![Food Standards Australia New Zealand — Te Mana Kounga Kai – Ahitereiria me Aotearoa]

Future ready Food Standards

Digitisation

June 2024

Stakeholder Forum 2022

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'Digital transformation has huge potential but must be people and client centred'.
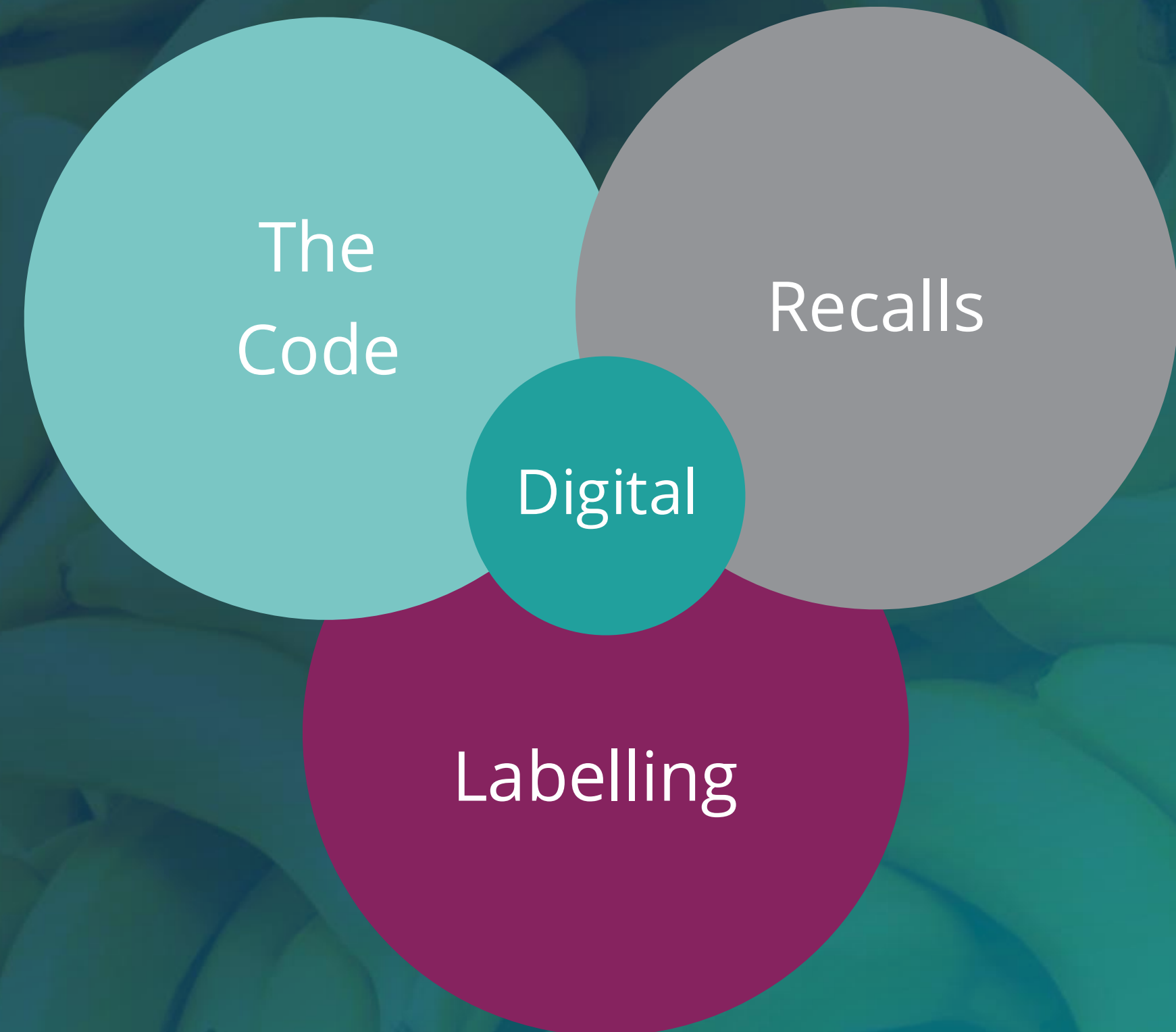
Stakeholder engagement identified three key areas for consideration:

- Digital food labelling
- Digital recalls platform
- Digitalisation of the Food Standards Code

2023

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Research & engagement

01 Completed scoping project

02 Stakeholder workshops

03 Explored costs and models

01 Implemented an upgraded form for businesses to speed up response action and automate steps

02 Improved visibility of food recalls for consumers

01 Considered international approaches

02 Stakeholder workshops

03 Considered cross-government appetite

The Code

Recalls

Digital

Labelling

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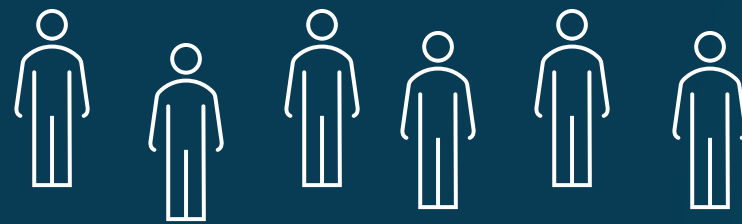Te Mana Kounga Kai – Ahitereiria me Aotearoa

'Technology that helps people be self-sufficient and get the information they need faster is supported'

'Time and resource savings through improved access to information, better quality submissions, fewer industry enquiries and simpler and more cost-effective compliance activity'

'This work should be strongly linked to the Government's broader digitalisation agenda and funded accordingly'

Across all workshops stakeholders expressed support for digital transformation projects

61 participants
8%   Consumer
19% Government
42% Industry
12% Public Health
19% other

'Regulatory frameworks lack agility to accommodate the increasing technology developments, therefore it will be good to see these ideas come to pass'

'Health and safety information like use by and best before dates, warning statements, list of ingredients and directions for use are all essential information to retain on-pack'

'If only one project was to progress would prefer efforts and resources be directed to the Code'

Feedback summary

Food Standards Code

Start with the Code content and digitalise it all at once
Prioritise improving access and readability of the content over linking interpretational guidance or resources

Ensure it can be read on all devices
Functionality to be usable across platforms and devices

Staged approach
Start with minimalist approach with basic features such as internal searchability, indexes, hyperlinks and a clear table of content

Clear benefits
Likely lead to time saving and access improvements for users, government and FSANZ, potentially leading to improved understanding of and compliance with the Code

Future features
Progressively introduce features such as signposting, searches by commodity /product, questions, links to existing guidance and PIF forms, personalisation and external linkages to other related legislation

Digital Food Labelling

Balancing the benefits
Overcoming limited space on pack, packaging costs for industry and broadening consumer access

Purpose of digitalisation of on-pack information
Clarity needed regarding the problem to be addressed, the purpose of any change and the implications and benefits of that change

Presentation
Needs to be meaningful and useful for consumers and not limited in digital format to QR Codes (e.g. website addresses)

Content
Low appetite for removing existing health and safety information from on-pack labels. Preference to use digital labelling to provide supplementary, complementary, discretionary or additional information

Other concerns
Inconsistent or inaccurate information between on and off pack, equity of access to information and digital literacy, privacy, tracking and cybersecurity

mpconsulting

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Scoping a digiCode: key findings

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Nearly 1 million people access the Code annually
- An annual average of 972,000 visits across the Code and enabling instruments over the past five years
- Most accessed standards: food safety, labelling, health claims and food additives

Alignment on basic functionality
- Stakeholders were aligned on their desire for search optimisation, hyperlinking, cross-referencing and navigational aids for the Code

Guidance
- On 'How the Code works', tips and tools to assist people to more efficiently access the information
- Opportunities to harness and harmonise guidance across jurisdictions

Benefits
- For small to medium businesses, relieving pressure associated with regulatory burden
- Decreasing non-compliance, reducing enforcement costs
- Improving public health outcomes for all

Road ahead

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01 Consolidated Code

Publish a consolidated Food Standards Code to the FSANZ website imminently:

- A compilation of the 74 Standards and 29 Schedules that will be regularly updated

02 Future opportunities

- Develop a 'How the Code works' webpage to support understanding
- Continue to explore ways to make 'digiCode' as user friendly as possible – linkages, easier navigation, indexing
- Pursue options to support further digitalisation, including exploring new and emerging technologies
- Continue considering international and whole-of-government approaches to digital food labelling
- Utilising the new website to deliver fit-for-purpose information