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THE SOAPBOX

SHOULD THE HEART FOUNDATION TICK BE SCRAPPED?

Celebrity chef Pete Evans has backed a petition calling for the Heart Foundation's Tick program to be ditched, saying it's outdated. Given what we now know about foods that increase our risk of heart disease, is the program redundant?

For 25 years, shoppers have trusted the Tick logo to help them choose foods that reduce cardiovascular disease risk (a very admirable intention) by limiting saturated fat and sodium and increasing dietary fibre. However, in March 2014, an *Annals of Internal Medicine* article reported that eating less saturated ('bad') fats doesn't lower heart disease risk. This added to the existing debate about fats and whether the Tick promotes healthy choices.

The commercial nature of the program means manufacturers must pay big bucks to be Tick-approved. This has led to many highly processed foods getting the Tick (because they contain nutrients emphasised by the program), while fresh food producers opt out completely.

The fact is, not all fats are bad and reducing them in our food has often led us to replace healthy ones with sugars (the Tick does not focus on sugar content) or types of polyunsaturated fats that, when eaten in excess, may actually promote inflammation in our bodies. But vilifying the National Heart Foundation is unfair, as many of the most vocal supporters of the petition stand to gain financially by selling more of their own diet books.

Bottom line: the Tick program, currently under review by the Heart Foundation, is too simplistic. Keep an eye out for the Federal Government's Health Star Rating system, currently being rolled out – which will detail foods' dietary energy, saturated fat, sugars and sodium plus an overall star ranking of nutritional value.

ABOUT OUR EXPERT
The nutritionist and mum of three is the director of education company Beck Health & Nutrition.