Reviewer’s report

Title: Disparities Exist Between National Food Group Recommendations and the Dietary Intakes of Women

Version: 2 Date: 21 July 2011

Reviewer: Malcolm Riley

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you to the authors for considering and responding to my reviewer comments so thoroughly.

As the authors state, every method of estimating dietary intake has inherent limitations. That is accepted. It is also often the case that the measurement instrument isn’t precisely want is required for a specific purpose (this often happens with dietary surveys conducted using one day recall). However it is important to discuss and consider in a study report the limitations of the measurement methods when applied for the specific study purpose. I think the manuscript is improved in this respect.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. The following comment has been misinterpreted: ‘NRVs refer to a range of values – throughout the manuscript name the actual reference value intended rather than the generic term.’ An NRV can be an Adequate Intake, an Estimated Average Requirement, a Recommended Dietary Intake, etc – reference should be made to the specific NRV intended (which I think is the AI/EAR). Reference to ‘the NRVs’ occurs in a few places in the manuscript.

2. The following comment may also have been misinterpreted (and I apologise that the comments were unclear). ‘The method of converting the FFQ categories into the AGHE categories should be given (a conversion table might be shown unless each category had an unambiguous assignment).’ I was referring to the fact that there is sometimes ambiguity about how to assign FFQ categories directly into AGHE categories particularly when the categories are made up of composite foods or foods have a place in two AGHE groups (eg ‘meat pies, pasties, quiche and other savoury pastries’, or ‘Other beans (include chick peas, lentils, etc)’ are two FFQ categories within a widely used Australian FFQ that there might be considered to be some ambiguity about assigning to a AGHE category). The use of AGHE food groups is a central part of the study and explicit guidance about the FFQ responses were converted to AGHE categories seems relevant. The serve size information in the footnote of Table 2 might fulfil this function – but it is not clear whether these represent FFQ categories or AGHE indicators of relative serve sizes. If these do represent the FFQ categories then the clarification is simple by putting (FFQ categories) after the ‘Serve Size’
heading and amending the text on p7 to ‘The portion sizes for each FFQ category used to calculate each food group serving size can be found in Table 2.’.

Discretionary Revision:

3. The amended phrase:
‘Despite past dietary recall being influenced by current intake [38], statistical analyses have been designed to accommodate the constraints of using this dietary assessment tool to improve the validity of results.’ Begs the question ‘what accommodations were made and what constraints are you referring to?’ I think this should be omitted because the statistical analyses are justified when they are described. Without wishing to be prescriptive, perhaps the section could be re-phrased:

Past dietary recall is known to be influenced by current intake [38]. While the inexact alignment of the dietary reference period with the definition of some of the groups may explain some of the lack of difference between groups,...

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I worked for Dairy Australia – a dairy industry services organisation – from 2006-2010. I declare that I have no other competing interests.