

### **New draft law released for plant products industry**

The State Government released a draft regulation designed to help ensure the continued safety of key segments of the State's fruit and vegetable industries. The draft plant product regulation is the first of its kind in Australia and is specifically designed for businesses that provide products from five key areas: fresh cut fruits, fresh cut vegetables, vegetables in oil, unpasteurised juices and seed and bean sprouts. Under the draft regulation, these businesses will be required to establish food safety programs based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles, with specific elements designed to address traceability, hygiene and overall food handling. Copies of the Regulation and supporting documentation is available at <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/hot-issues.htm> or by contacting the Authority on 1300 552 406.

### **Authority cracks down on illegal use of food preservative, meat substitution**

An investigation into the use of sulphur dioxide in butchers shops found more than half of the samples taken had the preservative illegally present in fresh mince or in levels exceeding those permitted in sausages. Sulphur dioxide is a preservative permitted by the Food Standards Code to slow or prevent deterioration in many foods, but its use can be abused to extend the shelf life of food. In 59 of 101 samples taken, sulphur dioxide was either illegally present or present in excessive levels. The same investigation found a problem with meat substitution, with pork or mutton present in beef mince or pork in lamb mince in two thirds of samples. Officers issued warnings to businesses to take corrective action, which will be checked in follow up visits, and kept samples as evidence for further legal action.

### **Fish substitution project enters second stage**

The NSW Food Authority has commenced work on the second stage of its investigation into the practice of fish substitution. Authority officers have inspected 75 importer and wholesale premises and 88 retail and restaurant premises since the project commenced in May. One serious breach involving fish substitution was identified in Stage 1 (import and wholesale) and the investigation is ongoing. Six warning letters were also issued for matters unrelated to fish substitution. No evidence of fish substitution has been found to date in Stage 2 (retail and restaurant), but five improvement notices and two warnings were issued for unrelated matters, along with an incident of noncompliance with packing standards - since addressed - and sampling of filleted fish in connection with possible incorrect labelling of imported stock for sale. Fish substitution - where one species of fish is deliberately or accidentally sold as another - is illegal and offenders can face fines of up to \$50,000 for individuals or \$275,000 for companies. The project is continuing throughout NSW with 200 retail and restaurant premises scheduled for visits in Stage 2.

### **Help available on food business notification**

The Food Standards Code requires that all food businesses in NSW notify the NSW Food Authority of their food activity details. Since April 2004, new fines of up to \$55,000 for individuals and \$275,000 for corporations can be imposed for failure to notify. NSW businesses can notify the Authority by Internet, which is fast, free and provides an instant Certificate of Confirmation; or paper notification, which incurs a charge of \$55. More information is available from the Authority Notification Help Desk on 1300 650 124 or visiting the Internet site [www.foodnotify.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodnotify.nsw.gov.au). A fact sheet on food business notification is also available at <http://www.safefood.nsw.gov.au/pages/10.fact-sheets.htm>.

### **Authority and industry meet to plan catering food safety**

The NSW Food Authority has established a catering reference group to address food safety in the catering industry and meeting national requirements to implement mandatory food safety systems by mid-2007. The Authority and the catering reference group will work together over the next 18 to 24 months to develop a regulation and model food safety program for the industry. The first action for the group will be a detailed study of the industry's current approach to food safety management, including site visits by Authority officers. The Authority estimates there are at least 3000 catering businesses in NSW who will be affected by the national agreement. Food safety programs will not be introduced before December 2005 with industry continuing to comply with the Food Standards Code.



## How to report food safety concerns in NSW

Australia's first through-chain State food agency invites consumers to contact it to report food safety concerns. The NSW Food Authority has established a Consumer and Industry Contact Centre to respond to queries and complaints about food safety and labelling in NSW. People can telephone the Contact Centre from 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday on 1300 552 406. A voice mail service is available after hours to record messages for attention from the next business day and an emergency after hours service is also available. Alternately, people can email the Contact Centre on [contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) or fax 02 9647 0026. Information for consumers and industry is also available from the Authority's Internet site at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au).

## NSW Food Authority food safety activities for July

The following statistics indicate food safety activity by the NSW Food Authority for July:

- 491 audits were conducted
- 356 inspections were conducted
- Nine investigations of unlicensed businesses were conducted
- 16 investigations of other breaches were conducted
- There were 71 investigations of foodborne disease incidents, of which 31 were outbreaks (involving two or more people with the illness) and including four significant foodborne illness investigations
- 39 improvement notices were issued
- There were 12 occasions of product seizure
- 11 show cause notices were issued
- Nine warning letters were issued
- One licence was cancelled
- One conviction was recorded
- The NSW Food Authority did not initiate any mandatory or voluntary product recalls
- One trade retrieval was conducted
- 28 shellfish harvest area closures occurred
- 17 shellfish harvest area openings occurred
- 84 microbiological samples were taken. There were no sample failures.

## Food Safety Week to protect tiny tummies and sensitive systems

Food Safety Week 2004 will be the week beginning 8 November and will concentrate on getting food safety messages to those catering for people who are particularly at risk of food poisoning - the very young, the elderly and those who have poor immunity because of illness or medical treatment. The Food Safety Information Council, of which the NSW Food Authority is a member, organises Food Safety Week to promote safe food handling in the home. More information on Food Safety Week can be found at [www.foodsafety.asn.au](http://www.foodsafety.asn.au) or by calling the Food Safety Information Council on 02 6254 4896 or mobile 0407 626 688.

## Australia is mad-cow free

Federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss said the European Union has given Australia the highest status of freedom from mad cow disease, putting Australia on par with just a handful of other countries, including New Zealand, which are believed the safest from BSE. Mr Truss attributed Australia's reputation for being free of BSE to long-term bans on the importation of meat and bone meal and a range of stringent surveillance and quarantine requirements.

## Input sought for major changes to health claims on food labels

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has called for public comment into a major new food standard for Nutrition, Health and Related Claims. This follows a recent policy guideline by the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council that foreshadows allowing health claims on food labels. The first round of public consultation continues until 13 October 2004. The second round of consultation on a draft standard should commence in late May 2005 and the final standard is due to be completed by December 2005. A copy of the initial assessment report and submitters' response booklet can be found at the FSANZ Internet site at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment/proposals/proposalp293nutritionhealthandrelatedclaims/index.cfm>.



## New advisory group on the food chain created

A group bringing together consumers, the food industry, retailers and farmers is being created to facilitate consultation and dialogue between the European Commission and European organisations on food safety policy. The Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health will meet twice a year and consist of up to 45 members from EU-level associations (more from [www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?](http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?))

## Tainted wells found on Ohio resort island

Contaminated wells may be the source of the mystery illness that has stricken more than 1000 visitors to an island getaway in Ohio, US. *E. coli* was found in six wells belonging to a deli, a winery, resort cabins, a cave that is a tourist attraction and two residences (FSNet Aug 23/04 II)

## Cases of travel-associated Hepatitis A in Germany

An outbreak of hepatitis A has been detected among tourists returning to Germany from holidays in Egypt. By late August, 100 cases reported in Germany and 16 in other countries had been linked to a particular hotel by the Red Sea. Interviews have determined people from Russia, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden stayed at the same hotel and an international alert was issued on August 26 calling for potentially related cases (FSNet 26/04)

## Botulism from smoked fish in Russia

Ten cases of botulism, including one fatal one involving a 17 year old man, have been recorded in trains which passed through Moscow-Vladivostok, Vladivostok-Novokuznetsk since 12 August. Authorities have attributed the outbreak to sale of food near the carriages (FSNet 26/04)

## First vibrio parahaemolyticus oyster infections in Alaska

The first ever cases of oyster infected by vibrio in Alaska have been reported with 46 people probably contracting vibrio infection after eating oysters and eight more confirmed cases. One oyster farm has been closed and three others have voluntarily stopped selling their oysters until further tests are completed (FSNet Aug 23/04)

## Four dead from scavenged fish

Four people have died after eating contaminated fish scavenged from the Mwakirunge dumping site in Mombasa. They were driven by famine to collect and eat the fish, in spite of its state. Three other people were admitted to hospital suffering from severe diarrhoea and vomiting. More than 100 people were believed to have eaten the contaminated fish - a type of tuna - and it was feared they were suffering without medical help in their village, Mutsengo, which has been stricken by famine. The four who died were thought to have contracted salmonella poisoning. A mobile clinic was established to treat many of the villagers with more than 60 people treated as villagers surrendered some of the contaminated food to doctors and provincial administration staff (FSNet Aug 23/04)

## Two die in separate Legionnaires' outbreaks

In Sweden, two elderly men have died following two outbreaks of the bacterial infection Legionnaire's disease. There were nine confirmed cases and two more suspected in Umea. The Umea outbreak has been linked to an old spraying system at the OBS supermarket that is used to keep fruit and vegetables moist (FSNet Sept 3/04)

## Recall: Smoked salmon for *Listeria*

F. Mayer Imports Pty Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Royal Line Smoked Salmon (product of Denmark) products packed in 100g vacuum packs with use by date 04/09/2004 lot code 2272F distributed in NSW (Sydney metropolitan). Tests have detected high levels of *Listeria monocytogenes*.

## Recall: Yoghurt for *E. coli*

European Gourmet Fine Foods conducted a voluntary recall on its Danny's yoghurt products of various flavours packed in 250g, 350g and 500g plastic tubs with all use by dates distributed in NSW (Sydney metropolitan). Tests have indicated some products may be contaminated with *E. coli*.



### Recall: Frozen oysters for Norovirus

The Kiwi Shop of Joondalup, Western Australia conducted a voluntary recall on its Clevedon Coast Oysters WA (imported from New Zealand) product packed as one dozen oysters sold in plastic tubs with use by dates between 2 July 2004 and 18 July 2004 distributed in Western Australia and New Zealand due to possible Norovirus contamination.

### Recall: Salami for formulation error

Don Smallgoods of Altona North, Victoria conducted a voluntary recall on its Don White Hungarian Salami product packed in 1.5kg whole units with use by dates of 10 Nov 04 and 11 Nov 04 and sliced random weights bought from delis between 28 July 04 and 6 Aug 04 distributed in Victoria, Queensland, NSW and ACT due to a formulation error that may result in microbial spoilage.

### Recall: Drinking chocolate for undeclared allergen

Steric Trading Pty Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Dick Smith Foods Ozechoc Drinking Chocolate products packed in 250g plastic jars with use by dates between Jun 04 and Dec 05 distributed nationally due to possible presence of milk protein in the product. Consumers who suffer from a milk protein allergy or intolerance should not consume this product.

### Recall: Muffins for foreign matter

Susan Day Cakes Pty Ltd of Hallam, Victoria conducted a voluntary recall on its Susan Day Choc Chip Muffins packed in pack of four on plastic tray with flow-wrap - 300g with best before date 04 Sep 04 & Packed 215 distributed in Western Australia and Northern Territory due to small pieces of metal and plastic identified in some packets.

### Recall: Chocolate for undeclared allergen

David Jones of Sydney, NSW conducted a voluntary recall on its Charbonnel et Walker Truffles Chocolate Champagne and Charbonnel et Walker Pink Champagnes Truffles products packed in 130g round box (8 truffles per box) with best before date Dec 04 and lot code DJ0604 distributed in Western Australia, NSW, Victoria and South Australia due to product containing undeclared wheat protein.

### Recall: Salad dressing for undeclared allergen

Goodman Fielder Consumer Foods conducted a voluntary recall on its Paul Newman's Own Light Honey Mustard Dressing products packed in 250ml glass bottles with best before date 23 Jun 2005 distributed nationally. Application of an incorrect back label resulted in an undeclared milk protein. Consumers who suffer from milk protein allergy or lactose intolerance should not consume the product.

### Recall: Olives for foreign matter

Conga Foods Pty Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on its Green Valley Spanish Black Pitted Olives products packed in 350g glass jars with lot code 01V27 C-1870 distributed in Victoria, NSW, Tasmania and the ACT for the possibility of glass fragments in some jars.

Food S@fety Bytes is a publication of the NSW Food Authority, Australia's first completely integrated food safety agency. If you would like to make comments or suggestions, please telephone our Consumer and Industry Contact Centre on 1300 552 406 or email [contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

Please visit our Internet site at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

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