

Plant sterol as an ingredient

The Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Ministerial Council has approved sterol esters derived from vegetable oils as a novel food ingredient in edible oil spreads. Consensus was based on recommendations made by the Australia-New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA), which has also proposed that such products must carry an advisory statement. The advisory statement will state that these products are not appropriate for infants, children and pregnant and lactating women, and that people using cholesterol reducing medication should seek medical advice before using the spreads.

On 16 June 2001, the new Novel Foods Standard came into effect in Australia and New Zealand. Novel foods are new foods for which there is insufficient data to ensure that the likely total levels of consumption will be safe. Novel foods and food ingredients are not permitted unless they have passed a rigorous pre-market safety assessment by ANZFA and have been approved by the Ministerial Council. In Canada, plant sterol esters are currently considered to be therapeutic products and is not allowed to be marketed as food. The European Commission permits only edible oil spreads containing plant sterol esters. In the United States, spreads, salad dressings, snack bars and a yoghurt containing plant sterol esters have “generally recognized as safe” status. (Website: www.foodaust.com.au)