



OIA12-374

24 APR 2013

Alex Harris  
Fyi-request-829-375d21ad@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Alex Harris

## OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

I refer to your request for information of 11 April 2013 concerning rice imports into New Zealand.

You have specifically requested the following information on the testing programme in New Zealand.

1. *Whether there is any testing regime to monitor levels of lead, arsenic and other heavy metals in rice imported into New Zealand*

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) does not undertake routine specific testing for imported rice. However, white rice was tested in the 2009 New Zealand Total Diet Study (NZTDS). For this survey, it was analysed for arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury.

While imported rice is not specifically targeted in the NZTDS given there is little, if any, rice grown commercially in New Zealand, and the purchases for the NZTDS are made at supermarkets, it is not unreasonable to assume that the rice being analysed is largely imported. White rice was sampled in the second and fourth sampling rounds for the 2009 NZTDS. The individual analytical results for each of the four regional samples were released following each sampling round and are available at <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/science-risk/programmes/total-diet-survey.htm>.

The final report for the 2009 NZTDS was released by MPI in December 2011, and is publically available on the following MPI website: <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/elibrary/industry/total-diet-study.pdf>.

You might be interested to know that the Food Standards Code sets out the following limits for lead, cadmium and total arsenic:

- Lead in cereals 0.2mg/kg.
- Cadmium limit for rice 0.1mg/kg
- Total arsenic in cereals 1mg/kg

### Standards

#### Plant, Food & Environment

Pastoral House, 25 The Terrace, PO Box 2526

Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Telephone: 0800 00 83 33, Facsimile: +64-4-894 0300

[www.mpi.govt.nz](http://www.mpi.govt.nz)

2. *If so, any results from that scheme in the last year.*

The NZTDS samples and tests the typical diet of average New Zealanders to measure the presence of residues, contaminants and elements in food and is undertaken by MPI every five years. Hence, there are no results from the TDS for this year (2013). Your request for this information is therefore refused under Section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), as the information does not exist.

You have the right under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of our decision to refuse a part of your request. A request must be made in writing to:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsmen  
PO Box 10 152  
WELLINGTON]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Thomson', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Peter Thomson  
**Director, Plant, Food & Environment**