

NSW Shellfish Committee

Wednesday 20 November 2013

Summary of meeting outcomes

The NSW Shellfish Committee (NSWSC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 20 November 2013. Specific issues considered by the NSWSC at its meeting are detailed below.

NSW Wild Harvest industry update

Due to a number of new licensees into the wild harvest sector the NSW Food Authority (NSWFA) issued a reminder general circular and an updated food safety plan to all wild harvest licensees to provide a clear direction on classification requirements and E. coli testing requirements. NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will enforce a seasonal closure on the take of wild harvest shellfish from 1 December 2013 to 1 June 2014.

Outstanding local shellfish program fees

An issue was raised by industry members on the perceived high level of unpaid local shellfish program fees. NSWFA advised that the current level of unpaid debt is 3.8% across all local shellfish programs. This level is relatively low. Reminders to pay local shellfish program fees are provided 90 days, 60 days, and 30 days with a final 14 day show cause letter being provided. All possible attempts are made to recover local program fees with many businesses requesting leniency through paying fees via an approved instalment process. Some local shellfish programs have opted to account for a level of bad debt when setting their annual local program budget.

Tasmanian Paralytic Shellfish Toxin (PST) event review

The technical review of the Tasmanian Paralytic Shellfish Toxin event has been published and is available for download from the [FRDC website](#). The Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee is considering producing guidance material to assist state regulatory agencies with risk management frameworks for algal related food safety concerns for shellfish. Any changes proposed that include additional cost and increased level of testing would need to be based on a cost risk benefit analysis. There was general agreement that industry cannot sustain a large increase in testing regimes.

DPI production figures

NSW DPI proposed a number of changes to simplify the annual production return. Lease self auditing has been removed and tables consolidated. Changes to the report detailing aquaculture production were also proposed and agreed too. It was noted that even after a second reminder letter, only 64% of industry had returned production figures in 2013. This information greatly assists industry management, research and support. DPI will look to introduce actions as used for commercial fishers in 2014 where those failing to return forms on time will be required to attend a fisheries office to lodge the return

POMS incursion response

Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS) incursion response policy has been drafted by NSW Biosecurity. The policy includes making quarantine orders for areas confirmed as being POMS affected and preventing the movement of infrastructure and shellfish from these estuaries. Industry members advised that some estuaries rely on spat purchased from other estuaries and would not remain viable if quarantine orders were placed on certain spat producing estuaries. It was suggested that a proactive decision by local program committees is made to allow receipt of spat from POMS affected areas. This was supported by NSW Biosecurity. It is advisable that this is brought up at the local shellfish program annual general meetings yearly and captured in the minutes of the meeting.

The next meeting is to be held on 19 February 2014