

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 20 August 2014

Summary of meeting outcomes

New Food Authority Product Record Book

At the previous meeting of the NSWSC it was agreed that the NSW Food Authority harvested product record book be revised, with assistance on the structure of the book by industry members of the committee to align with the audit verification program being implemented across the shellfish industry. The revised harvested product record book has been circulated to industry members and is currently in use.

Shellfish Industry Economic Plan

A shellfish industry economic steering committee was established at the May NSWSC meeting with the initial steering committee meeting being held 18 August 2014 to discuss the economical status and future pathway for the industry. The steering committee is industry run with administrative assistance provided by NSW DPI Fisheries.

Harvest & Hold Policy Progresses

It is understood that a window of opportunity exists for shellfish to be safely harvested between sample collection and result reporting when local programs are seeking a harvest area opening. Although this occurs infrequently, when it does occur it is often during times of peak harvest periods in the summertime when rainfall events are common in occurrence where shellfish can be harvested without compromising food safety. A NSW Food Authority policy designed around harvesting product and holding it in the period between testing and result reporting was endorsed by the committee. It is important to note that policy is not implemented as yet and is still being considered by the NSW Food Authority.

Marine Biotoxin Management Plan Update

The Tasmanian biotoxin issue in 2013 prompted a review of algal and biotoxin sampling regimes. To ensure that market access can be maintained the Federal Department of Agriculture asked each state to review their biotoxin management plan to include specific performance based compliance measures. To meet this requirement, it was agreed that the NSW Marine Biotoxin Management Plan be amended to include local programs that are 3 days in excess of either algal or biotoxin sampling or 7 days in excess of algal or biotoxin result reporting would be closed until the sampling regime is resumed. The Shellfish Committee agreed that this is not an additional regulation but rather a strengthening of current requirements.

Raft Suitability Assessment Criteria

NSWSC approved a set of criteria that NSW DPI use to assess whether a lease area is suitable for raft cultivation. The criteria will be published in a revised version of the Raft Cultivation Best Practice Guidelines on the NSW DPI website.

Aquaculture Trust Advice to the Minister

Previously, advice on the Aquaculture Trust was considered at the former Seafood Industry Advisory Council; however the new Fisheries Advisory Council does not have a majority of aquaculture industry members and does not meet statutory requirements as a suitable replacement. NSWSC agreed to take on this role and endorsed the 2014/15 Aquaculture Trust budget.

Port Stephens Pacific Oyster Mortality

Mortality in Port Stephens Pacific Oysters in recent years has raised concerns in estuaries receiving Port Stephens oysters. Biosecurity has no presumptive reason to quarantine Port Stephens as there has been no evidence of a known transmissible disease. NSWSC agreed that DPI Biosecurity disseminate information on the investigation more broadly and consider holding regional workshops particularly at Pambula and the Clyde.

The next meeting is to be held on 19 November 2014