

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Seafood Industry Forum

19 October 2016

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 19 October 2016. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum: Patricia Beatty (Professional Fishermen's Association Inc), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Norman Grant (Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc), Robert McCormack (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc), Kerry Strangas (Master Fish Merchants Association of Australia), Jeffrey Go (NSW DPI). **Apologies:** Mark Boulter (Sydney Fish Market), Melissa Walker (NSW DPI), Anthony Mercer (De Costi Seafoods).

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

Food safety program compliance report

The Forum noted the food safety compliance report for the seafood industry sector during 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. During this period there had been 596 acceptable rated audits with 88% A rated, 11.4% B rated and 0.6% C rated; 78 failed audits (11.5% failure rate); and 716 inspections (54 unacceptable inspections).

In comparison with figures from the previous financial year, there has been a drop in compliance rate from 95% to 89%, which has been attributed to recent changes to the shellfish audit model requiring additional verification audits to be conducted on licensees where inconsistencies are found in submitted paperwork. It is expected that this is only a temporary fluctuation as licensees adapt to the new audit model.

Audit data analysis presented showed that the top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues for the current reporting period were within Process control – failure to complete or produce monitoring records (34%), Analytical testing (24%), and Food safety program (19%).

Enforcement activities in the seafood sector during the period included the issue of 52 Improvement notices, 10 Penalty notices, and 6 warning letters; there were no prosecutions in this sector since the last meeting.

Members noted an outline of food borne illness investigations conducted during the reporting period including an investigation undertaken in collaboration with NSW Maritime following reports of gastroenteritis clusters affecting people who had consumed oysters produced in two different harvest zones on the NSW South Coast.

North Coast man found guilty of oyster theft

A NSW DPI media release regarding the successful prosecution of a Murwillumbah man for the theft of oysters from the Brunswick River for sale on the black market was tabled for information. This was as a result of a joint 'Operation Trident' campaign by NSW DPI, NSW

Food Authority and NSW Police Force which aims to crack down on oyster theft as well as protect consumers from potentially unsafe, black market produce.

Members raised concerns at the small fine given to the offender for such a severe issue as black marketing of seafood.

Food safety program implementation

The Forum noted an update on the revised Food Safety Program (FSP) which was implemented in the meat retail sector through a targeted pilot program to educate poor performing businesses and increase overall sector compliance. The revised program document is outcomes based with 14 specific outcomes, and gives guidance and information on how to simplify food safety controls by removing a lot of excessive monitoring and recording. There has been positive feedback on the program so far, and if successful it is envisaged that this will be rolled out to the wider industry, including the seafood sector, later in the year.

Antimicrobial resistance in the food supply chain

Members received a presentation on the national strategy developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Department of Agriculture in partnership with government and industry stakeholders to minimise the spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to ensure that over time there is continued access to effective antimicrobials. This strategy has been developed because of global issues with increasing resistance to modern drugs and medicines in both human and animal health.

The key objectives of the strategy are to increase awareness and understanding of AMR and its implications; to implement effective AMR practices across human health and animal care settings to ensure appropriate prescribing and use; to develop nationally coordinated surveillance of AMR and antimicrobial usage; and to conduct further research and partner on development of new antibiotics.

In NSW preliminary scoping work to progress the national AMR strategy has been undertaken between NSW DPI and NSW Health, and further workshops will be held to determine next steps and responsibilities. In terms of potential impact on the seafood industry, there may be a review of current AMR use by the industry and surveillance opportunities through the use of new or existing testing data. Further updates will be provided to the Forum.

Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) update

An update was tabled on changes to the Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) requirements for food which will move from the Food Standards Code to come under the Australian Consumer Law. The new standard commenced on 1 July 2016 but stakeholders have a 24 month transition period for compliance to 1 July 2018. The Committee was advised that since the last meeting, the ACCC has developed extensive user guides which are available on their web-site to enable businesses to seek more answers and information. This includes an on-line decision tool to assist businesses in deciding on types of labels to display on their foods. Members were advised to contact the ACCC for any queries in regard to specific products.

Regulation of Australian Agriculture Productivity Commission report

Members noted an update on the Productivity Commission review on the burden of regulation on Australian farm businesses. The report covered a broad range of issues and was released for public consultation on 21 July 2016. Public submissions for the draft report are now closed. 190 submissions were received and an inquiry report will be prepared by the Productivity Commission by 15 November 2016.

National Food Incident Response Plan

The Forum received a brief overview of the national food safety network including the role of FSANZ and food agencies and the National Food Incident Response Protocol. Members were advised that further information can be found on the following link to the FSANZ Food Incident page which also includes a link to the National Food Incident Response Protocol:

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/FoodIncidents/Pages/default.aspx>

Communications update

Members noted 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*, media releases and social media posts on safe consumption of seafood.

Biosecurity legislation update

The Committee noted a brief update on the development of new legislation under the Biosecurity Act 2015 being conducted by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Work is underway to draft the Regulations and develop a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for stakeholder consultation which will occur around November 2016. A newsletter was tabled for information and members will be kept updated on this process.

The next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum will be held in early 2017.