Longfresh in for the long haul

The establishment of Longfresh over two years ago was a result of Managing Director David Byrne’s experience working in the food industry and his recognition of what is at stake when undertaking the high risk production of manufacturing food in the ready-to-eat (RTE) space.

The name Longfresh sums up their operations – they provide longer shelf life for fresh foods.

There are a number of RTE foods supplied across the marketplace, many produced using different methods, but all delivering a product which meets the necessary food safety requirements and therefore, safe to consume.

Recognising that there are a lot of different foods and liquids that don't handle heat well, or where heat pasteurisation may destroy the product, Longfresh saw High Pressure Processing (HPP) - a cold pasteurisation process, as an alternative option to processing RTE foods to deliver a food safety outcome. HPP places foods in their ready for market packaging under enormous water pressure. Pressures can be many times greater than found at the bottom of the deepest ocean, effecting cold pasteurisation.

The application of pressure delivers many benefits. First and foremost it provides a kill step, a critical control point in the food safety chain. Additionally, it provides an extension of shelf life of a product without the addition of preservatives or additives.

It also retains the nutrient profile and has little or no effect on the enzymatic activity of foods and liquids.

To put it simply, what comes out is exactly what went in – minus any potential spoilage organisms or target foodborne pathogens and with a significantly extended chilled shelf life.

Not only do consumers benefit from consuming food that has gone through HPP as these foods are not only safe but nutritious and free from additives, the peace of mind for manufacturers in knowing that their food is highly unlikely...
Updated resources

February 2015
- Pregnancy brochure

March 2015
- Food safety guidelines for the preparation of raw egg products

April 2015
- Safe preparation of raw egg products
- Cleaning & sanitising in food businesses

RTO Forum – 11 May

The Food Authority recently hosted a Forum for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) with approximately 70 people from RTOs approved under the Food Authority’s Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) program attending the event.

The Food Act 2003 (NSW) requires certain food businesses in the NSW hospitality and retail food service sector to employ at least one trained FSS whose aim is to prevent individuals from becoming ill from food poisoning as a result of incorrect handling and preparation of food. RTOs approved by the Food Authority deliver FSS training for the purpose of issuing FSS certificates.

With the first round of FSS certificates due to expire this September, the RTO Forum was an opportunity for the Food Authority to consult with approved RTOs on the FSS refresher training program and recertification. A detailed Q&A session provided the opportunity for RTOs to give feedback and recommendations on how the Food Authority can improve the program. This included discussion on the development of training and assessment materials for FSS refresher training on three key subject areas – allergen management, cleaning and sanitising, and handling eggs. These have been identified as key food safety issues in the hospitality and retail food service sector.

Overall, the 2015 RTO Forum was a success. The Food Authority aims to strengthen its partnership with RTOs under the FSS program and help them deliver a consistent refresher training option from September 2015.

The Food Authority aims to strengthen its partnership with RTOs under the FSS program.
Food Allergy is your Business

Food Allergy Week, an initiative by Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, ran from 17 – 23 May this year. Food Allergy Week aims to increase awareness and understanding of food allergies and help protect those at risk.

There are over 170 foods now known to have triggered severe allergic reactions. However, 90% of reactions are caused by nine foods – cow’s milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts, sesame, soy, shellfish, wheat and fish. It is estimated that up to 2% of adults, 1 in 10 babies* and 6% of children have a food allergy and some of them will experience anaphylaxis – a life-threatening allergic reaction.

President of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, Maria Said, said “Australia has one of the highest reported incidences of food allergies in the world, and 1 in 10 babies* born in Australia today will develop a food allergy.”

Australia has one of the highest reported incidences of food allergies in the world.

"With so many children and adults at risk, ensuring that our wider community can help prevent allergic reactions from occurring, but also recognise the symptoms of a reaction and know what to do in an emergency, is key. Not only does this help in reducing hospitalisation rates, in some cases, it potentially prevents death."

The food industry has a responsibility to manage food allergens and assist customers with food allergies, by providing accurate food ingredient information and reducing the risk of cross contamination in food preparation.

Food manufacturers are responsible for managing the presence of food allergens and ensuring their products are clearly and accurately labelled.

Food service businesses have a responsibility to keep their customers safe by providing accurate information on the allergen status of products, and ensuring best practice food preparation and storage procedures to avoid cross contamination.

Importers are responsible for ensuring their imports are properly labelled in accordance with Australian labelling legislation and for providing clear and accurate information about the allergen status of their product.

Food labelling laws in Australia state that the nine most common allergens must be declared on packaging. Gluten and sulphites must also be declared on food labels of packaged foods.

Food business staff play a key role in that they need to understand their obligations and responsibilities to customers, why it is important for people with food allergies to avoid trigger foods and how to respond appropriately when consumers disclose their allergy.

NSW Food Authority and local councils help food businesses to understand their responsibilities and ensure foods are labelled correctly. Food Safety Supervisor training now includes an Allergen Management learning module. There are also a number of resources available to raise awareness of food allergies in your business including the Be Prepared Be Allergy Aware booklet. For more information visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

With over 4 million cases of food poisoning in Australia every year and with hand hygiene identified as one of the most common causes, it was a great opportunity to once again spread the message (and not the germs) that clean hands are safe hands at this year’s Royal Easter Show (the Show).

Together with NSW Department of Primary Industries, the Food Authority had a strong presence at the Show promoting the theme “Safe food starts in the paddock and ends on your plate” providing showgoers with a hands-on opportunity to learn more about the importance of safe food, biosecurity and aquaculture in the context of the Food Farm.

The Show is the Food Authority’s flagship consumer event and 2015 proved another highly successful year. Almost 40,000 visitors to the stand took part in the interactive “Clean hands are safe hands” display, testing correct hand washing techniques with a special Glitterbug potion and UV light.

Correctly washing your hands is an important step for everyone, particularly for food handlers where it is a legal requirement. Proper and thorough handwashing removes dirt, leftover food, grease and harmful bacteria and viruses from your hands, preventing them from spreading to food, work surfaces and equipment.

Feedback from visitors was extremely positive, with many return visitors from last year. Some visitors who work in schools, pre-schools or hospitality expressed interest in running the activity in their workplaces.

Feedback from visitors was extremely positive, with many return visitors from last year.

New Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Lands and Water, Niall Blair, also visited the display in his first week in the role.

More information on handwashing in food businesses can be found on the Food Authority’s website.

Hands on at the Royal Easter Show

Book your spot – Third Party Auditor Workshop

The Food Authority’s Regulatory Food Safety Auditor (RFSA) System, allows the Food Authority to approve persons, other than Food Authority employees, to conduct regulatory food safety audits of certain licensed businesses in NSW. These auditors are also known as Third Party Auditors (TPAs).

The Food Authority will be holding 2 x one-day workshops for TPAs at the beginning of August. The aim of the workshops is to bring together TPA professionals to discuss developments in food safety auditing via a series of presentations and open forum discussions.

The focus of the first workshop scheduled for Wednesday 5 August will be on the dairy industry while the focus of the second workshop scheduled for Thursday, 6 August will be on the vulnerable persons industry.

Although participation is voluntary, TPAs are encouraged to attend one or both of the workshops to better understand the process, expectations and requirements of third party auditing from a through-chain perspective which encompasses regulators, auditors, and industry.

TPAs and representatives from third party auditing organisations can register for one or both workshops depending on the industries they audit, and there is no cost for attending.

Both workshops will be held at the NSW Food Authority head office in Newington. For further information, or if you wish to register, email AuditAdmin@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
Country of origin labelling for unpackaged meat

As part of the Federal Government reforms to country of origin labelling laws, the Food Standards Code was extended to include the requirement for raw unpackaged Australian retail meat at the point-of-sale to be labelled with country of origin.

The NSW Food Authority supported and led a national approach to the labelling of unpackaged Australian meat with a single country of origin sign. The use of a single sign is a common sense approach that reduces compliance costs for meat retailers.

While the Food Authority understands that meat retailers display a wide range of products in store, the majority of unpackaged meat offered for sale is a Product of Australia. In these circumstances, the retailer may provide a single country of origin declaration rather than reproduce a statement on each product.

Approval was recently given on the wording of the proposed sign and the Food Authority is currently drafting guidance material to assist industry in the use of the sign, including visual information on the correct and incorrect positioning of the sign – see right.

Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted 234 inspections and 574 audits of licensed meat businesses. This industry sector has maintained a compliance rate with 86% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the meat sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Audits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Inspections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that products such as sausages, rissoles, schnitzels and kebabs may have Australian meat but also ingredients that may be imported (value-added products) – therefore, these products cannot be declared as a Product of Australia.

It is important to note, that products such as sausages, rissoles, schnitzels and kebabs may have Australian meat but also ingredients that may be imported (value-added products) – therefore, these products cannot be declared as a Product of Australia.

You should ensure these value-added products are displayed separately from unpackaged raw meat.

To assist in implementing this requirement, the Food Authority is currently developing guidance material, including access to a sign template, which will be available by the end of June and meat retailers will be advised as soon as this is finalised. It is expected that the display of a single sign for country of origin of raw unpackaged Australian retail meat at the point-of-sale will commence at all retail meat premises from July 2015.
Meat Industry Consultative Council, March 2015

Issues considered by the council at its meeting on Wednesday 11 March included;

Figures from Food Safety Program compliance report 1 July – 31 December 2014 included 684 acceptable rated audits, 91 failed audits and 464 inspections. With a total audit failure rate in the retail meat sector of 11.2%, this is a slight improvement from the previous reporting period of 12%. During the reporting period, none of the retail meat businesses that failed a compliance audit also failed their follow up audit, indicating that licensees are implementing effective corrective actions in response to audit failures.

Enforcement activities in the meat and poultry sector during the reporting period included the issue of 133 improvement notices, 34 penalty notices, eight warning letters, one prohibition order and two product seizures.

The Committee received an update on the Food Authority’s microbiological verification & surveillance program, which involves ongoing random sampling and testing of selected ready-to-eat products manufactured in NSW.

Members were advised of the work that the Food Authority has done to identify and evaluate areas of non-compliance in the retail meat industry in order to promote training strategies targeted to these businesses.

A 12-month pilot program to report on Key Food Safety Indicator (KFSI) monitoring in NSW poultry producers was implemented by the Food Authority last year with reporting of KFSIs commencing in August 2014. The Food Authority advised that initial results have been extremely encouraging and are very happy with the cooperation of the companies involved. Members who have been involved also expressed their support of the project as the findings inform their own processes.

The committee was provided with an update on animal welfare training programs in non-red meat abattoirs which saw nationally recognised animal welfare training courses for poultry processors commence in late November 2014. Additionally, guidance material outlining requirements was developed by the Food Authority with officers being trained and equipped to personally deliver this training package to all medium and small abattoirs and assist in implementing the requirements. This was completed by 31 March 2015.

The committee was advised that the country of origin law had been extended to include the following raw meat products; beef, veal, lamb, hogget, mutton and chicken and that the Food Authority has supported a national approach to the labelling of raw meat with a single country of origin sign. The Food Authority advised they are currently working on the development of guidance materials to assist industry in the use of the single sign and this will be issued before the implementation starts to occur from July 2015.

Prosecutions – Illegal use of sulphur dioxide in meat products

A Sydney butcher was recently prosecuted and fined $12,950 by the NSW Food Authority and ordered to pay an additional $3,870 in costs for breaches of the Food Standards Code relating to the prohibited use of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) in beef mince, and at levels in exceeding prescribed limits in sausages. In a separate case, another Sydney butcher was also recently prosecuted and fined $2,500 and ordered to pay an additional $2,385 in costs to the Food Authority for committing the same offence.

The charges were brought under Section 21(2) of the Food Act 2003: Sell food that did not comply with a requirement of the Food Standards Code that relates to that food. Specifically, Standard 1.3.1 (food additives).

The breaches were detected during routine testing of butcher shops for the presence of sulphur dioxide by the Food Authority.

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) is a chemical used as a preservative and colour fixative in some foods. It is permitted in controlled doses in certain products such as sausages, but is not permitted at all in raw meat cuts or minced meat.

Some people, particularly asthmatics, are sensitive to sulphur dioxide. When ingested it may trigger typical asthma symptoms. Due to this, its use in foods is strictly controlled by the Food Standards Code.

The Food Authority will continue to check for, and take enforcement action against, licensed businesses that illegally add preservatives to meat products where they are not permitted.

Details of both cases have since been added to the Name & Shame Register of offences (prosecutions) list on the Food Authority website.
The Food Authority’s expertise in global shellfish safety issues was recently acknowledged when Anthony Zammit, Manager of the NSW Shellfish Program, co-chaired the 10th International Conference on Molluscan Shellfish Safety (ICMSS) held in Chile, 15–20 March 2015.

ICMSS is the world’s premier conference on shellfish safety and is attended by individuals from the seafood, public health, seafood quality assurance and algal bloom management sectors.

Regulators and researchers from 30 countries discussed seafood safety and current science on vibrios, viruses, biotoxins and shellfish restoration.

Key developments discussed at the conference included the determination of key drivers for large scale Vibrio illness outbreaks, improvements in understanding the dynamics of toxic algal bloom events leading to improved management strategies, new rapid methods for the quantification of paralytic shellfish toxins, improvements in the understanding of norovirus survival and breakthroughs in the use of male-specific coliphage (MSC) in the detection of municipal sewerage system failures.

In particular, the developments in understanding the relationship between MSC and human sewage pollution risk has the potential to improve food safety outcomes for shellfish consumers while minimising closure periods for industry. Improved assessment of the impact of sewage discharges through the monitoring of MSC levels can lead to faster re-opening of shellfish harvest areas after sewage spills.

Routine monitoring of MSC levels has been used in the United States to detect intermittent leaks, and work undertaken by the United States Food and Drug Administration has led to insights in the relationship between MSC levels and sewerage leaks. Determination of background MSC levels is the key, with significant deviations above background levels indicating a sewerage system leak or sewage treatment plant failure. There is a program of work to be undertaken in determining background MSC levels in NSW estuaries before this methodology can be applied.

Anthony was also recently appointed as a member of the international advisory committee for the next ICMSS Conference which is due to be held in Ireland in 2017.

The work of the Food Authority is underpinned by the use of sound science and evidence to identify, evaluate and manage emerging food safety issues.

Recently, the Food Authority partnered with researchers from the University of Technology Sydney to study the impact of ocean temperatures on the way oysters absorb toxins, in an attempt to prepare for the forecasted effects of climate change.

The research was published in the Global Change Biology journal, a highly regarded scientific journal and the lead author was Dr Hazel Farrell, Shellfish Operations Officer for the Food Authority. Dr Farrell worked with the Food Authority’s NSW Shellfish Program Manager, Anthony Zammit and a team of scientific researchers to deliver the findings which involved a large-scale feeding experiment on several different oyster types kept at two different temperatures.

Results were mixed, showing that the Sydney rock oyster and the diploid form of the Pacific oyster absorbed less toxins in warmer temperatures, but found that the toxin removal process had slowed down. The research team plan to conduct sampling during an actual algal bloom event to determine if the variations between species are similar in the field. This kind of information helps guide decisions by farmers and the Food Authority about future oyster production.


### Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted 43 inspections and 119 audits of licensed seafood businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 94% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the seafood sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Audits</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inspections</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Dr Hazel Farrell, Shellfish Operations Officer, NSW Food Authority
validate this methodology in NSW waters.

The committee noted a paper outlining the Harvest and Hold Policy (Scheme) had been largely well received by industry. Members were advised that the Food Authority was assisting with sample collection as well as contributing expertise.

A report was tabled for information on a compliance project/survey conducted last year between September and November which focussed on inspecting 152 seafood businesses that displayed unpackaged seafood for retail sale to check for compliance with country of origin requirements and correct naming of seafood. Refer to the article in this section for further information.

Members noted a report tabled for information on the Health Star Rating labelling system and its application to the seafood industry. This system gives manufactured and packaged food products a star rating for their overall nutritional value and is voluntary for manufacturers at this stage.
Country of origin and fish name compliance

The Food Authority is committed to Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) and recognises the need to have an educative approach to CoOL in order to increase business awareness of the requirement and raise the level of compliance.

The Food Standards Code (the Code) states under Standard 1.2.11 that unpackaged seafood must be labelled on (or in connection with) the display, with a declaration of the country or countries of origin, or an indication that the seafood is a mix of local and imported foods, or a mix of imported foods. Standard 2.2.3 of the Code, Fish and Fish Products, provides guidance to assist in identifying the names of fish.

The Food Standards Code (the Code) states under Standard 1.2.11 that unpackaged seafood must be labelled on (or in connection with) the display, with a declaration of the country or countries of origin, or an indication that the seafood is a mix of local and imported foods, or a mix of imported foods.

Between September and November 2014, the Food Authority implemented a country of origin and fish names compliance project (the Project) that examined the CoOL compliance and the correct use of fish names at retail seafood businesses.

The objectives of the Project were to:

- provide the retail seafood businesses that are inspected during this project with information about how to meet their legal obligations in relation to CoOL and fish naming of the seafood being sold
- obtain current data on the compliance baselines of retail seafood businesses with country of origin legislation and fish naming
- compare the current compliance baseline data with data obtained from the 2006 joint Food Authority and Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries operation
- collect intelligence on the type of seafood (cephalopods, finfish, crustaceans and bivalve molluscs) that is either incorrectly labelled with the country of origin or falsely described.

The Project was conducted over a nine week period and involved the inspection of 152 seafood premises across NSW that displayed unpackaged seafood for retail sale.

Compliance rates of the 152 seafood businesses inspected were found to be 67% for CoOL and 96% for fish naming, highlighting the need for improvement in relation to CoOL. However, it should be noted that many of the CoOL issues detected were minor or technical in nature and, overall, retailers demonstrated a clear intention to comply with the requirements.

Through the course of the project, Food Authority officers found there was some confusion by seafood retailers as to the use of prescribed statements in CoOL with some retailers using words in line with the 2006 legislation rather than the more prescriptive legislation.

A number of other barriers to compliance were also identified but these were largely found to be due to legislative interpretation issues, unfamiliarity or inadequate compliance systems rather than deliberate labelling breaches.

All seafood businesses inspected as part of the project were provided with information and advice to enable a thorough understanding of their legislative obligations in regards to CoOL and the correct naming of fish. The Food Authority also spent time talking to the proprietors to help them understand how best to apply CoOL.

A follow up on compliance is proposed for 2015 and information obtained from this project will be used to assist the seafood retail sector in complying with legislative requirements.
Issues considered by the committee at the meeting held in Sydney on 6 May included:

Figures from Food Safety Program compliance report 1 July – 31 December 2014 included 310 acceptable rated audits and 16 failed audits with 486 inspections carried out on dairy food transport vehicles with five failed audits reported. This represents a compliance rate within the sector of around 95% which is a positive outlook for the dairy industry.

A compliance rate within the sector of around 95% which is a positive outlook for the dairy industry.

The data showed that during the reporting period, there were three audit items that had increased observed levels of critical issues. These were process control, analytical testing and construction and maintenance issues.

310 acceptable rated audits and 16 failed audits with 486 inspections carried out on dairy food transport vehicles with 5 failed audits reported.

Enforcement activities in the dairy sector during the reporting period included the issue of 23 improvement notices and three warning letters. There were no product seizures or foodborne illness investigations conducted in the dairy sector during this time.

Members noted work that the Food Authority is doing in regard to the Third Party Audit (TPA) program in the last 12 months (refer to the article in this section). Improvements to this program will also include a review of TPA Manuals and work on the professional development of TPAs through training programs and auditor workshops.

The committee received an update on the implementation of the revised Standard 4.2.4, Primary Production & Processing Requirements for Raw Milk Products in which they were advised that the Food Authority had met with a national technical committee to ensure consistency across all jurisdictions regarding how these products are approved in the market place.

The committee was also made aware of a survey that the Food Authority had commenced in March 2015 which is looking at markets and health food stores to monitor where raw bath milk has been sourced. The Food Authority will continue to investigate the retail sale of this product. Members were also reminded that the issue is being addressed at a national level through the Forum on Food Regulation.

An update was provided to members in relation to a widespread Listeria outbreak and product recall in the United States linked to Blue Bell ice cream. The committee was advised that this was an unusual incident and that Australia has a very good history with ice cream which is classed as a low risk product.

Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted 30 inspections and 232 audits of licensed dairy businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 95% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the dairy sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Audits</td>
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<td>232</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Inspections</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Review of the Third Party Auditor program for dairy farms

For the last five years, the Food Authority has operated a system to approve and license private Third Party Auditors (TPA) as regulatory auditors so they can conduct audits on behalf of the Food Authority. Approximately 98% of NSW dairy farms are approved to utilise this system and have a TPA conduct their Food Authority audit instead of a NSW Food Authority auditor.

To ensure the system continues to deliver value to industry and the Food Authority, the compliance team recently reviewed this system and has been working closely with all dairy processing companies operating in NSW to ensure that the dairy farm audits are being conducted on time and that any overdue farms are made a priority. Farm services representatives at each processor have organised TPAs to conduct the farm audits and farms that have not been audited can expect to be contacted by their farm services representative or a TPA in the near future to schedule their audit. The Food Authority will continue ongoing communications with each processor to ensure that all licensed dairy farms are audited at the correct schedule to ensure that targets are achieved.

As a part of the review of the TPA program, the Food Authority will be conducting verification reviews of the TPAs to ensure that all audits are being conducted to the highest possible standard. This involves a senior Food Authority officer inspecting a number of farms that have recently been audited by a TPA to confirm the audit findings. This inspection will also provide an opportunity for farmers to provide feedback to the Food Authority on the audit program. There is no charge to the farmer for the inspection.

All dairy farms should have a Food Safety Program (FSP) that reflects the practices and processes for milking cows. Part of the FSP is maintaining records of key food safety areas such as animal drug treatment records, use of agricultural chemicals, maintenance and hygiene checks, and milk vat temperatures. Any farm that does not have a FSP or monitoring records should immediately contact their farm services representative at the processor they supply and organise to obtain the FSP and commence recording so that they can be ready for their audit.

There are several food industry sectors that can apply to use a TPA. These include:

- hospitals, aged care, meals on wheels and Vulnerable Population (VP) central processing units
- cold storage storing fresh meat
- seafood processors
- plant products processors.

For further information on the TPA program, visit the website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/audits-compliance/tpa](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/audits-compliance/tpa)

The level of risk associated with the commercial supply of raw cow’s milk products for human consumption cannot be sufficiently reduced.

The Forum, which comprises Australian and New Zealand ministers responsible for food regulation, found that the level of risk associated with the commercial supply of raw cow’s milk products for human consumption cannot be sufficiently reduced.


Raw Milk vs Raw Milk Cheese (article in Food Australia)

The Food Authority’s Chief Scientist Dr Lisa Szabo and Senior Technical Officer Bruce Nelan co-authored an article for a recent issue of Food Australia Magazine explaining decisions made at the Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (the Forum) earlier this year regarding raw milk and raw milk products.

The level of risk associated with the commercial supply of raw cow’s milk products for human consumption cannot be sufficiently reduced.
Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted 25 inspections and 30 audits of licensed egg businesses. This industry sector has recorded a high compliance rate with 94% of businesses recording an acceptable audit.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the egg sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
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<td>Total Inspections</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
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Salmonella workshops

The Food Authority works in partnership with industry and local councils to deliver programs that raise awareness of the risk of Salmonella outbreaks linked to eggs, and to also introduce interventions aimed at reducing the number of outbreaks occurring.

As a result, in contrast to previous years, 2014/15 data (to date) shows a downward trend in the overall size of Salmonella outbreaks linked to eggs.

Of these, the largest outbreaks have been attributed to cross contamination and hygiene breaches.

However, the Food Authority continues to investigate multiple Salmonella outbreaks involving raw egg foods.

In late March, the Food Authority supported the Australian Egg Corporation Limited (AECL) in hosting two Salmonella workshops in NSW – one for industry and one for government agencies, summarising the current state of knowledge of Salmonella and egg farms.

The workshops highlighted the risk of egg washing where this is not undertaken correctly, or not consistently monitored for effectiveness. The workshop also provided background on peak shedding periods for Salmonella in birds during times of stress.

Feedback from attendees was universally positive and the Food Authority is planning to build on the success of the AECL workshop by planning a review of Salmonella management activities and also look to undertake joint research programs with AECL.
Egg Industry Consultative Committee, May 2015

Issues considered by the committee at the meeting held in Sydney on 27 May included;

Figures from Food Safety Program compliance report 1 July – 31 December 2014 included 40 acceptable rated audits (95.2%) and two failed audits (4.7%). In comparison, the audit compliance rate in the egg sector for the previous reporting period was 96.5% and indicates the sector has maintained a high compliance rate. A total of 293 inspections were conducted with a failure rate of 1.36%. The Food Authority is pleased with this result.

95.2% acceptable rated audits.

The data showed that during the reporting period three critical Corrective Action Requests had been issued, two for process control and one for analytical testing. In all cases these issues were followed up by the Food Authority and licensees were able to demonstrate they had implemented appropriate corrective action.

The audit compliance rate in the egg sector for the previous reporting period was 96.5% and indicates the sector has maintained a high compliance rate.

Enforcement activities in the egg sector during the reporting period included the issue of five improvement notices and six warning letters. A number of egg-related Salmonella clusters were investigated by the Food Authority. However, the average size of each outbreak was approximately six people, which is comparatively small compared to the previous reporting period. The most commonly associated types of businesses involved included cafés preparing speciality sauces, such as aioli, and those preparing desserts (tiramisu, fried ice cream).

The committee was provided with an update on the Food Authorities recent education and training initiatives with local councils which targeted businesses preparing high-risk foods (such as Asian pork rolls, and fried ice cream). This has resulted in a reduction in the size, severity and frequency of outbreaks previously attributed to this area.

Members were given an overview of Salmonella outbreaks in 2014/15 linked to raw egg use and the work that the Food Authority is doing, in partnership with industry and local council, to mitigate the number of outbreaks occurring. Members were also given a debrief following the recent success of the Salmonella workshops hosted by the Australian Egg Corporation Limited (AECL) for industry and government agencies which detailed the lessons learnt as well as a proposed action plan as a result of this information.

The protocol for egg stamping equipment failures at Food Authority licensed egg processing facilities was discussed and members were provided with a report on current data relating to the number of licensees who have sought a grace period for stamping eggs due to equipment failure.

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<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Inspections</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
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<td>88%</td>
</tr>
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Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted three inspections and 16 audits of licensed plant product businesses. This industry sector maintains a high compliance rate with 88% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and no serious enforcement actions being taken.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the plant sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.
Health star rating workshop

The Food Authority recently worked in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Health to deliver a Health Star Rating (HSR) Stakeholder Workshop in Sydney.

As outlined in the recently launched NSW Food Safety Strategy, the Food Authority is committed to ensuring that 20% of packaged products in NSW supermarkets use the HSR on their products by 2021.

The HSR system provides a simple way to read food labels by providing key information that allows consumers to make at-a-glance comparisons of the nutritional profile of packaged food products that are within the same category. The HSR system is a voluntary front-of-pack labelling scheme which was introduced in June 2014 and is being gradually introduced by the food industry on a voluntary basis, with an evaluation due to take place in June 2016.

There were approximately 130 attendees at the workshop, predominately from the manufacturing and health industries. They were provided with practical information to assist them in implementing the HSR system on their products and were also given an update on the progress of the government education campaign. Representatives from Nestle and Monster Health Food Co presented case studies, talking to attendees about their practical application of the system on their products – what worked well, and lessons learnt.

The workshop also included a presentation by the Food Authority’s Manager, Compliance Investigations, Greg Vakaci, on how nutrient content and health claims are regulated, including how to access resources and guides, to help industry comply with the requirements which come into effect on 18 January 2016.

The HSR website was launched in December last year and is regularly updated with new information and resources, such as a new Factsheet for Educators and Factsheet for Shoppers.

vulnerable persons

Inspections and audits

From January 2015 to March 2015, the Food Authority conducted eight inspections and 423 audits of licensed hospitals and aged care businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 99% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result due to the correct implementation of food safety controls and ensuring staff have the necessary skills and knowledge.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the vulnerable persons sector between the same reporting periods in 2014 and 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2014</th>
<th>Jan – Mar 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Audits</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Inspections</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable Audit Rate</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Draft Food Regulation 2015 – public consultation underway

The Food Regulation 2010 is scheduled for statutory repeal on 1 September 2015 – a formal process which occurs every five years that requires the NSW Government to determine whether the Regulation should lapse and, in doing so, allow self-regulation, or be remade as is, or be remade with amendments.

The proposed Food Regulation 2015 and the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) are available for public comment until Friday, 26 June 2015.

The current Regulation plays a vital role in ensuring food is safe for consumption and that consumers are adequately informed prior to making purchase decisions. The proposed amendments build on changes that have been made to the Regulation over the period 2010–14, and are targeted at improving the efficiency and removing unnecessary impost on business, government or the community, while remaining contemporary and fit for purpose.

The Food Authority recommends the Regulation be remade as Food Regulation 2015, with minor amendments.

To access the proposed Food Regulation 2015 and RIS, and/or for more information regarding the proposed amendments, as well as how to make a submission, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/legislation/regulation-2010-review

Food Authority sponsors AIFST Convention

Demonstrating our commitment to food safety, the Food Authority is proud to be the Major Sponsor of the 48th Annual Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology (AIFST) Convention and the 15th Australian Food Microbiology Conference, to be held together for the first time from 11–13 August 2015, at Luna Park, Sydney. The Deputy Director General of Biosecurity & Food Safety, Bruce Christie, will officially open proceedings with a welcome to delegates.

The AIFST is a national association representing individuals from all sectors of the Australian food and allied industries, food research organisations and food regulatory bodies. The Convention is the premier food technology event in Australia for industry, research and government organisations, both locally and overseas.

The Food Authority will have a strong presence at the Convention with presentations being delivered on the investigation of foodborne diseases and how outbreaks and scientific research can lead to policy change. Representatives will also participate in a food labelling interactive session.

As part of the Convention, a Food Entrepreneur Business Essentials Workshop will be held on Wednesday 12 August 2015. Fifteen industry professionals will navigate delegates through three sessions covering the essential know-how that is needed to develop a sustainable and successful food business.

Delegates will have the opportunity to interact with all presenters, enjoy refreshment breaks within the Convention exhibition hall, see displays from 42 exhibitors and also receive access to all workshop presentations. To register for the workshop, visit www.aifst.asn.au/registration.htm

To view the full program and/or for more information about the Convention, visit www.aifst.asn.au/convention.htm

NSW Aquaculture producer acknowledged as a champion

The Food Authority works closely with industry, from paddock to plate, to provide certainty and confidence that food produced and sold in NSW is safe.

Our annual sponsorship of the Royal Agricultural Society’s Sydney Royal Fine Food Show is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate talented food producers in NSW and promote excellence and innovation in the food industry.

At the recent Sydney Fine Food Show, NSW Food Authority CEO, Polly Bennett, had the honour of presenting NSW aquaculture producer, Tathra Oysters, with the NSW Food Authority perpetual trophy for their Champion Sydney Rock Oyster Exhibit – which they have consistently won for the past 12 years.

The acknowledgement of Tathra Oysters as the champion producer of Sydney rock oysters is a testament to the quality of the aquaculture industry in our state and the high standard of our produce.

Polly Bennett, CEO of NSW Food Authority (L), with Jo and Gary Rodely from Tathra Oysters
to be exposed to a microbiological recall process is priceless. While there is an increased cost associated with HPP, it does allow for reduced production changeovers, longer runs and the longer shelf life means less wastage.

There is a wide range of products which are suitable for HPP, this includes cold pressed juices, ready-to-eat meals, salads, meat and dairy products, fruits & vegetables and value added seafoods to name a few. In fact, anything packaged in plastic or vacuum bags that allow for some flex under the enormous pressure they are subjected to is suitable for HPP.

Setting up a HPP facility was a considerable investment for Longfresh, but one that is beginning to pay off. With the only HPP machine in NSW and with the high cost of investment making it a prohibitive venture for many manufacturers, their facility in Homebush and their 5 permanent and a small number of casual staff are kept constantly busy.

With access to the world’s best technology, Longfresh are excited about growing the market in Australia and opening their doors to a range of manufacturers who come to them with great innovative product ideas wanting to know if new categories can be built to suit their products, but who don’t have the access to the technology to test it themselves.

There are also opportunities opening up in international markets with a smallgoods manufacturer wanting to export products to Korea which needed to be preservative and additive free and have a long shelf life. With the treatment of HPP delivering on these criteria and with Longfresh holding an export license, this was easily achieved.

An internal QA Manager is employed by Longfresh whose role is to manage the WQA, HACCP and Export systems, validate processes and train staff. However, managing food safety in their current operations is a long way from the complexities of their previous operating environment where “you never defeated the threat of Listeria, you just constantly managed it”.

They believe the Food Authority plays a critical role in providing a solid framework in which businesses can operate and keep food in NSW safe.

Food Authority visits the USA to review food safety systems

Last year, the Food Authority hosted the United States Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) when they visited Australia to undertake a review of Australia’s food safety system.

Working with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, the purpose of this review was to enable the USA to recognise that the regulatory systems operating within Australia provide the same food safety outcomes as required by their Food Safety Modernization Act, thereby reducing the need for the USA to conduct inspections of Australian food establishments wishing to export to the USA.

Following the success of this visit, the Food Authority, along with representatives from Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Safe Food Production QLD, recently visited the United States where they were invited by the US FDA to conduct a review of USA food safety systems. Mark Mackie, Manager Audit Systems & Verification, represented the Food Authority on the review team.

The team had the opportunity to review FDA food legislative operations, enforcement operations and the roles of other federal and state food regulatory agencies. They also travelled to Boston, San Francisco, LA and surrounding areas to review inspections to determine if the USA food safety systems are appropriate to manage all food safety risks.

The reviews are aimed to achieve system recognition from both Australia and the USA, which will allow food businesses easy access to the USA and Australian markets. Businesses will no longer be required to receive additional inspections from the customer country and export of food should be faster and cheaper as both countries will recognise the food safety systems already in place.