific knowledge? Do you have plans to address this quirky anomaly?

While it is permissible to seek information by asking questions under the Act, a distinction must be drawn between questions which seek information that is 'held', and questions which seek to elicit an opinion or explanation. The primary purpose of the Act is to allow requesters to seek information 'held' by Ministers and agencies. It is not a mechanism for requesters to seek an explanation or opinion. For this reason, this office is refusing this part of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Franklin
Senior Ministerial Advisor