

Authority flies flag for food safety in Beijing



NSW Food Authority Director-General George Davey flew the flag for food safety when he addressed the first ICMSF-China Food Safety International Conference and Food Technology for the Beijing Olympics Seminar in Beijing last month. Mr Davey (pictured left) attended the ICMSF conference from October 21 to 23 to speak on the Sydney experience managing food safety at the 2000 Olympics. The address followed meetings with Beijing Olympics officials, accompanied by Dr Patricia Desmarchelier of Food Science Australia, to provide insight into managing food safety effectively. In his address, Mr Davey explained how food safety was administered in NSW for the 2000 Olympics, describing the planning processes and food safety strategies developed and implemented for the Games. He explained the Athletes Village was then the world's largest temporary kitchen, with 450 kitchen staff and 250 chefs preparing 170 different dishes and 50,000 meals every day on a 24 hour basis. He reported that a food safety strategy was developed, comprising both preventative and investigation/surveillance aspects that were comprehensively tested prior to the Games and supported with experienced and trained staff. Mr Davey said the food safety strategies were very successful, reporting that there were no outbreaks of foodborne illness detected during the Games, there were no public health incidents associated with visiting cruise ships and the Athletes Village served over a million meals without a reported food safety incident.

State and local government working together on food safety

The Food Regulation Partnership was established in mid-2003 and comprises representatives from the Local Government and Shires Association of NSW, the Australian Institute of Environmental Health (NSW Division), Development and Environmental Professionals Association, NSW Department of Local Government, NSW Food Authority and NSW Health. The Partnership is holding workshops throughout NSW from 9 November to 9 December 2004 to consult with local government on food regulation. Workshop participants will respond to a paper published by the Partnership which makes suggestions on roles, funding, support, coordination and issues faced by local government when regulating food safety in NSW. The Partnership will consult directly with stakeholders until 24 December, which is also the final date for written submissions. Responses will be collated and a model for the future role of local government in food regulation will be drafted in February 2005. This model will be presented to stakeholders from March to May 2005 prior to submission to the NSW Government as the proposed way forward from June 2005. The Partnership paper *NSW Food Regulation Partnership - Issues and Options* is available at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au. People wishing to attend a workshop should telephone (02) 9741 4864 or email lgmodel@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au.

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.

Food Authority sponsors and speaks at food safety conference

The NSW Food Authority, with Food Standards Australia New Zealand, SafeFood Qld and Dairy Food Safety Victoria, organised the highly successful inaugural Food Safety Conference on the Gold Coast in Queensland from 11 to 12 October 2004, titled *Food Safety 2004: Future Directions*. The Authority's Director-General George Davey and Chief Scientist Stefan Fabiansson joined speakers from food regulators, industry representatives and interest groups around the world in examining future directions from both a national and international perspective.



Fact sheets available on doner kebabs

The NSW Food Authority has developed a fact sheet on producing doner kebabs safely. The fact sheet provides useful information which is specific to the production of doner kebabs and which applies simple food safety tips on cleanliness, cross-contamination, temperature control and cooking. The fact sheet is available at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au and translated versions in Arabic and Turkish are available by contacting the NSW Food Authority Consumer and Information Contact Centre on telephone 1300 552 406 or email contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au.

Meat retailers reminded about sulphur dioxide use

The NSW Food Authority has reminded meat retailers and butchers that sulphur dioxide and sodium and potassium sulphites in raw meat, poultry and game is expressly prohibited under the Food Standards Code. A notice issued by the Authority on 12 October warned that non-compliance would result in enforcement action without warning. The NSW Food Act 2003 provides for maximum penalties of \$55,000 for individuals and \$275,000 for corporations who breach the Code. A recent Authority investigation found sulphur dioxide either illegally present or present in excessive levels in 59 of 101 samples taken from 50 butchers in the Sydney and Hunter regions.

Food Safety Week to protect tiny tummies and sensitive systems

Food Safety Week 2004 from 8 to 15 November concentrated 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 or by calling the Food Safety Information Council on 02 6254 4896 or mobile 0407 626 688.

Fact sheets available to help food handlers

The NSW Food Authority has published two new fact sheets to help food handlers. The first fact sheet *Health and hygiene requirements of food handlers* explains the responsibilities and requirements of anyone who handles food for human consumption, such as what to do when food handlers are ill and what requirements there are for using gloves. The second fact sheet, *Hepatitis A*, explains the symptoms and management of this disease, which is commonly spread by food. Both facts sheets are available for viewing at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au or by contacting the Consumer and Information Contact Centre on telephone 1300 552 406 or email contact@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au.

NSW Food Authority food safety activities for September

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

- 553 audits were conducted
- 744 inspections were conducted
- 22 investigations of unlicensed businesses were conducted
- 30 investigations of other breaches were conducted
- There were 93 investigations of foodborne disease incidents, of which 45 were outbreaks (involving two or more people with the illness)
- 49 improvement notices were issued
- Four prohibition orders were issued
- There were 2 occasions of product seizure
- Four show cause notices were issued
- 54 warning letters were issued
- There were no licences cancelled
- Two convictions were recorded
- There were no mandatory recalls, three voluntary recalls and no trade retrievals
- There were 50 shellfish harvest area closures and 56 shellfish harvest area openings
- There were 24 microbiological samples were taken and no sample failures



Queensland resident fined for breaching food production safety act

An Inala resident was convicted in October for breaching the Food Production (Safety) Act 2000 by killing chickens in her backyard and processing them for human consumption in a bath tub. Trang Thi Diem Luu pleaded guilty to one count of processing chicken carcasses for supply without an accreditation. Mrs Trang was fined \$2000 and ordered to pay \$63.20 in costs. Officers from Brisbane City Council assisted with the investigation launched by SafeFood Queensland. They found more than 100 dressed or partially dressed chickens at the residence. The defendant told SFQ and BCC officers the 100 dressed chickens were for her own use and that she also planned to give some to friends. It is not an offence under the Act for a person without SafeFood Queensland accreditation to kill and process chickens for their own and their family's use; however, for food safety reasons, it is an offence to supply or intend to supply them to other people (more information available from www.safefood.qld.gov.au).

Australian and Canadian food agencies sign arrangement to share information

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share information about food safety emergency issues that may pose a serious or unacceptable risk or threat to the health of consumers. FSANZ is developing agreements with other countries to share interests, have a common purpose and build an infrastructure. Last year FSANZ signed a MOU with the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology to ensure ongoing collaboration in the important areas of food safety. This latest MOU will enable both CFIA and FSANZ to assist with protecting public health and safety by allowing us to share information at the earliest possible time when there is a food emergency that puts the health of consumers at risk (more from www.foodstandards.gov.au)

Plague in China's northwest kills eight

Eight Chinese villagers have died of plague in the country's northwest, most of them infected after killing or eating wild marmots. The story reported by the official Xinhua News Agency notes that 19 people fell ill with the disease in early October in Hiligou, a village in Qinghai province. Some cases are still under investigation but all others are farmers who killed or ate marmots. The other 11 people had recovered (FSNet Oct 27/04 II)

Safefood scoops safety award

Safefood, a government agency which promotes food safety and nutrition in the north and south of Ireland, has been rewarded for its creative and innovative approach to communicating food safety messages with a special award at the prestigious foodlink Communicating Food Safety Awards held in London recently. Run by the UK Food and Drink Federation, the Awards recognise and reward the nation's top environmental health and infection control teams for their imaginative approaches to communicating important food safety messages. This was the first time foodlink had presented a special award. The judges felt that safefood, which ran its campaign in schools throughout the island of Ireland, deserved special recognition for its outstanding entry (FSNet Oct 27/04)

Singapore blames seafood for rare cholera outbreak

Singapore blamed a deadly two-week cholera outbreak on bad seafood. Singapore's first outbreak of cholera since 1999 infected nine people, including an 89 year old man who died from the illness. Reports claimed the Ministry of Health said investigations of food stalls and restaurants established that contaminated seafood caused the outbreak (FSNet Oct 27/04).

Safe hangi guide's value underlined by illnesses

There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the New Zealand Food Safety Authority's (NZFSA) guide on safe food practices in preparing and cooking a hangi. The guide was developed following a 1997 case when 63 people were affected with foodborne illness at an Auckland hui. The NZFSA reported hangi food had been implicated in other outbreaks, including a salmonella outbreak late last year affecting at least 64 people, including six hospitalised, two with septicaemia and one near death with kidney failure. Using full-colour photographs, the step-by-step guide explains buying, storing and preparing hangi food, pit preparation, heating the hangi stones, serving the food – and what to do with the leftovers – while re-emphasising food safety practices at each stage (more from www.nzfsa.govt.nz).



NZ food review enters first phase of consultation

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) has released the first set of discussion documents as part of its Domestic Food Review, a major overhaul of New Zealand's food regulatory programme. Domestic food covers all food produced and sold in New Zealand, including food sold in supermarkets, cafes and restaurants and imported food for sale. In the first phase of public consultation, submissions are invited on four 2004 papers – a fifth is to be released later in the year – which propose changes to the way the New Zealand food supply is regulated. The Domestic Food Review is a major long-term project for NZFSA and is likely to run over the next five years. It aims to introduce a food regulatory programme that will apply across the board and deliver on a number of key policies and objectives. Decisions made as a result of the review have the potential to affect every food producer in New Zealand – from large factories to the corner dairy, through to restaurants and takeaways. It is only the second time in the past 30 years that the government's role in the New Zealand domestic food sector has been critically examined at official level. The last review was undertaken in the late 1980s and led to the Food Amendment Act 1996 and, eventually, the establishment of NZFSA. The ultimate aim of this review is to improve food safety for consumers and ensure that people selling food are responsible for that safety. NZFSA is inviting all those involved in food production, preparation, handling or delivery to have their say on the papers. All current and future concept papers will be available on the NZFSA website or by contacting NZFSA on hotline 0800 NZFSA 1 (0800 693 721) or email info@nzfsa.govt.nz

Recall: Wine for glass fragments

Beckett's Flat Pty Ltd of Busselton, WA conducted a voluntary recall on its Becketts Flat Cabernet Merlot 2001 product packed in 750ml antique green glass bottles bottled in 2001 distributed in Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria due to the possibility that products may contain small glass fragments.

Recall: Ravioli for undeclared allergen

Hormel Foods Pty Ltd of Rydalmere, NSW conducted a voluntary recall on its Kid's Kitchen Mini Beef Ravioli in Tomato Sauce product packed in 213g plastic microwave tubs with best before dates Jun 2005, Jul 2005, Aug 2005 and Sep 2005 distributed nationally due to it containing undeclared egg whites. Consumers who suffer from an egg protein allergy should not consume this product.

Recall: Custard for bacterial contamination

Dairy Farmers of Homebush Bay, NSW conducted a voluntary recall on its Shrek Chocolate Custard (12 x 100g), Shrek Vanilla Custard (12 x 100g), Shrek Split Pack Vanilla Custard and Jelly (190g), Dairy Farmers Chocolate Custard (12 x 100g), Dairy Farmers Vanilla Custard (12 x 100g) and Dairy Farmers Thick Vanilla Custard (6 x 140g) products with best before dates up to and including 10/11/04 distributed nationally as bacterial contamination may cause the product to spoil before the best before date.

Recall: Ravioli for undeclared allergen

Kraft Foods Ltd of Fishermans Bend, Victoria conducted a voluntary recall on its Kraft Ravioli Bolognese product packed in 410g cans with best before dates up to and including 09 AUG 2006 distributed nationally due to the presence of undeclared egg. Consumers who suffer from an egg allergy should not consume this product.

Recall: Cookies for undeclared allergen

Fontelle Pty Ltd and Woolworths Ltd conducted a voluntary recall on Woolworths Freshness Guaranteed Fruity Muesli Cookies product packed in 400g clear bag with attached label with best before date 17 March 05 distributed nationally due to the presence of undeclared peanuts. Consumers who suffer from a peanut allergy or intolerance should not consume this product.

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
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