

## **Food Irradiation: Just a few radiolytic products?**

Irradiation is the process of exposing food to high doses of ionising radiation.

Despite numerous scientific reports which clearly show the harmful effects of consuming irradiated food, Food Standards Australia and New Zealand promotes food irradiation as beneficial technology. By contrast the European Union has placed a hold on further approval, pending more research.

Irradiation changes the molecular structure of food, forming toxic chemicals linked to genetic damage, vitamin deficiency, immune system disorders, tumours, stunted growth and reproductive problems. The ionising radiation forms new chemicals called “radiolytic products”. These have not been adequately studied, and one has been shown to promote cancer development and cause genetic damage in rats, as well as genetic and cellular damage in human and rat cells.

So far, the following foods have been approved for irradiation in Australia: herbs, spices, herbal infusions (teas), and nine tropical fruits (mangoes, paw paws, lychees, longans, mangosteens, rambutans, carambolas, breadfruit and custard apples). Furthermore, non-package items such as fruit are not required to be individually labelled. They need only a sign nearby or at the point of sale, and the language permitted on the sign can be deceptive. Therapeutic or medicinal herbs and health formulations may be irradiated without being labelled, as they are not classified as “food”. Cereal grains fed to animals, bee hives and pet food also needs no label because they are not classified as “food.”

The major supporters of the global food irradiation industry are the nuclear industry, large agribusiness, and multi-national food corporations. Australia’s irradiation applications have all been put forward by irradiation companies: nuclear irradiator – Steritech and proposed X-ray beam irradiator – Surebeam (now Horticulture Access Solutions).

The solution, refuse to buy irradiated products (and say so!), support products and organisation that are irradiation free (the Food Co-op ;), contact companies and voice your concerns, contact your MP and request a ban.

This information was provided by Food Irradiation Watch, a volunteer-based, not-for – profit community network working out of Brisbane. To find out more or become involved visit [www.foodirradiationinfo.org](http://www.foodirradiationinfo.org)