

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Seafood Industry Forum

20 May 2020

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum held a meeting via teleconference on 20 May 2020. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum members:

Tricia Beatty, Professional Fishermen's Association Inc
Mark Boulter, Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc.
Robert McCormack, NSW Aquaculture Association Inc.
Ross Fidden, Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd
Erik Poole, Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd
Michael Kitchener, The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:

Lisa Szabo, Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority
Melissa Walker, Team Leader, Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs
Mark Mackie, Manager, Audit Systems & Verification
Suzanne Robinson, Director Animal Welfare
Jeffrey Go, Senior Veterinary Officer, Aquatic Biosecurity
Helen Chen, Senior Project Officer International Engagement
Jenine Ryle, Secretariat, Senior Policy and Programs Officer
Jaime Garcia, Secretariat

Apologies:

Ian Sanders, Director International Engagement
Peter Day, Director Compliance & Integrity Systems
David Cusack, Manager Food Standards & Programs
Craig Shadbolt, Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints
Sarah Britton, NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity
Anthony Mercer, De Costi Seafoods/Tassal Group Ltd
Kerry Strangas, Master Fish Merchants Association
Olivia Churchill, De Costi Seafoods/Tassal Group Ltd

Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with COVID-19 being the focus of discussion.

Members outlined the impact it is having on their industries and discussed planning and contingencies to address issues affecting their operations including diversifying supply lines/markets and moving to on-line marketing/auctions. Members noted a significant drop in sales to the hospitality, food service and export sectors however retail and regional sales have increased.

[Note: The Department has published [advice for businesses](#) on food safety aspects of COVID-19, workforce management and regulatory obligations.]

Food Safety Compliance Report

Members noted a report on seafood industry compliance activities between 1 July 2019 and 31 December 2019. During this period 166 audits and 117 inspections were conducted with seven failed audits and one failed inspection. The compliance rate for the seafood industry for the period was 97%, which is an increase of 2% from the previous six-month period.

All 66 inspections conducted under the fishing vessel inspection program achieved a compliance rate of 100%. The Compliance & Integrity Systems Team is focussing its efforts to inspect these fishing vessels over the coming months so that a high compliance rate can be maintained within this sector.

The top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues during the reporting period continue to be within process control (57%), analytical testing (29%) and food safety program (14%) categories. Enforcement actions during the period included two Improvement Notices and one warning letter. The Compliance Team is very satisfied with the high compliance rate recorded for the seafood industry sector during this reporting period.

Animal Welfare update

A paper was presented addressing the following animal welfare issues:

- COVID-19 impacts on the aquaculture industry and obligations pursuant to the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. Members were advised that NSW DPI has established the COVID-19 Primary Industries Liaison Team and an [Advice Portal](#) to help primary producers navigate the challenges and impacts of COVID-19 on their business and industry.
- The Animal Welfare Advisory Council has recently been reshaped as an independent scientific committee. Expressions of interest for Council positions closed in March 2020 and are currently being assessed.
- The Department is seeking feedback on the Animal Welfare Reform Issues Paper. The Paper identifies areas of reform to modernise the policy and legislative framework for animal welfare in NSW.
- National aquatic animal welfare context - The Issues Paper includes consideration of which animals should be covered by animal welfare provisions, including whether cephalopods, and crustaceans more broadly, should be included. It also includes a comparison with other jurisdictions.

White Spot Disease – Queensland situation update

An update paper was tabled noting that White Spot Disease (WSD) has again been detected in two of four prawn farms on the Logan River (south-east Queensland) in April 2020 and White Spot Syndrome Virus (WSSV) has again been detected in wild crabs and prawns in northern Moreton Bay. Members were advised that the QLD and NSW government movement restrictions implemented following the initial detection of WSD in 2016 remain in place. Members noted that surveillance is continuing in areas outside of South East QLD to demonstrate freedom from the disease.

There is no evidence, through active surveillance, to indicate presence of WSSV in NSW prawn farms or wild populations.

Biosecurity Update (Further to earlier discussion)

Members noted that the BFS Compliance Priorities 2020 - 2021 were being finalised and were invited to provide input for any priority projects for the upcoming 2020/21 period.

International Engagement Update

Members were updated in an out of session paper due to the poor audio quality at the meeting.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is 16 September 2020.