

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Seafood Industry Forum

17 October 2017

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum held a meeting in Sydney on Tuesday, 17 October 2017. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum members: Patricia Beatty (Professional Fishermen's Association Inc), Mark Boulter (Safe Sustainable Seafood), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Kerry Strangas (Master Fish Merchants Association of Australia).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo, Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Julia Corish (Manager Strategy & Standards and Manager Aquatic Biosecurity), Jeffrey Go (NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety), Helen Chen (Senior Project Officer, Mission & Delegation, International Engagement), David Cusack (Manager, Strategic Policy & Projects), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat).

Apologies: Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Robert McCormack (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc), Anthony Mercer (De Costi Seafoods), Melissa Walker (NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety), Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Christine Middlemiss (Group Director, Animal Biosecurity & Food Safety and Chief Veterinary Officer), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), Craig Shadbolt (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications).

Food safety program compliance report

Forum members noted the food safety compliance report for the seafood industry sector during the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, giving a snapshot of seafood industry licensed facilities and current key compliance statistics. During the period 407 audits and 661 inspections were conducted, with 28 failed audits and 11 failed inspections. Enforcement action during the period included 28 Improvement Notices, 12 Penalty Notices and 4 warning letters.

The report also outlined an active joint operation currently underway in which the Food Authority is working closely with the Imported Food Section in the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) to investigate complaints alleging treatment of imported fillets of fish (Tuna and Barramundi) with Carbon Monoxide (CO). Samples of the fillets have been taken for analysis and the results are pending.

The current compliance rate for the seafood sector is running at 95.2% which is a good result. Primarily the main issues being raised at audit with seafood processors relate to failure to complete monitoring records or to conduct product and shelf life testing as required for pathogens. Overall the Food Authority is quite satisfied with the level of compliance for this industry.

White Spot update

A paper was tabled updating members on work being conducted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) together with other jurisdictions to help minimise the risk of spread of White Spot Disease (WSD), a contagious viral disease which causes mortality in prawns but poses no threat to human health or food safety. A Biosecurity (WSD of crustaceans) Control Order was issued to prevent biosecurity risk by the spread of this into NSW. The DPI has made an amendment to this Order to allow for movement of certain decapod crustaceans from the Queensland White Spot infected area into NSW, that have been assessed as negligible risk, provided strict biosecurity measures are in place. These species include blue swimmer crabs, mud crabs, lobsters and spanner crabs. NSW DPI authorised officers will continue to monitor compliance and the Department is working closely with industry through its communication channels to conduct an education campaign on this issue.

Members received a NSW DPI presentation on “Biosecurity a shared responsibility: White Spot in crustaceans” to give an understanding on the importance of biosecurity and the way in which White Spot is being managed. Issues covered included an overview of White Spot disease, the Queensland situation response and impacts, NSW response and impacts, and recent changes in NSW biosecurity legislation with the *Biosecurity Act 2015* which introduces shared responsibility through the general biosecurity duty. The objective of the overall response in Australia is eradication. This presentation has been shared with several industry groups and the Department thanked industry for their engagement and productive working relationship.

Joint DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety / DPI Fisheries compliance operation

Forum members received an update on the joint operation being conducted with officers from DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety and DPI Fisheries to monitor compliance with the changes to the Biosecurity Control Order (as reported above). This will run from mid-October 2017 to the end of November 2017 and will focus on businesses that handle the permitted species and target compliance with the biosecurity conditions of the Control Order.

SafeFish report on recent Codex activities & SPS notifications

The Forum noted papers tabled for information giving a background on the Codex structure and an update on some of the work relevant to the seafood industry currently under consideration by Codex committees. SafeFish, a Government Industry Partnership, is a key communications and liaison point for providing input on Australian seafood related Codex matters and provides relevant quarterly reports on some of the actions being considered by the Codex Committees and Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS) from trading countries relevant to seafood. Issues currently under consideration include:

- Methyl mercury – proposal to reduce maximum level in fish.
- Histamine – control guidance and consideration of reduced maximum level.
- Ciguatoxins – proposal for development of standard.
- Alignment of food additives – notification of changes to various seafood products.
- Non-dioxin like Poly Chlorinated Biphenyl (PCBs) compounds – revisions to cover non-dioxin like PCB's in food and feed.
- Fish oils – new standard for fish oil, maximum levels for arsenic and lead.
- Review of maximum level (ML) for lead in fish.

Changes to Commonwealth legislation

Papers were tabled for information on reforms currently being proposed by the Commonwealth government 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. 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 were circulated to Forum members and 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

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 seafood industry sector including articles in *Foodwise*, industry journals, social media and extensive work and communications in relation to the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. A large amount of work has been done regarding the White Spot issue, with targeted emails to licensed seafood processors and Environmental Health Officers concerning the amendment to the Biosecurity Control Order for certain permitted species and the strict conditions of the amendment.

Members were encouraged to contact the Department if they have any messages on issues they wish to target through channels used by industry such as Apps or journals.

Biosecurity legislation update

The Forum was updated on work underway within the Department in relation to implementation of the new *Biosecurity Act 2015* legislation which came into effect on 1 July 2017 and particularly in terms of monitoring the Control Order. The Department is working closely with industry, community groups and other interested stakeholders through education and training to assist them in their understanding of the new legislation and in developing programs to manage and mitigate biosecurity related risks.

The next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum will be held on Tuesday 1 May 2018.