

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council

13 April 2016

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 13 April 2016. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

Food safety program compliance report (July to December 2015)

The Council noted the food safety compliance report for meat industry sector during the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2015. During this period there had been 962 acceptable rated audits with 71% A rated, 24% B rated and 5% C rated; 136 failed audits (12.3% failure rate); and 906 inspections (13.7% failure rate).

Generally speaking the compliance rate for the meat sector during the period has been good. The main audit items attracting Corrective Action Requests (CAR's) during the period were for Process Control (failure to complete monitoring records or to identify cross contamination risks), Food Safety Program issues, and Analytical testing. The Food Authority will be targeting its future oversight and implementing targeted strategies to address these critical and high risk issues and poor performers. This will include guidance material and Factsheets on the Food Authority's web-site to assist businesses in compliance with food safety requirements.

A report on enforcement activities during the period was noted and there were no food borne illness investigations in the meat sector during the reporting period.

Operation Mary update

Members received an outline of a proposed joint project being conducted by the Bio-security and Food Safety Compliance team to monitor traceability systems in NSW domestic and export abattoirs. The first stage of this operation had been conducted throughout NSW saleyards to ensure the effectiveness of traceability records for sheep and goats; this next stage will progress to abattoirs and will focus on the monitoring of traceability records for slaughtered small stock and verification of correct use of the NLIS data base.

Domestic and export abattoirs will receive letters at the end of this month to formally advise them of the project and timing of audits. It is anticipated that inspections will commence late May/early June. Inspections of export abattoirs will be conducted jointly with Department of Agriculture and Water Resources personnel. The main focus of the operation will be on educating facilities on the importance of traceability.

Recall programs for very small businesses

Members noted a paper regarding work by the Food Authority to develop a simplified generic template to assist small businesses such as wholesalers and manufacturers to have a food recall program in place. A copy of a two-page generic template developed to enable businesses to recall product effectively was attached for information. This template is available to businesses through the Food Authority's web site.

It was noted that all trials using the template so far have worked well and over time this will be rolled out to other food safety schemes. This template has also been shared with other jurisdictions.

Williamtown RAAF site PFOS contamination incident update

Members received a brief update on the contamination incident at the Williamtown RAAF base due to the previous use of fire fighting foam containing the chemicals Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). Because of its location, Williamtown feeds into a water area and the major impact was on seafood and egg hobby farms and some backyard poultry farms. It was noted that the NSW government had established an Expert Panel to assist with providing advice on handling this issue. They have also commenced an extensive sampling program of commercial seafood from around the area and will commence testing of other food sources.

Members discussed the implications for industry from the likelihood of the detection of these types of chemicals in any location where there has been fire training with the use of fire retardants as well as in some types of food packaging. It is expected that these issues will be addressed in the Human Health Risk Assessment being conducted by the Department of Defence. Members were advised that further information on this can be found on the NSW EPA website.

Biosecurity Regulation

Members received an update on a major reform currently underway by NSW DPI of its biosecurity legislation. The Biosecurity Act was enacted last year and work is now commencing to modernise its Regulations, some of which date back to 1924. Discussion papers have been released on a range of issues including traceability, weed control, wild dogs, eggs, and sheep and cattle. Initial consultations with the farming sector will be conducted through the Local Land Services Advisory Committees as well as through the Department's consultative committees. It was advised that the new Regulations will give more flexibility and will be aligned to industry programs that are already in place. The Draft Regulation for consultation is expected by the last quarter of this year with the aim of being finalised by 2017. Council members will be kept updated on this progress.

It was noted that one of the main drivers in the development of this legislation in NSW is "biosecurity duty" - to get farmers, producers and processors to realise that biosecurity is a shared responsibility. The Department is working closely with industry to work out the best way to guide people within high risk areas and to produce what is needed.

Retail Food Safety Plan

A revised Retail Food Safety Program document recently developed by the Food Authority was tabled for information and noted. This was prepared to assist retail meat businesses in meeting their regulatory requirements and has been narrowed down to 14 specific outcomes in which butchers will need to demonstrate compliance. A targeted implementation program is being planned in which the Food Authority's auditors will explain the document to licensees on an individual basis. The Food Authority is also investigating other educational tools such as animated videos, recipe cards and wall charts. So far feedback has been very positive, and it is envisaged that if this is well accepted by the meat industry sector, it can be rolled out across other food safety schemes. Members agreed that the templates in this document will assist people to focus on getting key issues right which ultimately will give a better outcome.

Audit and Inspection Factsheets

Factsheets prepared by the Food Authority that will be given to businesses receiving unacceptable audit or inspection outcomes were tabled for information and noted.

These were developed to ensure that businesses are informed of enforcement actions that would be implemented if they fail to rectify defects and also to answer any questions licensees may have.

Remake of Meat Industry Levy (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006

A paper was tabled for information regarding the remake of the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006 which is due for repeal on 1 September 2016. The Food Authority is seeking to remake the MIL Regulation exactly as it is without amendments to preserve the current arrangements with the Meat Industry Levy. It was noted that the MIL had been endorsed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) as a valuable means for industry to support the Food Authority's work supporting the meat industry sector. It is intended the new Regulation will be subject to a public exhibition commencing on 2 May 2016. Pre-consultation communications will go out to members in relation to the remake of this Regulation.

The Council supported the remake of the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006 without amendment as the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2016.

Communications update

Members received an update on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the meat industry sector, including the issue of *Foodwise* at the end of February, Fact sheets and guidance documents, social media posts to consumers, and a refreshing of the Food Authority web-site. Members were invited to provide any feedback on the new website.

Amendment to *MICC Charter and Procedural Guidelines*

An amendment to the *MICC Charter and Procedural Guidelines* was tabled for information and was noted. This amendment is to provide greater clarity to members on criteria for proposing alternate delegates to attend meetings as proxies.

The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held on 31 August 2016.