

## Summary of meeting outcomes

### NSW Seafood Industry Forum

13 September 2023

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The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on 13 September 2023. Issues considered by the Forum are outlined below.

#### Attendees

**NSW Seafood Industry Forum members:** Tricia Beatty (Professional Fishers' Association Inc), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc,) Bobby Tasev (Tassal Group Ltd- De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd).

**NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations), Ben Rampano (Senior Aquatic Policy & Project Officer), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Lisa Szabo - Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

**Apologies:** Danielle Adams (Clarence River Co-operative Ltd), Mark Boulter (Food and Beverage Importers Association), David Cusack (Manager Food Standards & Programs), Olivia Churchill (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd), Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity & Food Safety), Kerry Strangas (The Master Fish Merchants Association), Melissa Walker (Team Leader Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance).

#### Industry updates

Members provided updates on the following key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors:

- Feedback from professional fishers' is that they don't understand what is happening with the recent detection of White spot disease (WSD) and there seems to be some misinformation about what this detection means for their industry.
- Use of imported seafood for bait by recreational fishers' and lack of awareness of the biosecurity risks associated with this practice is causing angst among industry. The Professional Fishers' Association (PFA) is in the process of producing educational material to better educate recreational fishers about the dangers of this practice. This material is expected to be distributed through social media in coming weeks.
- The issue of Ocean Wind Farms and the potential impacts on ocean wildlife such as noise pollution, electromagnetic fields transmitted by cables that impact sea life navigation, predator detection, communication, and the ability for fish and shellfish to find mates was discussed. Industry expressed opposition to the use of wind farms.

- A PFA research project into *Kudoa thyrsites* (*Kudoa*), a myxosporean parasite of marine fishes went out to tender. Proposals from various companies on how to conduct this research are currently being considered by Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).
- A project to develop *Ciguatera* identification kits is underway. Early testing shows the kits will take several hours to provide results. Talks between industry & Sydney Seafood Market are underway on how these kits can be incorporated into the supply chain.
- A project funded by the FRDC (FRDC 2021-115 PI Southern Cross University) to develop Pipi hatchery production techniques and optimal restocking strategies has begun with input from DPI and industry members.
- The new Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code Standard 3.2.2A – Food Safety Management Tools means that food service, caterer, and related retail businesses in Australia will need to meet new food safety requirements from 8 December 2023. Initially, an education rather than enforcement approach will be taken.

### **Food Safety Compliance Report**

Mark Mackie updated the Forum on the seafood industry compliance activities for the 2022-23 financial year to date. Licensed seafood sector compliance saw a 3% drop to 92% compared to the previous two financial years. A total of 409 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 21 regulatory interventions (improvement notices, penalty notices, or warning letters). Biosecurity Food Safety compliance may need to adjust its planned activities and frequency of compliance monitoring depending on emerging risks and strategic priorities. Complaints, inspections, and investigations relating to seafood businesses will continue to be managed on an as needs basis.

### **White spot response and program update**

Ben Rampano presented an update on NSW DPI's WSD response program.

White Spot Syndrome Virus (WSSV) was detected in three northern NSW prawn farms in early 2023. Laboratory analysis was undertaken at NSW DPI Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute and confirmed by the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness.

Communication messages issued throughout the response have reassured consumers that WSD does not pose a threat to human health or food safety, and that NSW seafood, including prawns, remain safe to eat.

NSW DPI is working closely with the affected stakeholders to implement actions to contain and eradicate WSD on-farm according to the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer's intent for the response, and minimise the risk of spread through movement restrictions applied through the current [Biosecurity Control Order](#).

NSW DPI response actions are nearing completion, with water discharge finalised across all three farms, and a 40-day fallow period now underway.

Further information is available at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquatic-biosecurity/aquaculture/aquaculture/white-spot>

NSW DPI is commencing the next stages of the WSD response program including:

- a) Finalising response actions on three affected prawn farms.
  - A dedicated operational team continues to operate to support the farms finalise decontamination and fallow requirements.
  
- b) NSW long term surveillance plan implementation, from October 2023.
  - Two-year nationally agreed by Aquatic Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (AqCCEAD) Long Term Surveillance plan;
  - Developed according to World Organisation for Animal Health guidelines to support self-declaration of freedom (if all samples tested are negative for WSD);
  - Request for Quote – circulated to Clarence River prawn fishers to invite quotes to support implementation of this work.
  
- c) Coordinating the NSW Government [\\$21 million investment](#) WSD Response and Recovery program.
  
- d) Development of two new white spot response procedures (for future farm and wild surveillance outcomes).
  - Wild surveillance and future farm WSD response procedures under development, including scenario development, options and impact analysis and stakeholder engagement (industry, AqCCEAD);
  - Considering questions such as – what does positive result / negative result mean? what are the impacts of various response scenarios? What legislative, state and national frameworks must be considered?;
  - Clear engagement with stakeholders is critical.
  
- e) Engaging and leading NSW input into national discussion of ‘Future Management Recommendations’ – a paper endorsed at AqCCEAD.
  
- f) Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders including providing assistance, supporting industry consideration of future options such as the farming of alternative species.

### **Proposed New Management Measures for Shellfish Wet Storage Systems**

Ben Rampano presented a paper on development of proposed new requirements for Shellfish Wet Storage Systems.

Interest in using shellfish wet storage systems to prolong the shelf life of oysters and mussels is increasing as these systems allow growers to better manage harvest area closures. These systems help manage shellfish supply as product does not have to be dispatched to retail the day its harvested. This provides opportunities for growers to obtain better pricing when alternative product is scarce and avoid marketing product at discounted prices during periods of peak supply.

However, wet storage poses unique and significant food and aquatic biosecurity risks, that are currently not sufficiently covered by formal regulatory requirements. A Shellfish Wet Storage Working Group with representatives from NSW DPI Aquatic Biosecurity, Food Authority, Aquaculture Management, and shellfish industry participants was established to guide development of appropriate requirements for wet storage systems. The Working Group has met on 25 November

2022, 14 June 2023 and 14 August 2023, to develop and revise an options paper including proposed new management requirements and a record of decision points informing their development.

Appropriate requirements for these systems are being finalised by the NSW Shellfish Committee and NSW DPI as a priority to protect the NSW industry and environment against these risks. The proposed requirements categorise wet storage systems into two biosecurity risk classifications – high and low, based on each system’s intended use. The working group is now refining requirements for each classification. Legal Branch and DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance will be engaged to further refine the proposed requirements before consulting the broader NSW shellfish industry. When completed, these wet storage system requirements will apply to all wet storage systems used in NSW.

Funding has been obtained to deliver a series of workshops across NSW to explain the proposed requirements and obtain shellfish industry feedback. A communication package will also be developed to explain the wet storage system requirements, the application process to operate these systems, and to help industry comply with these requirements.

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum is invited to provide comment on any suggested approaches or key contacts for broader industry consultation, to ensure consultation with as many relevant industry participants as possible.

### **Biosecurity update**

Jeffrey Go updated members on the recent minor detection of Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) in the Western Zone in Victoria. Two dead Abalone with AVG were found on a beach near Portland, which is close to the 2021 wild detections. Victorian Fisheries Authority has subsequently assessed live Abalone populations in this area and all samples tested have been negative for AVG.

NSW DPI has been in touch with Victorian counterparts and has reassessed and reviewed existing measures, with no additional changes required to current restrictions. Existing Control Order restrictions prevent movement of live wild abalone from Victorian western and central zones and wild abalone from Tasmania, into New South Wales.

Farmed Abalone can only enter NSW from Tasmania under specific conditions outlined in the Control Order. Additionally, farmed abalone from Victoria can only enter NSW under a permit system which is issued to individual farms after assessment on a case by case basis. These measures are considered sufficient to address any potential risk from this recent detection.

### **Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL)**

Tricia Beaty advised the committee that the PFA met representatives from Senator Tim Ayres office in early September 2023 to discuss CoOL and the Australian seafood industry aspirations to make CoOL mandatory for ready to eat seafood products sold in retail. Proposed CoOL changes would be introduced under the Australian Consumer Law and not Food Legislation.

*The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is to be advised.*