Primo Moraitis Fresh

At the helm of Primo Moraitis Fresh (PMF) is Benjamin Watt, a third generation fresh producer and CEO of the business.

PMF operates across four states, employs approximately 700 staff and produces over 35,000 tonnes of fresh produce every year under the brands of Mrs Crocket’s, The Real and Salad Fresh. The types of products manufactured include freshly made salads, soups, risottos and other pre-packed, vegetable-based meals which are supplied to the retail and food service markets Australia wide.

The high cost of manufacturing, the competitive nature of the industry and the current retail environment, which is often challenging due to unforeseen weather events, has instilled an approach in the way PMF do business which ensures they stay relevant to the customer and are able to give them value for money while keeping the business viable and food safe.

The PMF approach is an integrated one which sees every part of the supply chain incorporating measures and monitoring to ensure customers receive a high quality product. This requires them to “communicate, communicate and communicate some more so that all team members understand what is required and to encourage innovation in order to find potential solutions for continual improvement,” said Benjamin.

Continued back page...
Refreshed website for the Food Authority

As part of the Food Authority’s continued effort to enhance communications and make it easier for you to do business, we’re in the process of giving our website a bit of a makeover and are expecting to hit the ‘go live’ button by the end of the year.

To kick-start the process, we asked a number of you across all industry sectors to give us some feedback on what you think works on our current website and what doesn’t. This feedback was invaluable and has informed the direction we’ve taken.

This includes re-organising the content to make it easier for operators to find what’s relevant in their sector, and it’s all contained in one place – no more flicking between sections to find out what you need to do to be licensed in the egg sector, and once you are required to stamp your eggs.

We’ve also taken the opportunity to re-write the content so that it’s easier to understand. We’ve still included all the necessary information to ensure food safety requirements are met, we’ve just removed as much of the legal jargon as possible and have looked to write in Plain English only.

While we were at it, we figured the design could be made lighter and brighter so we incorporated some new imagery to bring it in line with 2015.

Once live, we encourage you to take a look around your relevant sector to see what’s new. We’d also love to receive your feedback on the refreshed site as well as your suggestions for future development. You can access the website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

We are confident you’ll like the new look and feel as much as we do and hope you find the new order of content helpful.
Welcome to Dr Lisa Szabo – CEO
NSW Food Authority

The NSW Food Authority would like to officially welcome Lisa Szabo to the role of CEO Food Authority / Group Director Food Safety for the NSW Food Authority.

In her new role, Lisa will ensure that the Food Authority’s strong commitment to community and stakeholder engagement continues to grow and develop. By working in partnership with our government, industry and community stakeholders, we can reduce the risk of foodborne illness through safe food handling and production, drive market access, reduce red tape and make it easier for businesses to operate, and to provide confidence and certainty that food is safe in NSW.

Lisa holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) and Doctor of Philosophy (Microbiology) from the University of Queensland. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Inc., and member of the International Association of Food Protection (USA). Lisa was a research scientist with the CSIRO before she joined the Food Authority.

Updated resources

JUNE 2015
• Licensing forms x 9 – LIC001-LIC009
• Scores on Doors: How to get a higher rating

JULY 2015
• Wild game meat field depot food safety program

Calendar dates

NOVEMBER 2015
8–15
Australian Food Safety Week
18
22nd Australian HACCP Conference, Sydney

DECEMBER 2015
2
NSW Shellfish Committee meeting, Newington
10
Implementation Sub-Committee for Food Regulation (ISFR) Planning Day, Canberra

FEBRUARY 2016
1–4
RAS Cheese and Dairy Show, Sydney (Judging)
10–16
RAS Summer Fine Food Show, Sydney (Aquaculture Judging)
Food Regulation 2015 commences 30 October 2015

The Food Regulation 2010 is an effective regulatory framework that delivers long-term benefits for the NSW food industry, consumers and the broader community through confidence and certainty in food safety.

The Food Regulation 2010 was scheduled for statutory repeal on 1 September 2016. This is a formal process that occurs every 5 years and requires the Food Authority to determine whether the Food Regulation 2010 should lapse (and in doing so allow self-regulation), be remade as is, or be remade with changes.

Following a significant review project for the making of the proposed Food Regulation 2015, which included a number of comprehensive surveys, extensive industry consultation and, in accordance with the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989, the public consultation period (which saw 29 submissions lodged), it was determined that the Food Regulation 2015 would be remade with amendments.

In seeking to achieve a balance between maximising food safety outcomes for consumers while minimising regulatory costs of regulation on business, the Food Authority believe the amendments enhance the effectiveness of the 2010 Regulation, are ‘fit for purpose’ and are broadly supported by regulated stakeholders.

The Food Authority believe the amendments enhance the effectiveness of the 2010 Regulation, are ‘fit for purpose’ and are broadly supported by regulated stakeholders.

The amendments:

- prescribe local councils as the appropriate enforcement agencies for the purposes of retail/food service business notification
- remove the application fee to become an approved analyst
- align food safety supervisor trainer and assessor requirements with the national Standards for Registered Training Organisations made under the Commonwealth National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011
- reset the baseline for annual licence fees to reflect the annual application of the CPI which has been applied over 2010–15
- remove reference to the out of date publications Australian Manual for Control of Salmonella in the Dairy Industry and Australian Manual for Control of Listeria in the Dairy Industry
- align the dairy Food Safety Scheme with national Standard 4.2.4 of the Code by removing the prohibition on the manufacture of raw milk cheese
- allow a former holder of a shellfish licence to also be eligible to be a member of a local shellfish committee
- align the egg Food Safety Scheme with national Standard 4.2.5 of the Code by removing the definition of broken egg, and associated references, and cl. 155 of the 2010 Regulation in relation to stock food for layer hens, both of which duplicate what is in the national Standard; and
- reset the baseline for annual inspection and audit charges for licensed and non-licensed businesses to reflect the annual application of the CPI which has been applied over 2010–15.

Food Regulation 2015 was published on Friday 16 October with a commencement date of Friday 30 October 2015.

More information regarding the repeal process, including access to some of the submissions received as well as the Regulatory Impact Statement can be found at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/legislation/regulation-2010-review.
Calibration of thermometers in varied altitudes

Businesses that are licensed with the NSW Food Authority are required to maintain a calibration program.

A calibration program should be implemented to:

a) identify equipment used by the business which require calibration and are necessary for ensuring food safety (e.g. hand held thermometers, fridge, freezer and cool room thermometers),

b) document the frequency and responsibility for calibration (e.g. 6-monthly by an external contractor),

c) specify the temperature ranges of calibration (i.e. hot and/or cold),

d) document the acceptable margin of error and appropriate corrective action for non-compliance with this tolerance (e.g. discard or re-calibrate), and

e) maintain calibration records.

Australian mountain ranges do not have sufficient height to cause the problems in cooking seen on Mt. Everest or in Colorado due to reduced boiling points but they are high enough to interfere with thermometer calibration.

Water will boil at temperatures around 94°C at the highest towns in NSW and if the expectation is 100°C then thermometers appear to exceed the +/- 1°C tolerance.

Those calibrating thermometers and undertaking internal and external audits should note the reduced boiling point of water at towns in a higher altitude.

To assist with determining what the boiling point of water should be in a specific area, the Food Authority has developed a factsheet which includes a table highlighting the boiling point of water at varying altitudes, as well as a table showing the approximate boiling point of water for towns located in higher altitudes in NSW. This can be accessed at: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry_pdf/Calibration_thermometer_varied_altitude.pdf

New resources

**JULY 2015**
- Country of origin unpackaged meat
- RTO approval conditions
- FSS recertification guideline for RTOs
- FSS recertification FAQs – RTOs
- FSS recertification FAQs – Retail food

**SEPTEMBER 2015**
- Pipi testing program FAQs
- Shellfish Program Coordinators’ Handbook
Auditing the auditors

Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture (the Department), the Food Authority conducts audits and inspections on licensed export facilities, reducing audit duplication.

To ensure the Food Authority is auditing these facilities at the correct frequency and taking correct action for defects identified during an audit, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources undertakes yearly internal audits of the processes, procedures and controls that the Food Authority has in place when conducting these activities at licensed export facilities.

In June 2015, the Department visited the Food Authority to undertake the review and, once again, the Food Authority’s Audit, Systems & Verification and NSW Shellfish Program teams passed with flying colours.

A successful review is crucial to maintaining export market access for a number of food production industries and the key objectives are to:

• ensure that export legislative requirements are met and the Food Authority’s assessment of export registered facilities is of the highest standard
• ensure food safety officers have appropriate training and qualifications to conduct audits at export registered facilities
• identify ways to improve the existing relationship between the two agencies
• ensure the Food Authority is operating in compliance with the MoU.

The review also acknowledged the Food Authority’s Shellfish Program for enabling shellfish harvest areas to gain export approval to secure access to export markets.

NSW’s well-deserved reputation for safe food helps maintain existing markets for the food industry, attracting higher premiums on products and generating export growth, and this is supported by the Food Authority’s consistent high standard of auditing food export industries.

Working with our third party auditors

Third Party Auditors (TPAs) who have been approved by the Food Authority are able to conduct regulatory audits of a business’s approved food safety management system to determine whether their system continues to comply with the appropriate legislative requirements.

The Food Authority is committed to working with TPAs to ensure the process, expectations and requirements of third party auditing from a through-chain perspective encompassing regulators, auditors and industry, is well understood.

Recently, the Food Authority hosted two TPA workshops – one focussing on the dairy industry and the other on the vulnerable persons sector.

Discussions at the workshops centred on industry compliance, emerging and recurring issues in auditing, as well as TPA verification and performance. Specific case studies for both sectors were also presented and topics relevant to each were discussed.

Feedback was extremely positive and highlighted the need for similar forums across all industry sectors which we will look to schedule in the new year.
Safe Food – fueling our bodies as well as our economy

The NSW Food Authority was proud to be the major sponsor of the recent 48th Annual Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology Convention and 15th Australian Food Microbiology Conference held at Luna Park.

The Convention brought together almost 500 food science and technology professionals across the country, as well as some international guests, to share ideas and opportunities in the food industry. It also allowed the Food Authority to continue the conversation with industry regarding food safety, food labelling, foodborne illness management and response, policy change and market opportunities in Australia and Asia.

Deputy Director General of Biosecurity and Food Safety Bruce Christie officially welcomed guests on the opening day of the Convention and spoke about how safe food not only fuels our bodies, it also fuels the NSW economy with the state’s food industry contributing $113 billion each year and providing employment for approximately 350,000 people across the supply chain. Bruce emphasised the critical role that each of the delegates play in delivering safe food and contributing to this positive outcome.

Representatives from the Food Authority delivered presentations on food labelling, threats and opportunities in Australia and Asia as well as how scientific research into foodborne disease outbreaks leads to policy change. A Food Authority information booth provided delegates with the opportunity to interact directly with staff from our science and compliance teams to ask questions specific to their business and to discuss projects that Food Authority staff are currently working on.

Not only was the Food Authority able to provide delegates with information specific to food safety and regulation, the event provided a fantastic platform to learn more about new innovation and emerging technologies to maximise positive food safety outcomes and to help mitigate, manage and monitor potential foodborne outbreaks.
Meat Industry Consultative Council, August 2015

Issues considered by the council at its meeting in Sydney on 12 August included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 included 1,840 acceptable rated audits, 280 failed audits and 3,475 inspections.

Enforcement activities in the sector during the reporting period included two prosecutions relating to the prohibited use of sulphur dioxide, 287 improvement notices, 74 penalty notices, 10 warning letters, one prohibition order, two product seizures and three foodborne illness investigations. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12-month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

Members were advised that the Food Authority were developing projects aimed at implementing targeted compliance and educational programs to improve compliance across the retail meat sector.

Members noted the final report on the review of animal welfare systems at non-red meat abattoirs licensed in NSW. The review showed a significant improvement in animal welfare controls in this industry sector with all abattoirs having fully documented animal welfare control system in place. Specialised animal welfare training has been provided to senior managers of large and medium abattoirs, and standardised technical control systems for small and medium abattoirs have been implemented to ensure all abattoirs operate to the highest standard.

An update was provided to members on the staged repeal of the Food Regulation 2010, highlighting proposed changes relevant to the Meat Food Safety Scheme (refer to Food Regulation 2015 article for more information).

A paper was tabled advising that the Food Authority had commenced a project to review and update the retail meat food safety program issued to licensed butcher shops to ensure that information on requirements is up-to-date and specific, yet easy to follow. As part of the project, all licensed butcher shops will be inspected by 1 August 2016 where the new food safety program and monitoring book, along with other educational materials will be provided.

For the full summary of meeting outcomes, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/meat/meat-industry-consultative-council

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted 189 inspections and 688 audits of licensed meat businesses. This industry sector has maintained a compliance rate of 88%.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the meat sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>2120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>3475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Joint agency operation a success

The NSW Food Authority regularly partners with the NSW Police Rural Crime Investigators to conduct joint operations targeting unlicensed game harvesters.

To ensure all game animals are harvested and sold in line with food safety requirements, it is essential that these activities are regularly monitored.

Participating in these operations is crucial for the opportunity to identify any activity involving the unlicensed harvesting of game animals for sale for either human consumption or pet food. To ensure all game animals are harvested and sold in line with food safety requirements, it is essential that these activities are regularly monitored.

Over the recent long weekend, the two agencies were joined by a Game Licensing Officer to undertake a joint patrol in state forests around Tamworth.

As a result, a number of inspections of fixed field chillers as well as licensed field harvesters took place with a small number of warnings issued for minor offences only and no major enforcement actions taken. Along with the fact that no harvester was found to be involved in illegal activity, the operation was deemed a success.

An added benefit of joint operations such as this is that it provides a training environment for Food Authority and Game Licensing officers, improving efficiencies and resulting in an increased number of joint activities conducted between both agencies.
Harvest and Hold Scheme nets industry support

The Harvest and Hold Scheme (the Scheme) commenced in early 2015 and expands the window of opportunity to harvest product during bad weather conditions. A win for business and one that has been fully endorsed and supported by the NSW Farmers Oyster Committee who formally thanked the Food Authority for the development of the Scheme which they said was a great initiative and that “they appreciate the efforts of the Food Authority to engage with the constraints that growers face while developing effective food safety protocols to protect consumers”.

The Harvest and Hold Scheme (the Scheme) commenced in early 2015 and expands the window of opportunity to harvest product during bad weather conditions.

 Rolled out on an estuary by estuary basis over a 24-month implementation period within estuaries that meet the 90% performance requirement, the Scheme is expected to generate red tape savings of $3.3 million per year once fully implemented.

Since its commencement, Anthony Zammit, Manager Shellfish Program at the Food Authority, along with Shellfish Operations Officers, Phil Baker, Grant Webster and Hazel Farrell has implemented the Scheme in 10 estuaries so far, representing approximately 54% of the State’s overall production.

The Food Authority closes shellfish harvest areas when environmental conditions make the shellfish unsafe to eat, which occurs on average between 300 and 400 times each year. Areas are opened again when testing shows the shellfish are safe.

In 2014–15 we saw almost 540 closures. The closures are necessary for public safety but create a financial burden on industry due to lost revenue. To mitigate this, the Food Authority developed the Scheme to reduce the time required for producers to start operating again after an adverse environmental event.

The Scheme allows shellfish farmers to harvest product in the period between sample collection (for a harvest area opening) and the reporting of results by laboratories.

Sometimes during extended wet periods, microbiological samples have been collected and meet the standards, but the harvest area is not opened due to bad weather conditions between sample collection and result reporting.

Each closure period is now reduced by several days, allowing producers to prepare shellfish for market while clearing tests are being done, rather than waiting until after test results have been received.

Once samples have been tested, if the final results meet the necessary criteria, the harvesting of product may proceed as normal, otherwise the product must be returned to the water.

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted 39 inspections and 172 audits of licensed seafood businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 95% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the seafood sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>1049</td>
<td>1438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More resources at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

nswfoodauthority nswfoodauth
NSW Seafood Industry Forum, September 2015

Issues considered by the committee at the meeting in Sydney on 23 September included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 included 397 acceptable rated audits, 23 failed audits and 1,438 inspections. The inspections were predominately done on seafood transport vehicles with only 18 unacceptable inspection results recorded. The seafood sector has maintained a high compliance rate of around 95% which is a great result.

Enforcement activities in the sector during the reporting period included 28 improvement notices, four penalty notices and three warning letters being issued, with one product seizure and four foodborne illness investigations taking place – three of which related to scombroid and one to ciguatera. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12-month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

An update was provided to members on the staged repeal of the Food Regulation 2010, highlighting proposed changes relevant to the seafood safety scheme (refer to Food Regulation 2015 article for more information).

The committee noted a paper advising of the proposed evaluation of the NSW Shellfish Program. The purpose of the evaluation is to review the program’s effectiveness and ensure that it achieves the desired outcomes.

NSW Shellfish Committee report, August 2015

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting held in Sydney in August included:

The NSW Oyster Industry Strategy was completed and presented to industry members at the Oyster Industry Field Days. The committee acknowledged the work of all involved and discussed the establishment of an implementation group to progress the recommendations made in the strategy.

A compliance update for the reporting period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 was provided which showed 197 audits were conducted with a total of five failed audits.

Members were also advised that estuary-wide verification audits will soon commence.

A compliance update for the reporting period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 was provided which showed 197 audits were conducted with a total of five failed audits.

The committee endorsed the distribution of new policies for wider industry consultation on the management of Pacific Oysters on oyster leases and best practice standards for “tidy” leases which were drafted by NSW DPI Fisheries. Comments to be sought during October 2015.

Members discussed winter mortality, which remains a notifiable disease in NSW and is prevalent on the NSW South Coast, particularly over winter and early spring. The specific cause of the disease is unknown and requires further studies to better understand it. In order to do this, fresh sample material is required and industry members noticing pustules, abscesses, ulceration on their product are urged to contact DPI Aquatic Biosecurity team on 02 4916 3911 so that research can continue.

Rewarding seafood excellence

The NSW seafood industry was celebrated on Thursday 27 August at the 2015 Sydney Fish Market Seafood Excellence Awards.

The Coffs Harbour Fishermen’s Co-operative Ltd was awarded the prestigious Best Supplier (NSW) award, proudly sponsored by the NSW Food Authority. The Wallis Lake Fishermen’s Co-operative Limited was highly commended in this category.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Lands and Water, The Honourable Niall Blair MLC, and CEO of the Food Authority, Lisa Szabo, were in attendance and presented the award.

The Minister acknowledged the contribution the NSW seafood industry makes to the economy and confirmed the government’s commitment to industry. “The NSW Government is committed to guaranteeing the supply of sustainable and top-quality seafood and ensuring a sustainable future for our valuable marine resources.

We would like to applaud all winners and nominees, and congratulate the Sydney Fish Market for an outstanding awards night.”

The Seafood Excellence Awards recognise suppliers as well as NSW seafood retailers and restaurants across nine award categories. Find out who all the winners for 2015 were at seafoodexcellenceawards.com.au

The Seafood Excellence Awards recognise suppliers as well as NSW seafood retailers and restaurants across nine award categories.
NSW Dairy Food Safety Consultative Committee, September 2015

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 2 September included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 included 700 acceptable rated audits, 38 failed audits and 1,285 inspections on dairy food transport vehicles with only 13 failed inspections. This indicated a 99.6% compliance rate which is a great outcome for the dairy sector.

The committee noted tables showing industry trends for the last three years for bulk milk cell count, total plate count and pickup temperatures. The Food Authority now has 100% compliance from companies in submitting this data and all milk picked up in NSW will be trended through this system.

Enforcement activities in the sector during the reporting period included 42 improvement notices, one warning letter, two product seizures and no foodborne illness investigations taking place. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12-month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

Members were also advised of a review of the Third Party Auditor (TPA) program for dairy farms which will involve unannounced verification inspections from the Food Authority of facilities recently audited by a TPA in order to confirm audit findings. Dairy farmers are encouraged to provide feedback to the Food Authority on the TPA program.

An update was provided to members on the staged repeal of the Food Regulation 2010, highlighting proposed changes relevant to the Dairy Food Safety Scheme (refer to Food Regulation 2015 article for more information).

Members discussed inconsistencies across councils in determining the level of risk for ice cream. The Food Authority advised members that they will be working with local councils to demonstrate how rules should be applied and will develop clear compliance policies based on science risk. This work will encompass home-based businesses, markets, mobile food vehicles and temporary events which often operate across council areas.

The committee noted a paper on the Blue Bell ice cream Listeria monocytogenes outbreak and recall in the US between 2010 and 2015 which highlighted that the major contributing factor to the outbreak was the lack of any mandated testing and clearance program for pathogens. The incident reinforced the need for constant vigilance in relation to Listeria but, similarly, gave confidence with the systems that are in place to detect and control pathogens in processing facilities in NSW.

The committee noted a paper advising of the proposed evaluation of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme. The purpose of the evaluation is to review the Scheme’s effectiveness and ensure that it achieves the desired outcomes.

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted 22 inspections and 165 audits of licensed dairy businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 96% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result. There were no serious enforcement actions taken against licensed dairy business during this period.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the dairy sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>1049</td>
<td>1438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inspections and audits
Free range egg labelling – have your say

The Commonwealth Government is seeking comments from industry and consumers on a Free Range Egg Labelling Consultation Paper until 27 November 2015.

The consultation paper outlines three broad policy options to provide more detailed guidance to consumers and producers on the requirements for egg labels:

1. the status quo
2. an information standard for free range eggs
3. an information standard for all eggs

The consultation paper provides more detailed guidance to consumers and producers on the requirements for egg labels.

In June 2015, state and federal consumer affairs ministers requested the development of a national information standard to enhance consumer confidence on the labelling of free range eggs.

This consultation process is designed to allow interested parties and stakeholders to provide views on options to enhance consumer certainty regarding the labelling of free range eggs, including ensuring consumers are not misled by free range egg labels.

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted 16 inspections and 34 audits of licensed egg businesses. This industry sector has recorded a high compliance rate with 95% of businesses recording an acceptable audit.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the egg sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commonwealth is undertaking the consultation process on behalf of the government agencies responsible for consumer affairs or fair trading in the commonwealth, states and territories.

To view the consultation paper and for information on how to make a submission, please visit the Australian Treasury website at www.treasury.gov.au/ConsultationsandReviews/Consultations/2015/Free-range-egg-labelling
Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety launched

In August, the FPSC launched Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety, a revised and extended scope edition of guidelines last developed in 2004. The new guidelines extend across Australia and New Zealand and along the fresh produce supply chain to provide up-to-date information on assessing and managing food safety risk, incorporating the latest in scientific research and industry experience.

The guidelines are designed to assist growers, packers, transporters, wholesalers, retailers, auditors, trainers and others involved in the fresh produce supply chain to identify and assess potential food safety hazards.

Updated information on hazard analysis, microbial and chemical contamination risks plus additional information on risk assessment, product traceability, allergens and managing product test results have all been included in the scope of issues covered.

Food safety associated with fresh produce is of growing significance at home and internationally. The Food Authority supports the Fresh Produce Safety Centre research program which aims to provide guidance and risk management solutions for both small farmers and major grower, packer, wholesaler and retail operations in NSW. The Food Authority is proud to be a platinum sponsor of the development and launch of the new guidelines.

Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety can be downloaded on the Fresh Produce Safety Centre website at freshproducesafety-anz.com/guidelines/

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted 15 inspections and 37 audits of licensed plant product businesses. This industry sector has maintained a compliance rate of 88%.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the plant sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
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Preparing to be prepared

To mitigate the risk of foodborne outbreaks, it is critical that all stakeholders responsible for food safety participate in workshops designed to test preparedness in their capacity to respond quickly and effectively in the event of any potential food safety incident.

The Food Authority, FSANZ and the Produce Marketing Association – Australia & New Zealand, hosted a workshop recently for the horticulture industry which was designed to test the readiness to respond in the event of a severe E. coli incident linked to bagged spinach.

The workshop considered a scenario which saw problems of developing complexity being introduced. This included the number of cases increasing, managing media interest, issues with traceability and how best to identify and engage with the appropriate contacts.

The workshop highlighted:

- the importance of business continuity, preparedness and understanding of traceability across the horticulture supply chain in the case of a food safety event
- the potential severity and overall consequences of a food safety event
- the importance of maintaining relationships and contacts outside crisis time to allow for ease of contact during a food safety event
- the importance of having a communications strategy in place to capture coordination point contacts, identifying potential trusted spokespeople and having agreed messages up front/ready to go
- the need to building on existing mechanisms for government-industry engagement
- the government’s emergency management protocols. The Food Recall system, the Bi-National Food Safety Network and the National Food Incident Response Protocol.

The workshop was well attended with representation from Commonwealth and State regulators, a wide variety of peak industry bodies within the horticulture sector as well as from the retail sector.

Following the success of the workshop – which allowed for input from a wide cross-section of industry and government – it is proposed that similar food safety workshops are held which encompass examples from other food industry sectors.
NSW Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme Consultative Committee, June 2015

Issues considered by the committee held in Sydney on 24 June included:

The committee discussed the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2014 to 31 December 2014. It was noted that during this period, 801 acceptable rated audits have been recorded with a high compliance rate of 99%.

There were 23 Improvement Notices issued during the reporting period. However, there were no prosecutions, penalty notices or warning letters issued which is a good result for the sector.

The committee also received an update on the facility verification program implemented in 2014 in which 26 unannounced inspections have been conducted as a result. Five of these inspections recorded an unacceptable result with the main issues identified in the areas of process control, and hygiene and sanitation. Overall inspection results for this program indicated 73% acceptable audits, 8% marginal and 19% unacceptable. One issue identified at the unannounced inspections is the need for knowledge, skills and training to be passed down to other staff onsite so they can respond to questions during inspections when senior managers are absent.

The committee noted a reminder that licensed facilities operating under the regulatory third party audit program need to ensure they schedule their audits at the required frequency. Notifications will now be sent to all licensed facilities and contractors advising when audits are due.

An information paper was presented to members to assist in understanding the effect of altitude on water boiling points when calibrating thermometers. Refer to article on page 5 for more information.

A presentation was given to members on the outbreak of Salmonella Bovismorbificans which occurred across ten different aged care facilities earlier this year and linked to baked goods supplied from an external supplier. During the investigation officers collected 504 food samples and environmental swabs and conducted numerous inspections of different facilities.

A paper was tabled which provided guidance on the serving of lettuce and other ready-to-eat foods. The Food Authority advised it does not list lettuce as a high risk food and that withdrawing these types of food from healthy patients and long term residents could be detrimental to their overall health and wellbeing.

For the full summary of meeting outcomes, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/industry-sector-requirements/vulnerable-persons/vp-committee

Inspections and audits

From April 2015 to June 2015, the Food Authority conducted seven inspections and 429 audits of licensed hospitals and aged care businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 98% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate for an extended period, due to the correct implementation of food safety controls and ensuring staff have the necessary skills and knowledge.

The below table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the vulnerable persons sector between reporting years 2013/14 and 2014/15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting period</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The importance of declaring allergens

The importance of declaring allergens was highlighted recently following multiple national recalls linked to undeclared dairy in imported coconut milk drinks.

In August 2015, the Food Authority was alerted that a child had an allergic reaction linked to an imported coconut milk drink. The product was tested and found to contain undeclared dairy, resulting in a national recall.

As a result of this and other recent incidents, the Food Authority inspected a number of businesses and worked with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to identify potential importers of similar coconut milk drink products.

This work has led to five recalls of coconut milk drinks sold in NSW due to undeclared dairy, with several other recalls also occurring in other Australian states.

The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has since put in place a holding order at the International border, meaning that no coconut milk drinks can enter the country without first being tested for undeclared allergens.

Any business importing foods must ensure they are aware of all ingredients, particularly those which may be used for a specific purpose such as whitening agents, and whether these ingredients are allergens. On arrival, the importer must ensure all allergens are correctly declared on the product’s label.

Section 8 of the Imported Food Control Act 1992 states that it is an offence to import food into Australia if the importer knows, or ought reasonably to have known, that it poses a risk to human health.

Standard 1.2.3 of the Food Standards Code mandates the requirement for food labelling to declare the presence of specific allergens, which includes milk and milk products (dairy).

The food industry plays a major role in helping to manage food allergies. All food manufacturers, food retailers and food importers have an obligation to declare allergens in food to ensure it is safe for customers.

In instances where the Food Authority becomes aware of a product that does not contain a warning statement or allergen declaration, prompt action is taken to ensure the health of consumers is protected.

For more information regarding allergens and labelling, as well as access to tools to help you meet the requirement, visit our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/labelling/declaring-allergens
HACCP Conference 2015

The NSW Food Authority is once again proud to be the platinum sponsor of the 22nd Australian HACCP Conference being held at the Mercure Sydney from 18-19 November.

The conference is reported to be the largest food safety exhibition in Australia and will be attended by a wide range of food safety professionals including manufacturers, third party auditors, fresh food businesses and the service sector including health and aged care.

There is a new format for this year’s conference which sees the conference take place over the course of one day only, Wednesday 18 November, with the HACCP Awards Cocktail Party taking place that evening and a workshop: What is TACCP – Threat Assessment Critical Control Point? being held the following day.

Guide for Industry to HSR Calculator UPDATED

The Guide for Industry to the Health Star Rating Calculator was updated on 14 September to reflect a decision made by the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation that, for the purpose of the Health Star Rating (HSR) system, nut and seed based beverages may be classified as Category 1D (dairy beverages) if they meet the calcium requirements for that category.

Further work is being undertaken in relation to how dairy alternative beverages should be categorised within the HSR system.

For further information regarding the HSR system and to access the updated version of the Guide, visit www.healthstarrating.gov.au
Awarding FRP scholarships in environmental health

The Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) Scholarship, valued at $5,000, was recently awarded to two students, Annie Verghese (City of Sydney) and Leah Mulqueeney (Manly Council) who were officially presented with the award at the annual Western Sydney University Scholarship Award Ceremony on 17 September.

The FRP Scholarship in Environmental Health program was established by the NSW Food Authority and Western Sydney University in 2008.

The program aims to promote food surveillance careers, facilitate communication between enforcement agencies, tertiary institutions and the Food Authority, provide the opportunity to access undergraduate training, and encourage innovation to deliver new ways of delivering food safety outcomes that will benefit NSW.

To apply for a FRP Scholarship, eligible students are asked to undertake a food safety based project and deliver it as part of a work experience program with a local council. They must then provide a written report outlining the outcomes of the project, attend an interview with an independent panel and, if successful, deliver a presentation at a stakeholder event such as the biennial FRP Workshop 2015.

Annie’s project focussed on exploring whether implementation of food safety programs and pre-inspection desk audits by council staff improves business compliance.

Leah’s project was aimed at determining the benefits associated with the Scores on Doors program.
Do you export food to China?

A public notice issued by China’s General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQISQ) has advised that as of 1 October 2015, companies that export food to China need to register using a new registration system.

The move is in response to the official implementation of the revised “Food Safety Law” which is considered to be the most stringent yet for China and strives to further improve the quality of imported food. The new regulation requires all foreign exporters, domestic importers, suppliers, and agents to register using the online system, which can be accessed at http://ire.eciq.cn.

The new regulation requires all foreign exporters, domestic importers, suppliers, and agents to register using the online system.

Companies can use the web-based interface to submit required information, such as import and sales records. The AQSQ regulation seeks to improve several aspects of food imports, such as comprehensive record-keeping and better traceability for products. The system will also keep track of violations and penalties companies may have against them.

The registration system will ensure that exporters and importers meet food regulation requirements, and create a better mechanism for safeguarding quality along the whole supply chain.

For further information regarding the new registration system, contact the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources via www.agriculture.gov.au/export.
Is your RTO recertification ready?

With the support of approved Registered Training Organisation’s (RTOs), the NSW Food Authority’s Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) program helps support a skilled and compliant retail and food service sector in NSW.

From 1 September 2015, RTOs approved under the FSS program were required to incorporate training and assessment in three key focus areas into their FSS training program for new and recertifying students.

The focus areas are:
1. cleaning & sanitation
2. safe egg handling
3. allergen management.

Many RTOs have already launched FSS recertification programs or are soon to do so. The Food Authority will modify its listing of approved RTOs on its website to facilitate awareness and provide information on those who are ‘recertification ready’.

The modification will comprise the addition of an extra column on the website list of approved RTOs to demonstrate those who are ‘recertification ready’. If your RTO is recertification ready, please contact the Food Authority so that your RTO’s name may be added to the list.

To ensure that new and recertifying students enrolling in FSS training after 1 September 2015 receive training and assessment in the three focus areas, the Food Authority amended the SmartForm interface to enable approved RTOs to complete a declaration to this effect.

All approved RTOs must now complete this declaration when issuing NSW FSS certificates.

Food Regulation Partnership heads to Lismore

Lismore City Council hosted the Retail and Food Service Industry Group meeting on 27 August as part of the Food Regulation Partnership.

The meeting was attended by 70 people which included a mix of local businesses, council members, registered training organisations and Food Authority staff.

Presentations by Food Authority staff and Lismore local council officers were given on a range of topics including the Scores on Doors program, managing allergens, food safety basics and local government’s role in food safety management.

The Retail and Food Service Industry Group meeting provides a valuable and unique platform for open dialogue between retail food businesses, local council Environmental Health Officers and staff from the Food Authority.

The meeting in Lismore was the second meeting of the Retail and Food Service Industry Group with the third meeting to be held in the Sydney council area of Warringah later this year.

SAVE THE DATE
For the next Retail and Food Service Industry Group Meeting which will be hosted by Warringah Shire Council on Thursday 26 November 2015 – invites with full details to be sent shortly!
Is your FSS certificate current?

FSS certificates expire five years from the date of issue, with the first round of certificates expiring from 1 September 2015.

Food businesses have 30 working days to ensure their appointed FSS renews their training and obtains a new FSS certificate.

Food businesses with an appointed FSS holding an FSS certificate which has since expired, will need to enrol their FSS in recertification training with a RTO approved under the FSS program.

This training will consist of obtaining the required units of competency where those units have incorporated the three key focus areas (details above), as a prerequisite to the issue of a new NSW FSS certificate.

Food businesses have 30 working days to ensure their appointed FSS renews their training and obtains a new FSS certificate.

Further information regarding FSS recertification training for retail food businesses and/or RTOs can be found at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/retail/fss-food-safety-supervisors

FSS refresher training

The Food Authority recently hosted the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Forum which was attended by approximately 70 people from RTOs approved under the Food Authority’s Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) program.

It was a great opportunity for the Food Authority to consult with approved RTOs on the FSS refresher training program and recertification of FSS certificates – with the first round due to expire in September 2015.

The Forum was well-received by attendees who were presented with data on RTO compliance of the FSS program and the results of the FSS evaluation project.
Continued from front page...

"To do this, you need to have an in-depth understanding of the products and processes. You also need to understand your ingredients and when a change is made, conducting a thorough risk assessment which involves everyone is critical. Just as important is making sure you have in place effective strategies to mitigate potential risks."

Benjamin also believes that “while it’s important to make sure staff are trained in all aspects of food safety and quality, it’s just as important that they understand the reasons why.”

Ensuring food safety also means keeping abreast of emerging issues (not just locally, but globally as well), ensure that documentation is controlled and monitored, and that programs have been implemented to verify and validate processes. Benjamin also believes that “while it’s important to make sure staff are trained in all aspects of food safety and quality, it’s just as important that they understand the reasons why.”

The use of chemicals in the food processing industry in regards to the manufacturing and cleaning of equipment is critical to ensure that food is safe for consumers. According to Benjamin, another ingredient for success is “establishing close relationships with your chemical and testing laboratories”, which allows PMF to receive trusted advice regarding best-in-class cleaning programs. PMF also “conduct daily assessments of the effectiveness of the cleaning and sanitation and are always discussing new opportunities with these companies.”

They also assist in providing training to staff as part of their food safety program and PMF have a trained sanitation team to ensure that all chemicals used are dosed according to the chemical company’s recommendation and are tested and monitored throughout production and the cleaning process.

With PMF getting ready to head into their busiest time of year, they are confident that they have the right systems in place and are supported by strong and trusted relationships with their chemical company and testing laboratory to ensure that consumers, as well as their brand, continue to stay in great health over the festive season.

Reducing red tape for food retailers

As of 30 October 2015, retail food businesses such as restaurants, cafes and supermarkets were no longer required to notify the Food Authority of their business details.

The Food Authority recognises retail food businesses’ provision of relevant details to council as complying with the intent of the statutory obligation to notify. Council already receives the relevant information through applications for services, permits and approvals, and through the process of paying commercial rates, fees and charges.

All non-retail food businesses, including manufacturers and wholesalers, will need to continue to notify the Food Authority. Licensed businesses (such as butcher shops, dairy producers and seafood processors) are deemed to comply with notification requirements when they submit a completed licence application.

The Food Authority is taking this action to reduce government red tape and remove duplicative requirements for retail food businesses.