Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Evaluation of voluntary pregnancy labelling on alcohol products in New Zealand

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Growing and Protecting New Zealand

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Contents

Page

1 Introduction

In 2009, the then Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) announced the review of Food Labelling Law and Policy – the *Labelling Logic Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy 2011* (the Review). The Review was jointly funded by the Australian Government and all the Australian States and Territories, and New Zealand consultations were supported by the New Zealand Government.

In its response to the Review (December 2011), the Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation (FoFR) stated its intention to provide the alcohol industry a two-year period (till December 2013) to adopt voluntary initiatives for pregnancy labelling on alcohol products before considering regulation. FoFR has welcomed industry efforts to introduce pregnancy labelling voluntarily and committed to working with industry over the voluntary labelling period.

This evaluation intended to capture the extent of voluntary pregnancy labelling on alcohol product labels in New Zealand at the end of the two year period. The evaluation did not attempt to capture the impact of pregnancy labelling, the economic impacts of providing it, or labelling associated with products intended for export. It may be used to inform future decision-making processes by Ministers regarding pregnancy labelling on alcohol beverages.

2 Methodology

The evaluation sought to determine the extent and type of alcohol products and containers that carry a pregnancy health warning label and/or pictogram with respect to the market share of those products.

The survey also asked, in the cases where pregnancy warning labels had not been adopted, the reasons for the non-adoption and the intent to introduce pregnancy labelling in the future.

Attempts to quantify the impact of pregnancy labelling falls outside the scope of this work. This meant there were no questions pertaining to the visability and readability of pregnancy labelling, nor levels of consumer awareness. This work did not attempt to assess the extent and nature of associated industry initiatives designed to supplement and leverage the impact of pregnancy labelling. This work also did not attempt to assess the economic impacts associated with placing pregnancy labelling on alcoholic beverages.

In order to address these questions, an online survey was designed to capture the volume of alcoholic beverages currently being marketed in New Zealand to which pregnancy labelling is applied. ‘Alcoholic beverages’ were to be considered as ‘individual can/bottle/cask etc’. Alcoholic beverages were divided into subcategories by type; beer, wine, spirits, cider and Ready-to-Drink spirits (RTDs). Survey questions for each product type included:

- respondents’ estimated total domestic market share by volume;
- total percentage of respondents’ products carrying pregnancy warning labelling;
- projected time to reach 90–100 percent uptake of voluntary pregnancy labelling on products; and
- nature of the labelling.

The ‘nature of labelling’ includes subdivisions for:

- the wording proposed by the DrinkWise Australia’s brochure on ‘drinking during pregnancy’; “It is safest not to drink while pregnant”;
- the DrinkWise Australia associated logo (see Figure 1);
- other wording; or
- another logo.

Figure 1: DrinkWise Australia associated logo

The survey underwent targeted stakeholder testing with industry prior to dissemination to; ensure the use of precise terminology in phrasing the questions, avoid making unwarranted assumptions about the respondents, ensure that questions were posed in the appropriate format.

The online survey was distributed to New Zealand peak alcohol industry associations on 22 April 2014, who in turn disseminated it to their members. The consultation period ran until 5 May 2014.

All respondents were provided with the same question set. This was to ensure a broad, representative sample of the alcohol industry was gained. An online approach was selected due to its ability to reach a broad range of respondents across industry quickly and cost effectively.

3 Response rate and analysis

The survey received 135 responses from producers across the alcohol sector. The market share of the respondents by category can be found in Table 1. Market share data indicated that for beer, cider and RTDs, 90 percent of market share was attributed to three companies.

Each respondent’s contribution to the total percentage of labelled products was weighted by their proportion of total market share. As respondents estimated a range in increments of 20 percent of total products bearing pregnancy labelling, only estimates can be provided.

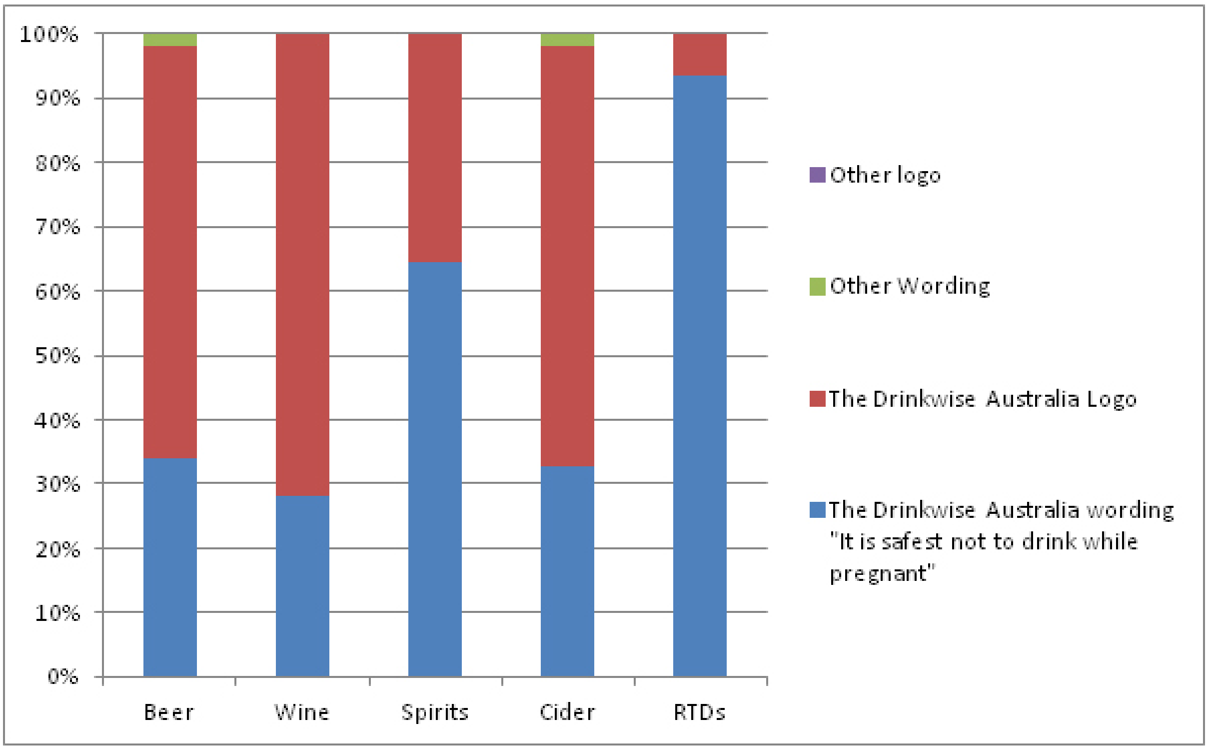
Table 1: Percentage of respondents having some form of pregnancy labelling on alcoholic beverages

Alcohol Type	Survey respondents’ estimated total market share	Percentage of respondents’ product with pregnancy labelling (±10%)
Beer	100%	57%
Wine	92%	50%
Spirits	59%	32%
Cider	90%	54%
RTDs	95%	62%

3.1 TYPE OF PREGNANCY LABEL

Of the four labelling types sampled, those who marketed beer, wine and cider to the New Zealand domestic market preferred the DrinkWise Australia logo, while spirits and RTDs preferred to use the wording ‘it is safest not to drink while pregnant’.

Figure 2: Preferred pregnancy labelling type



3.2 REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING LABELLING

Fifty-nine respondents provided reasoning for why they did not provide pregnancy labelling on their labelling. Their responses are summarised below.

Table 2: Reasons for not providing labelling

Reasons for not adopting pregnancy warning labelling	Number of respondents
Not legally obliged, only have mandatory information on labels	13
It is well known that alcohol should not be consumed while pregnant / it is unnecessary	12
Transitioning – Using up previous label stock	9
Unaware of the need to do this	8
Do not produce the product themselves	6
Limited by labelling space	5
Some industry labelling guidelines do not include it	2
No clear guidelines on what language to use, and what information to be included	2
Cost considerations	1
Captured by other slogans i.e. ‘Drink Responsibly’	1

3.3 PROJECTED ADOPTION

Respondents indicated dates by which they expected 90–100 percent of their products to have pregnancy labelling. These projections (collated below) indicate that by 2015-2016, labelling coverage for all product types except spirits will be around 80–90 percent of market share.

Table 3: Projected adoption timeframe from captured market

Product type	Projected respondent market share with labelling	By the date
Beer	82.8% – 92%	Mid 2015
Wine	74 – 82%	Mid 2016
Spirits	52 – 58%	Mid 2016
Cider	80 – 90%	End 2014
RTDs	86 – 95%	Mid 2015

4 Conclusion

The survey provides a snapshot of industry steps towards the voluntary adoption of pregnancy labelling. Our key conclusions are:

- approximately half of all beer, wine, cider and RTDs available in New Zealand carry pregnancy labelling (Table 1);
- producers who provide labelling almost universally have used the logo or slogan of the Australian Drinkwise programme (Figure 2);
- while various reasons are most frequently given for not providing labelling (including not being legally required and unnecessary), cost and lack of industry guidelines are not major factors limiting voluntary uptake of labelling (Table 2); and
- most producers who indicated they will achieve 90–100 percent labelling will do so by 2015–2016 (Table 3).