

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council

29 August 2017

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Tuesday 29 August 2017. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Will Barton (Australian Meat Industry Council), Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Heather Channon (Australian Pork Limited), Ray Lee and Annabel Johnson (NSW Farmers' Association), Collin Naidu (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Christine Middlemiss (Group Director Animal Biosecurity & Welfare & Chief Veterinary Officer), Ian Sanders (Director International Engagement, NSW DPI). **Apologies:** Kevin Cottrill (Australian Meat Industry Council), Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Amanda Black (NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety), Kiara Drinan (NSW Farmers' Association), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement Unit, NSW DPI), Beth Krushinskie (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd), Robin Achari (Red Lea Chickens Pty Ltd).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Peter Day, Chair (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), David Cusack (Manager, Strategic Policy & Projects), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat). **Apologies:** Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Lisa Szabo, Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Craig Shadbolt (A/Group Director Food Safety & A/CEO NSW Food Authority), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications).

Industry updates

It was advised that Kevin Cottrill, who had represented the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) on the MICC since the committee's establishment in 2004, was retiring this week from his role as CEO of AMIC. MICC members acknowledged the enormous contribution Mr Cottrill has made over many years in the industry and through his involvement on this consultative committee and other industry forums.

Food safety program compliance report

Council members noted a report on food safety compliance in the meat industry sector for the twelve-month period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. During the period licence numbers remained steady with 2,645 audits being conducted (with 104 failed audits), and 3,678 inspections (with 154 failed inspections). The compliance rate for the meat industry sector is currently 96% which is above the target strategy of 95%. The improvement in compliance particularly in the meat retail sector is a very positive outcome.

During the period there were 232 enforcement actions, including the issue of 168 improvement notices, 50 penalty notices, 8 warning letters, 1 prohibition order, 1 prosecution of a poultry meat processor, and 4 seizures. There was one food borne illness investigation in December 2016.

Members noted audit data analysis for the reporting period which indicated that the top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues were within process control – failure to complete monitoring records or to identify cross contamination risks (28%), hygiene and sanitation (16%) and analytical testing (14%). Overall a very good outcome for the sector.

National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy update

Members noted an update on work underway to develop a strategy to manage the NSW DPI's approach to antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The NSW DPI is currently reviewing all activity conducted on antimicrobial resistance which will inform the development of an agency position on AMR and future strategy for managing the issue in line with the goals of the Australian Government's National AMR Strategy. It is expected this will be finalised by mid October 2017, following which NSW DPI will work together with NSW Health on a joint "One Health" approach to AMR management. Industry will be consulted early next year on the development of a future strategy to mitigate AMR risks.

The Council was informed about work being done across industry through a livestock industries group with representatives from Australian Pork Limited, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Australian Lot Feeders' Association and Meat and Livestock Australia. This group meets regularly to ensure they have co-ordination and standing across all industries in the development of a stewardship framework.

Review of post mortem procedures and disposition

The Council received an update on two projects currently being undertaken by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), Australian Pork Limited (APL), and Australian Meat Processors Corporation (AMPC) to review the Post-mortem Inspection and Disposition Judgements currently in Schedules 2 and 3 of the *Australian Standard Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption (AS4696)*.

It was noted that the way processors currently conduct post-mortem inspections and make decisions on carcasses is based on a disease framework and risk management approach developed over 100 years ago, which contains an element of risk through cross-contamination in the process. The object of the projects is to validate alternative post-mortem inspection procedures by going down the pathway of recognising equivalence (as specified by the WTO for trade purposes).

Steering groups were established for both projects which had representatives from State jurisdictions and were chaired by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. The project teams also met with the Australian Meat Regulators Group (AMRG) for guidance on preparation of submissions to validate equivalence of alternative procedures. A number of project reports have now been finalised and submitted to AMRG with three of these being approved to date. A subsequent meeting held in July 2017 to discuss implementation of these alternative procedures agreed that a guideline document be produced to accompany the standard. Members will be kept updated on this process.

PFAS information

Members noted an information paper regarding per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), man-made chemicals that have been widely used in industrial and consumer products since the mid-1990s.

PFAS contamination continues to be of world-wide concern due to their historical use in firefighting foams used at Defence sites, airports and firefighting training sites across the State where higher environmental levels have been associated with these sites. At present there is no consistent evidence of any human health effects related to PFAS exposure however as studies and monitoring are ongoing, a conservative approach has been adopted. People who have high exposure or multiple exposure pathways to PFAS chemicals are being advised to reduce their exposure by avoiding eating and drinking, cooking with, watering vegetables, bathing in or swimming in water known to have elevated levels of PFAS and to eat a variety of food from a variety of sources. The NSW DPI is part of a group working on this issue with the NSW Environment Protection Authority and NSW Health.

Changes to Commonwealth legislation

Council received an update on reforms currently underway to improve Australia's export and import legislation through the *Imported Food Control Amendment Bill 2017* and the *Export Control Bill 2017*.

The *Imported Food Control Amendment Bill 2017* was admitted to the Commonwealth Parliament on 1 June 2017 and is currently under consideration. Once this is passed a 12-month implementation timeline will be provided.

Members were advised that the *Export Control Bill 2017* and associated Regulatory Impact Statement are now open for public comment and consultations will close on 24 October 2017. Further details on this can be accessed through the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources web site on: www.agriculture.gov.au/market-access-trade/export-regulation-review/consultation

Performance monitoring of poultry plants

A paper was tabled outlining work underway to develop a national benchmarking system for poultry plants. The Food Authority and Safe Food Queensland implemented Key Food Safety Indicator monitoring for large poultry plants in 2015 in which companies supply key processing data designed to support compliance with the national poultry standard.

In October 2016 FSANZ published key food safety indicators as Poultry Process Hygiene Criteria which were developed by regulatory agencies in consultation with relevant food industry sectors. In April 2017 food regulation ministers endorsed the development of a national pathogen reduction strategy, focussing on *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. As part of this strategy, the Food Authority and other agencies are considering a series of subprojects to feed into a broader strategy. Preliminary discussions have been held with FSANZ and other state jurisdictions, as well as the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, to consider issues involved in developing a national adoption of poultry process hygiene monitoring. A pathogen prevalence survey is currently underway by RIRDC and will assist in addressing concerns over consistency of testing and analysis used by companies.

NSW is continuing to work with industry and government agencies on this issue and the MICC will be kept updated on progress.

Communications update

Members noted an update on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting relevant to the meat industry sector including media releases and social media posts on safe handling, cooking and consumption of meat and poultry. The media release around the prosecution of a chicken processor saw a large increase in engagement by the public with the Food Authority's Facebook page and opened the way for broader discussion about food safety practices and behaviours.

Biosecurity legislation program update

Council received an update on the *Biosecurity Act 2015* which came into effect on 1 July 2017 and noted steps being taken by the Department to see this legislation implemented across the state. The Department is working closely with industry through education and training to assist industry in developing programs to manage and mitigate biosecurity risks. The Department's authorised officers have also undergone significant training to be reauthorised under the new Act.

The Biosecurity & Food Safety page on the Department's web-site has been restructured, with the current focus on fact sheets, policies and forms required. Stage two of the restructure will be looking at how to categorise this information for stakeholders and identify better customer pathways to the information.

The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held in early 2018 – date to be advised.