

# MEDIA ALERT



Embargoed until 6am Saturday 17 January, 2008

## **Symposium experts tackle food concerns**

A team of international and Deakin University experts will seek to resolve some of the most critical issues affecting Australia's food supply chain and the impacts this has on public health and regulation at a special symposium this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, January 17 and 18.

The symposium, organised by the University's School of Law, will be opened by Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing.

Head of the School of Law, Professor Anne Rees, said the symposium came at a time of continued concern about the safety and impacts of genetically modified food, the role of additives in food, genetic manipulation of key foods, the use of nanotechnology, the melamine scare in Chinese milk, obesity, interest by the ACCC in claims made by food companies in relation to food and nutrition and governmental concern about regulation of the industry.

"There is not a large nor systematic body of law – even at an international level to address the issues associated with food," she said. Does the law have role to play or do we tackle these issues in other ways?"

Organiser of the Symposium, Professor Danuta Mendelson, said the law was forever playing catch up with the social and scientific developments in this area.

"There is an urgent need for discussion by lawyers, food policy makers and public health professionals about the ramifications of these developments – as much has been acknowledged by the Federal Government which has commissioned reviews of Australia's food regulation system," she said.

"Australia does not exist in a vacuum so we have invited international experts Professors David Jukes, Christine Kaufmann and Margaret Grossman to look at aspects of food law including that relating to GM foods, biotechnology from an international perspective. "

Other speakers include - Professor Bernd van der Meulen who will provide a European perspective and Dr Joan Wright who will look at Food Product Law and how it serves the public interest.

Dr Mona Chung from Deakin's School of Management and Marketing will outline how food is a critical part of doing business in China, while Professor Wenxiang Gong, Ai Ji, Ji Fangfang and Yu Bai will look at food safety in China and the global implications of China's milk crisis.

Professor Richard Ingleby from Deakin University, along with Associate Professor Roger Magnusson Dr Vishaal Kishore and Shelley Miller QC will look at litigation, market choice and obesity.

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Mandatory fortification of bread-making flour with folic acid is due to take effect in Australia from 13 September 2009. Deakin University's Adjunct Professor Joe Lederman argues that the legal process by which mandatory fortification is being introduced was not a thorough process. Professor Lederman argues that there are few legal safeguards in place to protect Australian consumers if this government health intervention were to prove dangerous or if recent contra scientific studies were to outweigh the health benefits claimed by proponents of this mandatory fortification.

Deakin's Professor Boyd Swinburn will outline the use of public policy in preventing obesity while Associate Professor Mark Lawrence will suggest that food policy makers, the legal profession and public health professionals need to work together to develop a food regulatory system that is better able to protect public health in the face of significant chronic disease, social, economic and environmental challenges.

**Where:** Deakin University Management Centre, Deakin University's campus at Waurn Ponds, Pigdons Road, Geelong.

**When:** 9.15am to 5.45pm Saturday, 17 January and 9.15am to 10.15am Sunday, 18 January.

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