Food labelling at your fingertips

The NSW Food Authority recently launched an online, interactive food labelling hub which aims to be a ‘one-stop-shop’ resource for both industry and consumers.

The hub is designed to be the ‘go to’ place for easy to find food labelling information, as well as an important regulatory labelling information resource for industry. The food labelling hub has five sections of specific information:

- How to read a label
- Understanding claims
- Food production
- Stay safe
- Labels & the law

Continued back page...
Working together to manage antimicrobial resistance

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has emerged as a major national and international issue in public health and is of growing importance in the international trade of food–animal products.

AMR is the ability of a microorganism (like bacteria, viruses and parasites) to stop an antimicrobial (such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials) from working against it. As a result, standard medical treatments become ineffective and infections persist and may spread to others.

(source: www.health.gov.au)

From a food production perspective, the use of some antimicrobials by industry sectors may compromise human health in future if microorganisms develop resistance through overuse or bad practice. This is particularly significant for antimicrobial products that are similar to drugs of ‘last resort’ used in hospitals or other clinical settings, where treatment options for some microorganisms are running out.

Last year, a National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in partnership with government and industry stakeholders to minimise the spread of antimicrobial resistance and to ensure that over time there is continued access to effective antimicrobials.

The key objectives of the strategy are to increase awareness and understanding of AMR and its implications; to implement effective AMR practices across human health and animal care settings to ensure appropriate prescribing and use; to develop nationally coordinated surveillance of AMR and antimicrobial usage; and to conduct further research and partner on development of new antibiotics.

Preliminary scoping work to support and progress the national AMR strategy has been undertaken between NSW Department of Primary Industries and NSW Health with workshops to be held to determine next steps and responsibilities.

Industry will be kept informed as this important piece of work progresses.


Calendar dates

FEBRUARY 2017
20
The Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Awards Night (RAS), Sydney

APRIL 2017
6–19
The Sydney Royal Easter Show, Sydney
Sydney dishes up food safety advice

One of the key aims of the NSW Food Authority’s Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) with councils, is to ensure that those who prepare, cook and deliver our food, dish up food that is not only delicious, but safe to eat as well.

Customers expect the food they buy to be safe to eat. With consumers dining out more and new food trends constantly emerging, it’s more important than ever that retail food service businesses continue to look for opportunities to increase their food handling skills and knowledge.

The City of Sydney was the latest council to host the Retail and Food Service Information Session, held on 10 November as part of the FRP. The free sessions bring together local food businesses, council Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and representatives from the Food Authority to learn how to create and maintain a culture of food safety within the retail food sector.

Presentations given to attendees at the Sydney session included egg safety and reducing the risk of Salmonella, as well as how to get a higher rating through the Scores on Doors program. Guest Speaker Maria Said, CEO of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, spoke to attendees about why allergen management is so important and that all who work in the retail food service sector have a duty of care to be allergy aware.

Customers expect the food they buy to be safe to eat. With consumers dining out more and new food trends constantly emerging, it’s more important than ever that retail food service businesses continue to look for opportunities to increase their food handling skills and knowledge.

The session provided the perfect opportunity to launch the recently revised Be Prepared, Be Allergy Aware brochure as well as new allergy resources, The Usual Suspects (poster) and the Allergy Aware checklist (poster), which were developed specifically for the retail food service industry. Refer to article on page 4 for more information.

The Retail and Food Service Information Session provides a valuable and unique platform for open dialogue between retail food businesses, EHOs and staff from the Food Authority.
Raising allergy awareness in our retail food sector

Food allergy is a growing problem in Australia and is potentially life threatening.

**THE USUAL SUSPECTS**

![Image of food allergens]

In NSW, an estimated 1 in 20 children (under 5 years of age) and about 2 in 100 adults are affected with a food allergy, with approximately 1 in 10 Australian infants less than one year of age expected to develop one.

The food industry plays a major role in helping to manage food allergies, and food manufacturers, retailers and importers all have an obligation to declare the presence of food allergens in foods they are manufacturing, serving or importing.

Recent studies show that most fatalities relating to a food allergy occurred when eating outside the home*.

It is vital that people working in food service understand their roles and responsibilities when preparing and serving food to customers with an allergy.

While both the customer and the food service business play a role in preventing an allergic incident, the law requires that a business must provide accurate information to a customer when they ask about potential allergens in the food being served.

Australia has one of the highest allergy prevalence rates in the world so it’s important that as new information comes to hand, we update our resources and share them with our retail food service businesses to help them manage allergens effectively.

The NSW Food Authority and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia recently updated the *Be Prepared. Be Allergy Aware* brochure which was first developed for the retail food service sector in 2011. We also took the opportunity to enhance the existing Allergy Aware checklist as well as develop a new resource, *The Usual Suspects* (poster).

All resources can be downloaded from our website at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/rp/allergies-intolerances](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/rp/allergies-intolerances)

* Source: Clinical & Experimental Allergy, 46, 1099–1110 © 2016 John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Increases in anaphylaxis fatalities in Australia from 1997 to 2013 R. J. Mullins1,2

L to R: Jody Aiken, Health Management Educator (A&AA), Maria Said, CEO (A&AA), Genevieve Bonello, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications Manager (NSWFA), Lisa Szabo, CEO (NSWF)
Strengthening the policy on service of raw egg foods

The risks associated with the preparation of raw egg products are well understood.

Statistics show that the consumption of foods containing raw or minimally cooked eggs is currently the single largest source of foodborne Salmonella outbreaks in Australia.

In October 2014, the NSW Food Authority released *Food Safety Guidelines for the Preparation of Raw Egg Products* (the Guidelines). Despite this, outbreaks continued to take place, particularly where business hygiene and temperature control issues were apparent. In addition, businesses and councils approached the Food Authority for advice on desserts containing raw eggs and other unusual raw egg dishes.

As a result, the Guidelines were recently updated and give specific reference to Standard 3.2.2, Division 3, clause 7 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code to ensure that only safe and suitable food is processed.

To reduce the risk of foodborne illness outbreaks caused by Salmonella, retail businesses are advised to avoid selling food containing raw or minimally cooked eggs. The Guidelines give food businesses that do sell food containing raw egg specific safety steps for its preparation and clear guidance and advice on what they must do to meet food safety regulations.

The revised *Food Safety Guidelines for the Preparation of Raw Egg Products* is available on our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/retail/raw_egg_guidelines.pdf

Have you subscribed to the HSR newsletter?

At least 115 companies have now adopted the Health Star Rating (HSR) system, with more than 5,500 products displaying the HSR graphic in Australia (as at the end of September 2016), and over 2,100 products in New Zealand proudly displaying the stars.

Visit the HSR website at www.healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/Home to get the latest on all things HSR.

While you’re browsing the site, make sure you remember to subscribe to the HSR newsletter to stay on the front foot of all the latest news regarding the front-of-pack labelling system. You can do this by clicking on the subscribe button on the bottom of the homepage.
NSW Food Authority Annual Report 2015-16 now available

The NSW Food Authority’s 2015-16 Annual Report is now available online for viewing.

The report outlines the body of work undertaken by the NSW Food Authority throughout the year and provides a detailed snapshot of food safety achievements in NSW.

A highlight of the period was the ongoing and valued relationship the Food Authority shares with its industry partners. These successful partnerships forged through sector committees, including egg, dairy, meat, plants, vulnerable persons, seafood, shellfish, and the retail food service sector, are evidence of the collaborative approach to developing a food safety culture across the state’s food industries.

Other notable achievements of the 2015-16 reporting period include:

- continued delivery on outcomes identified in the NSW Government Food Safety Strategy 2015-2021, a six year plan to drive and further enhance NSW’s reputation as a supplier of safe, quality food
- an important role in leading the Department of Primary Industries’ response to the PFOS/PFOA contamination incident at the Williamtown RAAF base by providing sample collection, analysis of results, support and advice to consumers, industry and the Expert Panel established in response to the incident
- commencement of the Food Regulation 2015 following the completion of an internal review and consultation with stakeholders to provide an improved balance between maximising food safety outcomes for consumers and minimising regulatory costs for food businesses
- the development of a simplified generic food recall template for small business that assists in more easily implementing an effective recall program and understanding the process.

You can read the full report on our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/publications

Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation


The Forum discussed the latest updates on investigations in relation to low THC hemp as a food and a number of technical evaluations on potential further labelling of added sugars and vegetable oils.

Other items discussed included:

- Health Star Rating (HSR) system update
- Vitamin D in breakfast cereal
- Voluntary pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverages
- Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)
- Food regulation website (launched).

Further and more detailed information from the Forum can be found in the communiqué on the Food Regulation website at www.foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/ministerial-forum-communiques
Julianne’s Kitchen cooks up Fine Food awards win

The NSW Food Authority continued its support this year of the 2016 Sydney Royal Spring Fine Food Show which recognises and celebrates excellence and innovation in the fine food industry.

The Hornsby based company took out the 2016 Sydney Royal Deli Meat Competition with their ‘Chicken and Madeira Pate’, which is one of a range of pate based products that are hand-made from locally sourced products. Julianne’s Kitchen is no newcomer to the Sydney Royal Fine Food stage, having won an award in the prestigious competition each year since 2013.

The Food Authority congratulates Julianne’s Kitchen on their win, and thanks all businesses that took part for their quality entries.
New resources

SEPTEMBER 2016
• Adverse sampling compliance policy
• NSW Retail Meat Food Safety Program & Retail Diary

NOVEMBER 2016
• RTO compliance report 2016
• The Usual Suspects (poster)
• Allergy Aware checklist (poster)
• Foodborne illnesses reduction strategy review

Updated resources

SEPTEMBER 2016
• Food safety guidelines for the preparation of raw egg products

NOVEMBER 2016
• Be Prepared. Be Allergy Aware (brochure)

An insight into foodborne illnesses in NSW

An independent review has been conducted for the NSW Food Authority to better understand foodborne illnesses.

An independent review has been conducted for the NSW Food Authority by food safety consultant and microbiologist Dr Patricia Desmarchelier to better understand foodborne illnesses, in support of the NSW Government’s goal of reducing foodborne illness by 30% over the next 5 years.

Dr Desmarchelier is a former CSIRO leader in food safety, who consults for industry and government nationally, and internationally for the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The Foodborne Illnesses Reduction Strategy Review targets three microorganisms considered to be the most important causes of foodborne illnesses; Salmonella, Listeria monocytogenes, and Campylobacter.

Also reviewed were current food safety strategies used by the NSW Government to reduce risks, compared with similar strategies from the USA, New Zealand and the UK, as well as identifying new technologies that can potentially strengthen risk reduction.

The Foodborne Illnesses Reduction Strategy Review can be accessed on our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/scienceandtechnical/foodborne_illnesses_reduction_strategy_review.pdf
FSANZ - Food Safety Hub

Taking stakeholder feedback on board, FSANZ recently developed a Food Safety Hub on their website which sees all food safety related information consolidated into one central location, and it’s now accessible from their home page.

The hub is designed to be a one-stop-shop for easy access to information divided into the following four areas:

1. Standards, guides and other information — outlining the regulatory requirements related to food safety and links to useful guides and fact sheets.
2. Food recalls, incidents and consumer advice — explaining what’s involved in recalling food as well as information for the public on past food incidents and specific food safety topics.
3. Food safety culture — explaining what food safety culture is, why it’s important and how food businesses and regulators can work together to improve it.
4. Featured content — highlighting publications (e.g. the new revised Safe Food Australia guide), videos, key messages and the latest food safety information.

The content will be further improved and added to over the coming months, so be sure to keep checking in via www.foodstandards.gov.au

Safe Food Australia guide

The new 3rd edition of Safe Food Australia, the comprehensive guide to the food safety standards, is also now available. The revised edition includes updated evidence and information to address current food safety issues and trends. It also provides new guidance for mobile, temporary and home-based vendors.

You can access the guide at www.foodstandards.gov.au/safefoodaustralia

Biosecurity Legislation update

Public consultation for the Biosecurity Act 2015 legislation started on 14 November 2016 and will continue until 29 January 2017. The Biosecurity Act and proposed Biosecurity Regulation 2016 provides a framework for the prevention, elimination and minimisation of biosecurity risks posed by pests, diseases, weeds and contaminants to the economy, environment and communities of NSW.

The proposed Biosecurity Regulation, like the Biosecurity Act, covers the biosecurity spectrum, reducing the need for multiple regulations.

A series of community drop-in sessions were held throughout November, however those who missed out and still want to have their say on the Biosecurity legislation are encouraged to view the proposed Regulation and Regulatory Impact Statement and contact DPI NSW Biosecurity for public comment.

For more information and to have a say on the Biosecurity Act 2015 legislation, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-act-2015
Meat Industry Consultative Council, August 2016

Issues considered by the Council at its meeting in Sydney on 31 August included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 include 2,371 acceptable rated audits, 384 failed audits, 1,611 acceptable rated inspections and 268 failed inspections.

The meat sector maintained an overall compliance rate of 87% for the period 2015/16.

The Council noted the top three critical issues identified during the period were process control, hygiene and sanitation, and analytical testing. Members were advised that the Food Authority is developing strategies to address these specific areas: by publishing the auditor guidance document to focus more on inherent food safety risks; by updating the Meat Retail Food Safety Program for implementation in 2016/17; and by developing and incorporating targeted training programs into the sector.

Enforcement activities in the meat sector during the reporting period included the issue of 271 improvement notices, 95 penalty notices, 3 warning letters, 3 prohibition orders as well as several product seizures. There were no reported foodborne illness outbreaks in the sector during this time. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12 month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

Members received an update on Operation Mary, a project being conducted by the NSW DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety compliance team to monitor traceability compliance throughout the production chain from producers to saleyards to abattoir processors. The assessment team has conducted inspections of sixteen sheep and goat abattoirs, focussing on National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and/or equivalent documentation for sheep and goat consignments; completeness and accuracy of mob based NVDs; uploading of data and timelines to the NLIS data base, to inform the overall traceability of carcase to Property Identification Code (PIC).

Generally in NSW all plants had a very high rate of compliance. The common issue in the saleyard and abattoir project was property to property transfer with the biggest non-compliance area being the requirement for a farmer to record all applicable PICs that the animals had been on for the NVD.

A presentation on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was given to members. Refer to article on page 2 for more information.

Inspections and audits

From July 2016 to September 2016, the Food Authority conducted 241 inspections and 725 audits of licensed meat businesses. This industry sector has recorded an improvement in compliance rate of 96% for period Jul – Sep 2016.

The main areas of non-compliance related to the retail meat sector — failure to have a food safety program in place and non-compliance with process control, particularly issues relating to cross contamination of cooked and raw products.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the meat sector between the same reporting periods in 2015 and 2016.

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<tr>
<td>Total audits</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>725</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>96%</td>
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Simplifying compliance in the retail meat sector

The Food Authority seeks to continually improve how it engages with licensed businesses proactively to better educate and increase voluntary compliance with food safety requirements.

Earlier this year, a targeted audit improvement training and education program focussing on the retail meat sector was conducted. The program included a number of on-site sessions at retail meat premises to guide businesses through the food safety and regulatory requirements specific to their operations with a focus on maintaining monitoring records using their food safety program and retail diary.

Other changes were made to the audit program and internal processes which resulted in development of new guidance material. One of these new resources, Guidance on Audits, aims to not only enable auditors to apply a consistent approach regardless of the size or range of operations of licensed food businesses, it also aims to help food businesses understand the compliance audit model process. That is, why defects are identified during audits and their impact on food safety - both of which can greatly assist businesses prepare for an audit.

Audit Failure Action Required fact sheets were also developed so that businesses who receive an unacceptable audit outcome understand what this means, and what the required next steps are.

We encourage businesses to become familiar with the guidance document as well as the fact sheet prior to an audit as it will help gain an understanding of expectations, and therefore, help to avoid an unacceptable audit outcome.

Reminder letters are also now issued to all licensed businesses to advise that an audit is due and that an officer will be conducting this in the near future. The letter includes key information to help businesses plan and prepare for the audit, in order to achieve an acceptable audit outcome.

As a result of these initiatives, there has been a significant improvement in compliance in the retail meat sector. We will continue to monitor this trend and look at implementing new initiatives that support increased compliance.

A recent initiative is the new NSW Retail Meat Food Safety Program & Retail Diary which was implemented on 1 December.

In order to maintain the current high level of compliance, a significant revision of the previous generic Food Safety Program (FSP) has seen it transform into an outcomes based format providing clearer guidance and necessary information to achieve compliance. The revised document is a result of feedback received from licensees who asked for the current requirements to be simplified, better explained, and to be provided with additional guidance information to help answer any questions a licensee may have between audits.

The new FSP identifies 14 major outcomes that licensees must achieve, a summary of how to reach the outcome, and additional guidance information to assist them achieve it.

The most significant change sees the FSP and the Retail Diary combined into one document making it easier for businesses to comply as all the required information relating to general processing as well as required monitoring records will be contained together - which can then be easily presented during the next audit.

From 1 December, retail meat operators who order the diary will receive the new combined revised version. It will be delivered with a letter explaining the change, as well as a simple user guide which has been designed to answer any questions regarding how to use it.

In addition, the document will be translated into multiple languages and is available to download free of charge from our website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/retail_meat_food_safety_program.pdf
SEAFOOD

NSW Seafood Industry Forum, October 2016

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 19 October included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 include 596 acceptable rated audits, 78 failed audits and 716 inspections.

The overall compliance rate for the seafood sector for the period 2015/16 was 89%, which is a significant drop in compliance from the previous financial year which saw an overall compliance rate of 95%. This has been attributed to recent changes to the shellfish audit model requiring additional verification audits to be conducted on licensees where inconsistencies are found in submitted paperwork. It is expected that this is only a temporary fluctuation as licensees adapt to the new audit model.

The Committee noted the top three critical issues identified during the period were in relation to process control — failure to complete or produce monitoring records, analytical testing and Food Safety Program.

During the reporting period, 52 improvement notices, 10 penalty notices and 6 warning letters were issued with no prosecutions in this sector being undertaken. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12 month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

Members noted an outline of foodborne illness investigations conducted during the reporting period including an investigation undertaken in collaboration with NSW Maritime following reports of gastroenteritis clusters affecting people who had consumed oysters produced in two different harvest zones on the NSW South Coast.

An update was tabled on changes to the Country of origin labelling requirements for food which will move from the Food Standards Code to come under the Australian Consumer Law. The new standard commenced on 1 July 2016 but stakeholders have a 24 month transition period for compliance to 1 July 2018. The Committee was advised that since the last meeting, the ACCC has developed extensive user guides which are available on their website to enable businesses to seek more answers and information. This includes an online decision tool to assist businesses with deciding on types of labels to display on their foods. Members were advised to contact the ACCC for any queries in regard to specific products. Refer to article on page 19 for more information.

A presentation on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was given to members. Refer to article on page 2 for more information.

A presentation on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was given to members.
Animals and fishing vessels

Operators of licensed fishing vessels are reminded that the presence of pet dogs or other animals aboard a licensed vessel can pose a risk to the contamination of seafood.

Standard 4.2.1 Primary Production and Processing Standard for Seafood of the Food Standards Code, states that a seafood business must identify potential seafood safety hazards and must take all necessary steps to prevent the likelihood of seafood being, or becoming, contaminated.

Investigations following complaints of dogs on vessels revealed only a small potential for contamination, as the dogs were confined to the cabin and living areas and separated from all food contact surfaces and processing areas. In cases where separation is not possible due to the vessel design and construction, such as estuary boats and trawlers, animals are prohibited from entering the vessel.


NSW Shellfish Committee, August 2016

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting held in Sydney on 17 August included:

Members were made aware of advice from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) that all vessels associated with commercial aquaculture activities are considered ‘domestic commercial vessels’. Further, from 1 July 2017, AMSA will assume full responsibility for service delivery of the national domestic commercial vessel safety system. Existing vessels operating prior to 30 June 2013 will be considered under a ‘grandfathering clause’ and no new safety systems will be required. All new vessels operating after 30 June 2013 may require additional certificates of survey and safety systems.

The committee discussed the interactions between oyster farmers and recreational vessels in and around oyster leases. A working group consisting of DPI Fisheries (Aquaculture and Recreational Fishing), RMS, oyster farmers and a recreational fishing representative has been established to prepare a strategy aimed at reducing conflicts between recreational boaters, fishers and oyster leases.

A discussion was held regarding the ‘local sales’ of oysters which are sold direct to the public. Members were reminded that they must be labelled with a tag, sticker and business card with the business name, date and quantity to demonstrate the oysters were not illegally harvested, collected or likely to be on-sold. Shellfish businesses are also to be reminded that traceability back to a point of harvest must be maintained and that the NSW Food Authority Product Record books are suitable for this purpose.

NSW Dairy Food Safety Consultative Committee, September 2016

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 20 September included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 include 692 acceptable rated audits, 53 failed audits and 249 inspections.

The overall compliance rate for the dairy sector for the period 2015/16 was 93%.

A large amount of the audits conducted during the year were under the Third Party Audit (TPA) program with 321 TPA audits on dairy farms conducted with a high level compliance rate of 97.5%.

The Committee noted the top three critical issues identified during the period were in relation to process control issues, failures with monitoring of food safety programs, and product testing issues. However due to targeted efforts within the audit program to address areas where failures are occurring, the observed occurrences of critical CARS were reduced in comparison with previous financial years.

During the reporting period, 35 improvement notices, 6 penalty notices and 2 warning letters were issued and there were 6 product seizures all relating to a project to target unpasteurised milk. No foodborne investigations were conducted and there were no prosecutions. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12 month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

A presentation on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was given to members. Refer to article on page 2 for more information.

There was also discussion on the importance of updating dairy farms about new drugs on the market and the need for pharmaceutical company representatives to liaison on a regular basis with vets. The Committee will be kept updated on these issues.

The Committee noted a paper giving background to the lengthy verification process undertaken by the NSW Food Authority to approve the production of High Pressure Processed (HPP) milk by a NSW business. The HPP process used by the business was verified as equivalent to milk pasteurisation, but without using heat, and it is not raw milk. Any future processors of HPP milk will be expected to go through the same staged approval process.

An update was given to the Committee on the development of new legislation under the Biosecurity Act 2015 which is being conducted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Work is underway to draft the Regulations and develop a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for stakeholder consultation which occurred in November 2016.

For a full summary of meeting outcomes, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/nsw_DCCM_outcomes_september_2016.pdf
Raw Milk Cheese App – bringing production of raw milk cheeses within reach

In early 2015, Australian cheesemakers were given the green light by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to produce a wider range of raw milk cheeses using the raw milk of cows, buffalo, sheep and goats. However, no cheesemaker has yet been given approval to make these cheeses under the national standards.

To assist in understanding of the specific raw milk cheese requirements outlined in Standard 4.2.4 of the Food Standards Code, Australia’s dairy regulators have been working with the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture who have developed software (an ‘app’) to support manufacturing and regulatory decisions about the safety of defined raw milk cheeses.

The app will be an essential tool for food safety regulators but it should also be extensively used by cheese makers to assist with product development of raw milk cheeses. The app considers the quality of raw milk and processes around milk supply and cheese making but it starts with the target product. The style of cheese is the first decision. The cheese maker may then check if the planned product prevents the growth of pathogenic bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes*. This is a simple process but it relies on sophisticated mathematical models.

In the very early stages of product development this might be done by using analytical results typical of the intended style of cheese which, for many cheeses, are built into the app.

If pathogen growth is likely then the cheese maker can consider using a faster starter, adding more salt or increasing the maturation time. Once the ‘virtual cheese’ appears to prevent the growth of *Listeria* then trial batches can be made and analysed. Actual results for pH, salt-in-moisture and lactic acid must be run through the app to check for *Listeria* growth.

The app includes modules to check against requirements for milk quality and to evaluate cheese processing activities. By using the app cheese makers will learn much about their product — information likely to have previously required several expensive challenge tests to discover. Challenge tests are where pathogens are added to laboratory batches of cheese and their growth and inactivation followed through cheese making and maturation.

Development of the app was funded by Dairy Food Safety Victoria, Food Standards Australia New Zealand and the NSW Food Authority. Previous studies funded by the NZ Ministry for Primary Industries and the Victorian State Government generated information that was critical to make the app work.

The NSW Food Authority has received an evaluation copy of the Raw Milk Cheese App with the final product expected to be available via [www.foodsafetycentre.com.au](http://www.foodsafetycentre.com.au) in the near future.
Egg Industry Consultative Committee, August 2016

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 10 August included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 include 161 acceptable rated audits, 8 failed audits and 81 inspections.

The overall compliance rate for the egg sector for the period 2015/16 was 95%.

The Committee noted the top three critical issues identified during the period continue to be mainly related to construction and maintenance issues, pre-requisite programs and process control. However, follow up audits have shown that in all cases where Corrective Action Requests (CARs) were issued, corrective actions were implemented by licensees with all passing their follow up audits.

During the reporting period, 8 improvement notices, 3 penalty notices, 3 warning letters and a prohibition order were issued. Several foodborne illness investigations were carried out during the period into egg-related Salmonella outbreaks, mainly associated with the preparation of raw egg mayonnaises and sauces. It is worth noting that this data relates to a 12 month reporting period as opposed to the usual six months.

The report also included an update on the egg stamping program which was introduced in November 2014.

A presentation on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019 was given to members. Refer to article on page 2 for more information.

For a full summary of meeting outcomes, visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/summary_EICC_Aug_2016.pdf
Inspections and audits

From July 2016 to September 2016, the Food Authority conducted 13 inspections and 29 audits of licensed plant product businesses. This industry sector has recorded a compliance rate of 90%.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the plant sector between the same reporting periods in 2015 and 2016.

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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
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From July 2016 to September 2016, the Food Authority conducted 13 inspections and 29 audits of licensed plant product 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.

Inspections and audits

From July 2016 to September 2016, the Food Authority conducted 78 inspections and 522 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 2015 and 2016.

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<td>Total audits</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total inspections</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptable audit rate</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>98%</td>
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MANUFACTURING

Assisting businesses with Country of origin labelling requirements

Earlier this year, the Australian Government introduced the Country of Origin Food Labelling Information Standard 2016 which came into effect on 1 July 2016, with a two year transition period.

During this time, industry may choose to voluntarily adopt the new system, or continue to comply with the current requirements until the new system becomes mandatory on 1 July 2018. At that time, it will be regulated under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL).

The ACCC has developed a user guide to assist businesses which will be updated during the transition period to incorporate relevant changes to the law.

The guide:

- aims to help businesses identify whether they need to comply with the Standard
- sets out the labelling requirements for priority and non-priority foods
- explains how businesses must work out the percentage, by weight, of Australian ingredients in a food
- outlines the basic principles for how labels should look on food products
- outlines the ACL’s requirements regarding making clear and accurate origin claims.

Those working in the food industry will benefit from the centralisation of regulatory labelling information in the ‘Labels & the law’ section, providing confidence and certainty to food businesses that regulatory requirements are being met. ‘Labels & the law’ summarises information on; the Food Authority’s role as an enforcement agency for food labelling regulation, country of origin labelling, responsibilities for declaring allergens, the differences in ‘use-by’ and ‘best before’ statements, laws on nutritional claims and front of pack labelling.

The food labelling hub ensures that information essential to food labelling compliance is quick and easy to find, and can be used while on the move on any smart phone or tablet. The mobility of this information is ideal for those who work in the food industry and are time poor to find important labelling regulations in a time sensitive environment.

To access the food labelling hub, go to www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/labelling and begin browsing.

Businesses have 2 years to implement the new country of origin food labels on their products before the law takes effect on 1 July 2018.

FSANZ Call for submissions

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) have recently released a call for submissions on the following:

**Call for submissions – Application A1124**
Alternative DHA-rich Algal Oil for Infant Formula Products.
Written submissions are due by 6pm (Canberra time) 13 December 2016.

**Call for submissions – Proposal P1043**
Code Revision (2016).
Written submissions are due by 6pm (Canberra time) 16 December 2016.

**Call for submissions – A1132**
Broaden Definition of Steviol Glycosides (Intense Sweetener).
Written submissions are due by 6pm (Canberra time) 19 December 2016.

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