What is a seizure burial?

To ensure public health is maintained, a robust process exists to ensure that food and beverage products that have been seized and authorised to be destroyed, do not find their way back into the marketplace – this is known as a seizure burial.

Authorised officers generally have legislative seizure powers to seize food, vehicles, equipment and labelling or advertising materials which they reasonably believe do not comply with a provision of the relevant legislation, or may form part of evidence that an offence has been committed.

At no time are seized items to be destroyed or disposed of without authorisation, or without a witness present for the disposal. In addition, records are kept of how, when and where seized goods are disposed.

At no time are seized items to be destroyed or disposed of without authorisation, or without a witness present for the disposal.

Continued back page...
Calendar dates

MARCH 2016
1
ABARES Outlook Conference, Canberra
2
NSW Shellfish Committee meeting, Sydney
16
Egg Industry Consultative Committee meeting, Sydney
17–30
Sydney Royal Easter Show

APRIL 2016
7
Retail & Food Service Industry Advisory Group and Food Regulation Partnership meeting, Sutherland Shire
13
Meat Industry Consultative Committee meeting, Sydney
15
Food Regulation Standing Committee meeting, Melbourne
27
NSW Seafood Industry Forum, Sydney

MAY 2016
10
Dairy Food Safety Consultative Committee meeting, Sydney
15–21
Australian Food Allergy Week
18
NSW Shellfish Committee meeting, Sydney

Is the food you sell safe to eat?

With consumers dining out more, and new food trends constantly emerging, it’s more important than ever that food handlers working in the retail food service sector are provided with opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge.

Hosted by the Food Regulation Partnership, the next opportunity to do so will take place on Thursday 7 April in Gymea - within the Sutherland Shire Council local government area.

Join other local retail food businesses, council environmental health officers and representatives from the Food Authority to learn how to instil a culture of food safety in your food business to keep your food safe, and your customers free from foodborne illness.

Join other local retail food businesses...and learn how to keep your food safe, and your customers free from foodborne illness.

Presentations will include advice on egg safety – how to reduce the risk of *Salmonella* in your food business and how to get and keep a 5 star rating through the *Scores on Doors* program.

For more information, and to register your free attendance, go to www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/frpgroupsutherland

More resources at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

nswfoodauthority nswfoodauth
Opening the door to Chinese delegates & our export markets

NSW’s well-deserved reputation for safe food helps it to maintain existing markets, attract higher premiums on products and generate export growth.

Asia’s consumers want safe, quality food and the current free-trade agreement negotiations with China by the Commonwealth – coupled with our proximity to the Asian market – provide NSW farmers and producers with the opportunity to grow trading partnerships in these new and expanding export markets.

Late last year, the Food Authority, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department), hosted a visit by Vice Minister Teng Jiacai of the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) and his delegation of five.

Director General of DPI, Scott Hansen, welcomed delegates and highlighted the reasons why NSW is a significant state in terms of primary production and food. Not only do 40% of the nation’s food manufacturers operate in NSW, robust traceability systems established in NSW enable the Food Authority to manage new trends and technologies to confidently meet growing demand for ethical consumerism, convenience and functionality.

With China’s Food Safety Law recently revised, the focus of the CFDA delegation was to discuss food safety controls in Australia, and the recognition of our food safety management systems which will permit the increased import of foods into China, specifically dairy products.

A round table discussion followed the meeting where barriers to trade were discussed, along with how requirements could be streamlined to improve market access.

The visit provided an opportunity to promote NSW’s well-managed food regulatory system which sees strong industry consultation take place in order to deliver a safe product.

Mark Mackie, Manager Audit Systems & Verification, facilitated a tour of a local milk processing business prior to the delegation flying home.

The Food Authority works tirelessly with licensed businesses and the department to ensure that export market access is increased and companies can access overseas markets.

The current free-trade agreement negotiations with China by the Commonwealth – coupled with our proximity to the Asian market – provide NSW farmers and producers with the opportunity to grow trading partnerships.
Celebrating the Champions of Smallgoods & Cheese

At every stage along the journey from paddock to plate, the Food Authority works closely with industry to help ensure the food produced and sold in NSW safe for its consumers.

The Food Authority’s annual sponsorship of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) Sydney Royal Fine Food Show is an opportunity for the Food Authority to acknowledge and thank producers in NSW and further afield for their outstanding contribution towards NSW and Australia’s world-renowned food industry.

CEO Lisa Szabo had the honour of presenting the winner of the Food Authority sponsored Champion Smallgoods Exhibit at an official ceremony hosted by RAS late last year.

The trophy was awarded to Barossa Fine Foods for their Vienna Deluxe and was proudly received by Barossa Fine Food Production Manager Dieter Knoll and Operations Manager Tony Mann.

The trophy was awarded to Barossa Fine Foods for their Vienna Deluxe.

The Champion Smallgoods competition is part of the popular Deli Meat category which saw 676 products entered into the competition this year, with 65 per cent of entries being made up of NSW produce.

The Cheese & Dairy Awards Night was held earlier this month which saw winners from all categories in the Sydney Royal Cheese & Dairy Produce Show crowned as Champions.

Peter Day, Director, Compliance - Biosecurity and Food Safety was proud to present the Food Authority Perpetual Trophy Champion Specialty Cheese to La Vera for their The Art of Genuine Cheese Making – Parmesan and the Champion Cheddar Cheese perpetual trophy to Coles’ Extra Reserve Cheddar – both cheeses are produced by Bega Cheese Limited.

The NSW Food Authority is proud to sponsor these events which promote excellence in the food industry.
Food safety in food retail

Late last year, the NSW Food Authority hosted the Food Regulation Partnership Workshop 2015 which was attended by almost 140 delegates.

The workshop provided an invaluable professional development opportunity for council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), who undertake food regulatory inspections and complaint investigations of retail food businesses. The event provides education in food regulation as well as networking opportunities to help improve consistency, skills and knowledge for EHOs.

Food safety is a key contributor to economic growth and with the NSW retail food sector achieving a turnover valued at more than $45 billion during 2013/14, food retailing has demonstrated that it’s the biggest driver of growth in NSW’s retail industry.

Themed Risk and Reward, keynote speaker Dr Martin Cole (Chief: CSIRO Animal, Food and Health Science) spoke to delegates about emerging trends and food safety challenges in today’s food retailing environment while other sessions covered topics such as “how to improve food safety compliance”. Delegates were provided with an update on recent trends in foodborne illness outbreaks as well as how the Food Authority and councils work together to deliver safe food in NSW. Council representatives also spoke about the benefits of being part of the Scores on Doors program.

For the first time, there was an interactive ‘speed networking’ session which allowed delegates to participate in roundtables on various topics.

Overall, the FRP Workshop 2015 was a great success with feedback stating that the event was excellent, particularly the quality of the presentations and the usefulness of the event.
Audit tip #16 - Using technology to monitor food safety

The use of electronic, automated technology is becoming more prevalent in food processing businesses as it allows food safety monitoring to be completed by systems that ensure programmed limits are achieved for each batch of food produced.

The use of automated monitoring systems does not remove the requirement to complete verification monitoring. Businesses must ensure that these systems are continually checked and monitoring is conducted on each batch to verify that the automated systems are working correctly.

At the audit, the Food Authority will review the documented automated controls in the FSP, along with the manual verification activities conducted by staff. The Food Authority must be satisfied that the automated systems are comprehensive, verified and continually reviewed to ensure that all critical food safety steps are taken for all food produced.

Businesses must ensure that these systems are continually checked and monitoring is conducted on each batch to verify that the automated systems are working correctly.

Supporting local government for a national presence

Immediately following the Food Regulation Partnership Workshop 2015, Environmental Health Australia (EHA) hosted their 40th National Conference. Themed Environmental Health - Strength in Unity, the EHA Conference is the peak conference for environmental professionals across Australia.

As part of the Food Authority’s commitment to supporting the valuable role of local government enforcement agencies to drive increased compliance in the retail sector, an opportunity was provided for four EHOs in NSW to register to attend both events for free.

As a result, submissions were received from a number of Councils with Muswellbrook Shire Council, Snowy River Shire Council, Armidale Dumaresq Council and Goulburn Mulwaree Council all walking away with one registration to attend both of these significant events for free.

Ensuring food sold in NSW’s retail food sector is safe for human consumption and correctly labelled delivers long term benefits for consumers and the broader community and improves the NSW food industry’s reputation as a provider of safe food.
New year…refreshed website

You may have noticed that the new year brought with it a refreshed and improved website for the Food Authority.

The updated website was created with food businesses in mind and aims to enhance communications and enable easier ways to retrieve information important to their needs.

We took on your feedback and ideas during the redesign process, ensuring that new features were practical and user-friendly. We reorganised the content, layout, colours and overall design to provide for an efficient navigation process, allowing for information relevant to your sector to be easily found. We also re-wrote much of the content so it’s easier to understand, making it easier for you to do business.

If you haven’t seen already, we’ve also added in a new feature giving you the option of applying for a licence online.

Finally, the new website is compatible to all devices, meaning the site adjusts automatically to a mobile phone screen, tablet, laptop or desk-top computer.

We hope you have had a chance to click through the refreshed Food Authority website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au and enjoy its lighter and brighter design.

As we continuously strive to improve our online communications, we would love your feedback so that we can better equip you with the food safety resources for your business.
Audits in the food industry

The Food Regulation 2015 requires that certain industry sectors are licensed with the NSW Food Authority.

Audits are necessary to not only ensure public health and safety, but to also ensure compliance with Food Regulation 2015 as well as the Food Standards Code.

The Food Authority undertakes regular audits and inspections of all licensed businesses and operates two different audit models to ensure that ongoing compliance with food safety requirements are met and that food is safe in NSW.

New licensees and existing licensed low risk businesses that apply for a high risk licence permission to produce ready-to-eat foods are subject to an increased audit frequency under the licensing audit model.

Once a food business can demonstrate long term compliance with legislative requirements under the licensing audit model, they then move to the compliance audit model where routine audits will be undertaken. The frequency of audits will depend upon the type of business (priority classification) as well as the rating received at the last audit.

More information regarding both audit models, including audit frequencies and priority classifications can be found on the Food Authority fact sheet Audits in the Food Industry at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/audits_in_the_food_industry.pdf

The frequency of audits will depend upon the type of business as well as the rating received at the last audit.

New resources

NOVEMBER 2015
• Blue-green algae blooms: risk to fishers

DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016
• Guidance for Manufacturer and Wholesaler Inspection Program (MWIP)
• Food Recall Action Plan
• Annual Food Testing Report 2014 – 2015
• High Pressure Processing - Product Considerations in HPP
• Guidance on Audits

Updated resources

NOVEMBER 2015
• Audits in the food industry
• Harvest and Hold licence application LIC010
• Raw milk advice to consumers
Inspections and audits

From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 906 inspections and 1,098 audits of licensed meat businesses. This industry sector has maintained a compliance rate of 88% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The observed level for critical issues with process control (e.g. monitoring and storage temperature, time/temperature parameters for cooking ready-to-eat products, pH records) was reduced in comparison with the previous reporting period. This was due in part to efforts within the audit program to target specific areas where the failures are occurring.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Yield - thumbs up from the Federal Government

Oyster harvest areas in select parts of NSW and Tasmania are set to benefit from a new innovative technology system thanks to a Federal Government Grant recently awarded to The Yield.

The Federal Government runs a number of programs designed to help Australian businesses of all sizes and industries improve productivity and competitiveness, as well as create jobs.

Late last year, the Federal Minister for Innovation, The Hon. Wyatt Roy, announced that The Yield had been awarded an Accelerating Commercialisation Grant to assist in commercialising their products which in turn, is expected to contribute to Australia’s global reputation for high quality food exports.

The Yield is a digital technology company that seeks to improve yields and profitability in both agriculture and aquaculture. They believe that digital technology is the key to unlocking the next wave of improvements.

The Grant was awarded to The Yield for their recently developed patented-technology solution for the oyster industry which seeks to improve oyster grower’s yields and profitability through:

1. reducing unnecessary harvest closures
2. improving labour scheduling based on localised tides, and
3. tracking food safety.

The Accelerating Commercialisation Grant is part of the Federal Governments Entrepreneurs’ Programme. It works by providing Grant recipients with expert guidance and connections through Commercialisation Advisors so that novel products, processes and services can be brought to the market.

The Food Authority is proud to be a project partner for this work and supports the development of a tool to assist local shellfish programs and improve on farm efficiency.

To read more about The Yield’s work, visit www.theyield.com

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**Inspections and audits**

From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 132 inspections and 225 audits of licensed seafood businesses with no serious enforcement actions being taken.

The Food Authority has recently implemented new audit models for the shellfish sector which has impacted the compliance rate, yet overall the industry has recorded a compliance rate of 88% which is a good result for the sector.

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Is your retail seafood “local”?

When advertising retail seafood as “local”, it needs to be done with a clear understanding of what the term “local” means. When consumers buy retail seafood advertised as “local”, they have a right to expect that what they purchased was grown or caught in the immediate locality to where they are purchasing it from.

1. relates, or is restricted to a particular area or one’s neighbourhood
2. is associated with a particular locality or area, and
3. relates to the area that you live in, or to the particular area that you are talking about.

Local food clearly refers to a geographic production area that is defined by boundaries and in close proximity to the consumer.

When using the word local to describe that a food was grown or caught etc, it should be followed with the particular area that it relates to.

Example: Prawns – Local - Coffs Harbour

This example describes the product as being caught in boats that work in the waters off Coffs Harbour and NOT Taree, Tweed Heads or in NSW in general.

NSW Shellfish Committee, December 2015

Members discussed the new Biosecurity Act 2015 (the Act) which repeals parts of the Fisheries Management Act 1994 relating to disease, marine vegetation and noxious fish provisions and were advised that DPI Biosecurity was seeking feedback on the subordinate legislation to support the Act which comes into effect in 2017. (Submissions closed on 12 February 2016).

For the full summary of meeting outcomes, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/shellfish_summary_outcome_2_Dec_15.pdf

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting held in Sydney in December include:

Members were advised of the results of the national foodborne virus survey in oysters conducted by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) which saw a total of 33 commercial growing areas across Australia represented - all sampling was conducted when harvest areas were open for harvest and sale for human consumption. Despite there always being an inherent risk of foodborne illness with shellfish due to the raw consumption of the food, the results showed that no Norovirus or Hepatitis A virus was detected. This supports the current national management practices in place and is good news for the oyster industry and for consumer confidence.

Reducing visual amenity impact is a key component to the oyster industry’s commitment to sustainable aquaculture. Members were advised that the extent and use of internal white and multi-coloured infrastructure occurring throughout the industry is acknowledged and the practice is advised to cease, however, the existing coloured infrastructure may take time through a consistent compliance program to remedy. Local Fisheries Officers will exercise their discretion regarding timeframes for their removal or remediation. Industry members are advised to review the Oyster Industry Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy (OISAS) for industry best practices.
This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 93% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and has maintained this for an extended period due to the correct implementation of food safety controls.

Inspections and audits

From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 141 inspections and 399 audits of licensed dairy businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 93% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and has maintained this for an extended period due to the correct implementation of food safety controls.

There were no serious enforcement actions taken against licensed dairy business during this period.

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Inspections and audits

From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 57 inspections and 85 audits of licensed egg businesses. This industry sector has recorded a high compliance rate with 95% 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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
</tr>
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Draft National Standard for Free Range Egg Labelling

On 5 October 2015, the Commonwealth Treasury released a Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) concerning free range egg labelling. The NSW Department of Primary Industries provided a submission to this process, supporting the intention of clarifying the ambiguity surrounding the labelling of free range eggs, but raising concerns with the options proposed.

Submissions to the Consultation RIS are available at www.treasury.gov.au/ConsultationsandReviews/Consultations/2015/Free-range-egg-labelling/Submissions

A recent review of the Commonwealth website for this issue reveals that 149 formal submissions were received in response to the Consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

A recent review of the Commonwealth website for this issue reveals that 149 formal submissions were received in response to the Consultation RIS with 35 of these provided confidentially. The Commonwealth website further informs there were 2,043 informal comments made and 7,611 emails received.
Egg Industry Consultative Committee, October 2015

Issues considered by the committee at the meeting held in Sydney on 21 October 2015 include;

A representative from NSW Fair Trading attended the meeting to discuss the proposed development of a National Free Range Egg Information Standard with members. Industry members raised concerns regarding options proposed in the Commonwealth Treasury’s Consultation Regulation Impact Statement which would see egg labelling placed under Australian Consumer Law, with NSW Fair Trading and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance.

The committee received an update on the egg stamping program and a compliance program conducted by the Food Authority in early 2015 at farmers markets in NSW to measure the effectiveness of the program. It was noted that overall, licensees are compliant with the stamping requirement and that there is an average of five requests a week to issue egg stamps to small egg farmers.

No serious enforcement actions were taken during the period; however, there had been an increase in foodborne illness investigations due to a number of Salmonella outbreaks predominately linked back to raw egg use by cafes and Vietnamese bakeries. Members were advised that the Food Authority will continue to work with council to do targeted training with these businesses to increase their skills and knowledge.

Members commented that the introduction of egg stamping has been invaluable and is enabling them to trace-back when eggs are being sold at farmers’ markets in recycled packaging.
From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 59 inspections and 73 audits of licensed plant product businesses. This industry sector maintained a compliance rate of 76% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and no serious enforcement actions being taken.

The compliance rate in this industry sector is not reflective of the industries overall high compliance rate, but is instead due to the low number of licensed facilities in this sector.

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

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 59 inspections and 73 audits of licensed plant businesses.
From July 2015 to December 2015, the Food Authority conducted 669 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 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.

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<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Nutrition Content & Health Claims – are you getting them right?

On January 18 2016, nutrition content claims and health claims on all food labels, in advertisements and in endorsements became law.

The new food standard (Standard 1.2.7), first introduced on 18 January 2013, allowed businesses up to 3 years to make the change during which health claims needed to comply with either Standard 1.2.7 or the transitional Standard 1.1A.2 which contained the existing requirements.

As of 18 January 2016, the transitional Standard ceased to have effect and all health claims are now regulated under Standard 1.2.7.

Nutrition content claims are claims about the content of certain nutrients or substances in a food, such as ‘low in fat’ or ‘good source of calcium’. These claims will need to meet certain criteria set out in the Standard.

Nutrition content claims are claims about the content of certain nutrients or substances in a food, such as ‘low in fat’ or ‘good source of calcium’.

Health claims refer to a relationship between a food and health rather than a statement of content. There are two types of health claims:

1. **General level**: these are nutrients or substances found in a food and its effect on a health function. General health claims are prohibited from referring to a serious disease or biomarker of a serious disease such as ‘Fibre helps keep you regular’.

2. **High level**: this refers to a nutrient or substance in a food and its relationship to a serious disease or to a biomarker of a serious disease, for example: ‘Diets high in calcium may reduce the risk of osteoporosis in people 65 years of age and over’.

Health claims may only be permitted on foods that meet the nutrient profiling scoring criterion, meaning claims are restricted to foods which may support overall health.

Health claims may only be permitted on foods that meet the nutrient profiling scoring criterion.

All food manufacturers should now have assessed and adjusted any health related claims on their products to meet compliance with the new Standard.

More information can be found on our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/labelling/health-claims including a link to the FSANZ document Getting your claims right.
Hep A & Berries – new guidance on heat inactivation

Guidance for thermal inactivation of Hepatitis A virus in berries.

In addition, MPI have also published Information for processors using imported frozen berries which reminds processors and manufacturers who use imported frozen berries as an ingredient, to consider Hepatitis A as a hazard that is reasonably likely to occur and appropriate controls should be implemented in their process to address this hazard.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) recently developed Guidance for thermal inactivation of Hepatitis A in berries. You’ll find the Food Recall Action Plan on our website. Further information on food recalls and requirements can be found in the Food Industry Recall Protocol on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/foodrecalls/firp/Pages/default.aspx

RECALL: ready-set-remove

A requirement of the Food Standards Code is that all food businesses in Australia have a Food Recall Plan on-site, and in-use. This enables businesses to be well prepared, and quickly remove unsafe product from the market or consumer when identified.

In practice, most large and well-resourced companies have effective Food Recall Plans in place and these are well rehearsed. Smaller companies may find it difficult to develop an effective plan, which limits their ability to rapidly pull product off the shelf in the event that harmful bacteria are found present, or an undeclared allergen is identified.

To assist businesses, the Food Authority has developed a template, Food Recall Action Plan. The template is a simple, step-by-step editable document which guides you through the process you need to take if you are required to remove unsafe product from the market.

To assist businesses, the Food Authority has developed a template, Food Recall Action Plan.

You’ll find the Food Recall Action Plan on our website.
What to expect when we’re inspecting

Businesses that manufacture or wholesale food in NSW fall under the NSW Food Authority’s Manufacturer/Wholesaler Inspection Program (MWIP) and are required to have inspections.

The Food Authority recently developed a new document, Guidance on Manufacturer and Wholesaler Inspection Program to provide detailed information on inspection items for these businesses.

The document aims to advise businesses on what they need to do to comply and what to expect during an inspection. It also provides a framework for food safety offices to ensure a consistent approach is applied when inspecting facilities – from small manufacturers to larger operations.

Guidance on Manufacturer and Wholesaler Inspection Program can be accessed on our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/guidance_on_manuf_wholesale_inspection_program.pdf

High Pressure Processing – is it right for your business?

Foods prepared using High Pressure Processing (HPP) are a fairly recent addition to Australian supermarket shelves. HPP juices have been well received as they retain fresh flavours typical of the fruit from which they are prepared and are free of cooked or burnt flavours which can sometimes be detected in pasteurised juices.

For some foods, HPP provides a good technology solution to processing challenges and therefore, is an excellent addition to a food technologist’s tool kit. Low pH fruit juices provide the perfect example. For other products the use of pressure alone has limitations and processes that combine HPP and temperature might be required to achieve the sought-after product characteristics.

HPP needs to be used wisely and with an appreciation of the limitations of the technology. Broadly speaking, HPP applied at ambient temperatures, destroys vegetative cells and inactivates certain enzymes, with a minimal change in how a product tastes. Pressure alone at or near ambient temperatures has very limited or no effect on the destruction of bacterial spores. This has clear implications for the HPP treatment of low-acid foods.

A new document on the Food Authority’s website provides a basic introduction to HPP and includes a summary of a few key publications on the topic. The document, High Pressure Processing – product considerations in HPP is technical in nature but it will not turn people new to HPP into experts. Food processors interested in validating pressure-pasteurisation treatment should work with competent pressure-processing experts in designing and conducting validation trials.

You can view the document at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/high_pressure_processing.pdf

The Annual Food Testing Report provides a summary of completed and in-progress surveys, foodborne illness investigation and compliance samples analysed by the Food Authority’s primary testing provider, DTS Food Laboratories (DTS) since October 2014.

The report shows that between October 2014 and June 2015, a total of 3,265 samples were sent to DTS for testing. The diversity of foods analysed including raw and processed meats, raw and processed seafood, fruit and vegetables, dairy products and other processed foods.

Surveys
During 2014-2015, the Food Authority conducted a number of surveys with the aim of gathering information to inform future risk assessment work. Due to a large number of samples required for the surveys, these will now continue into the 2015-2016 financial year. Surveys include: Microbiological quality and handling practices of cut melon and papaya at retail, Microbiological quality of ready-to-eat (RTE) chilled foods, and Campylobacter in non-poultry products.

Verification program
Four verification programs were carried out:
1. Food Safety Scheme verification program. The microbiological verification program monitors food produced under Food Safety Schemes. A total of 194 samples were randomly collected from 70 businesses and submitted for testing with a total of three products identified as being non-compliant due to elevated levels of E. coli.
2. Egg farm and egg grading facility surveillance program.
3. Poultry verification program.
4. kJ menu labelling verification program.

Audit and compliance investigations
A total of 142 samples were submitted to DTS for testing due to compliance investigations. The most common analysis was for sulphur dioxide ($SO_2$) levels, meat speciation, starch and allergens.

Food Incidents and complaints investigations
1,563 food and environmental samples were submitted to DTS for testing in responses to a foodborne illness investigation and its follow up activities. During the reporting period, two major foodborne illness incidents took place: Salmonella in aged care facilities which saw 33 residents infected and resulted in two deaths and Histamine in fish which affected a number of consumers who suffered histamine poisoning after eating tuna salads at a Sydney café.

Salmonella linked to the use of raw egg foods continued to be the single most common type of incident investigated by the Food Authority and accounted for 26 of the 44 confirmed or suspected foodborne illness outbreaks.

Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation


The Forum considered a number of issues, some of which included the Health Star Rating System, unpasteurised milk not for human consumption, hydrocyanic acid in apricot kernels & other foods and Australian reforms to Country of Origin Labelling framework.

Health Star Rating (HSR) System

• Members welcomed the news that in New Zealand, the HSR system is well supported with over 600 products currently on shelves and strong industry support for its implementation.

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Unpasteurised milk not for human consumption

• Members noted that jurisdictions have agreed to achieve the consistent outcome of preventing the supply of raw cow’s milk for human consumption through the supply chain; however the means to achieve this will vary between jurisdictions.

• Australian Members remain concerned about consumption of unpasteurised (raw) cow’s milk that is sold as ‘bath milk’, a cosmetic product labelled ‘not for human consumption’.

Hydrocyanic Acid in Apricot Kernels & other foods

• Members considered and supported the work undertaken by FSANZ in relation to Hydrocyanic Acid in Apricot Kernels and other foods. This work indicated that consumption of raw apricot kernels poses an acute public health and safety risk for consumers as they contain cyanogenic glycosides that can cause cyanide poisoning.

• The public health and safety of consumers is of utmost importance to Members and the variations to a number of Standards in the Code will support this by prohibiting the retail sale of raw apricot kernels to consumers.

Australian reforms to Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) framework

• Australian Members welcomed the Australian Government’s commitment to improving the Country of Origin Labelling Framework for food. While the proposed changes include developing a mandatory information standard under the Australian Consumer Law, Australian Members agreed to request FSANZ to commence work to revoke the Country of Origin Labelling Standard in the Code.

• Members noted the work underway on the Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) and that public consultation is imminent. Members agreed to receive an update on progress in March 2016.

(NB: Following the Forum, the RIS has since been released with submissions closing on 29 January 2016. You can view the consultation documents on the Commonwealth’s website at www.industry.gov.au/industry/IndustrySectors/FoodManufacturingIndustry/Pages/Country-of-Origin-Labelling.aspx)

National Food Safety Incident Response Workshop

Late last year, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the NSW Food Authority hosted their second National Food Safety Incident Response Workshop (the Workshop).

This follows agreement by industry and government that the Workshops should be convened on an annual basis following the success of the first Workshop in 2014, and the subsequent Food Incident Preparedness and Response Workshop for the horticulture industry which was held in June last year.

The aim of the Workshop was to continue the discussion on management frameworks to further enhance incident response arrangements for food incidents.

Incidents that occurred last year were discussed in detail to establish what worked well, and what areas were open for improvement. Key roles in the response planning were identified and a number of case studies involving small and large businesses were undertaken to gain an understanding of where the challenges existed, how to manage them and what support industry needs to assist them in overcoming them.

The establishment of an Incident Stakeholder Forum with representation from government and industry where food incidents and issues would be discussed on a scheduled basis was supported by all participants at the Workshop and will be progressed for consideration within the next few months.

Annual Report 2014-15

The NSW Food Authority’s Annual Report 2014-15, published late last year, provides a detailed snapshot of food safety achievements in NSW. The NSW food industry contributes $113 billion to the state’s economy each year and ensures our stakeholders remain competitive in international markets and our consumers have access to safe food.

A major feature for this reporting period was the delivery of the NSW Government’s comprehensive Food Safety Strategy 2015-2021 which provides the framework to further strengthen the Government’s commitment to food safety and quality management. In addition, the Strategy will help safeguard NSW’s reputation of consistently supplying safe food.

Other highlights include:
- Implementation of egg stamping requirements for all eggs sold in NSW to improve traceability in the event of a foodborne illness outbreak
- Completion of nationally recognised animal welfare training for all poultry and rabbit domestic abattoir facilities in NSW
- supported food safety compliance in the retail sector through the Food Safety Supervisor, Name and Shame and Scores on Doors initiatives
- successful implementation of the Harvest and Hold Scheme that has netted $6 million in savings as part of a broader red tape reduction program
- continued a consultative approach with egg, poultry, meat, plants, vulnerable persons, retail, shellfish and seafood industries as part of our statutory regulatory responsibilities and charter to inform and develop a food safety culture with industry, and
- continued collaboration with Federal Government counterparts and other government bodies to instigate the Health Star Rating labelling program.

Ensuring food safety from primary production to the final product enables better consumer health and strengthens the economy while increasing export opportunities for all NSW food businesses.

FSANZ – documents for public comment

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) invite written submissions for each of the topics listed below. Submissions are due by 6pm (Canberra time) on the dates shown next to each topic.

• A1109 - Glutaminase from Bacillus amyloliquefaciens as a Processing Aid (Enzyme)
  Submissions for both are due 29 February 2016

• A1116 – Food derived from Herbicide-tolerant & Insect-protected Corn Line MZIR098

• P1041 – Removal of country of Origin Labelling Requirements
  Submissions are due 4 March 2016

• A1118 - Food derived from Herbicide-tolerant Corn Line MON87419
  Submissions are due 22 March 2016

• P1024 – Revision of the Regulation of Nutritive Substances & Novel Foods
  Submissions are due 24 March 2016

• A1120 – Agarose Ion Exchange Resin as a Processing Aid for Lactoferrin Production
  Submissions are due 29 March 2016

• Recommendation 34 in Labelling Logic on the labelling of irradiated food.
  Submissions are due 29 March 2016

• P1028 – Infant Formula
  Submissions are due 17 May 2016

More information regarding each topic can be found on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/changes/Pages/Documents-for-public-comment.aspx
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The following procedures have been determined as being suitable for ensuring the chain of custody for security burial/disposal of seized product:

• The Authorised Officer arranges to collect the seized goods for secure disposal
• The items collected are checked off against the seizure notice and Seizure Action Summary sheet
• The Authorised Officer and another (witness) is to follow the waste transport vehicle to the waste facility, in order to view and document the dumping procedure
• Upon presentation of the load at the weighbridge, the waste transport vehicle is weighed
• The waste transport vehicle is then directed to the landfill tip face

• The driver tips the load of seized goods in the designated area, a bulldozer is then directed to immediately crush and cover the load rendering it inaccessible
• The Authorised Officer is to remain at the tipping face in his vehicle to observe and document the disposal process being undertaken
• The waste transport vehicle then returns to the weighbridge where the vehicle is again weighed and the net weight is automatically calculated
• A docket is provided by the waste facility, detailing the weight of material disposed
• Any other details as required in the Seizure Action Summary sheet (including copy of the waste facility’s weight docket), is to be obtained by the Authorised Officer in charge.
• The Seizure Action Summary sheet and any attached documentation are then filed with the NSW Food Authority.

Following this process provides confidence that food that does not comply with a provision of the relevant legislation and that presents a health risk to consumers has no opportunity to find its way back into the marketplace.