

# NSW Seafood Industry Forum

Wednesday 24 September 2014

## Summary of meeting outcomes

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum (SIF) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 24 September 2014. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

### **NSW Food Authority food safety program compliance report**

The Forum received a report on the Authority's seafood compliance, enforcement and inspection activities during the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. It was noted that during the period there were 548 acceptable rated audits out of which there were only 24 failed audits (4.2%). The Authority was comfortable with this audit failure rate in line with previous reporting periods. There were 1049 inspections during the period with a 1.04% failure rate. There has been a reduction of CAR's issued for process control, but offset by an increase in CAR's for analytical and testing, with this now being the main area in which critical CARs are issued. 23 Improvement Notices have been issued and 5 Penalty Notices.

Members noted that the major areas of non-compliance across all seafood businesses during the period were in relation to pre-requisite programs, process control and construction and maintenance.

The Forum members were given an overview of the shellfish traceability project which was undertaken by the Authority. This project traced product that was found in the restaurant, and followed it back to its production place. The Authority generally found a very high level of compliance through retailers and wholesalers. Some restaurants were advertising 'Local Oysters' when in fact they weren't, with warnings issued that this potentially breaches truth in labelling requirements.

There was discussion around black market activity in clubs and pubs in regional areas in particular, and members were keen for such places to be included in the Authority's inspection / enforcement programs. The Authority encouraged members to provide them with intelligence on these activities if they are aware of it, and spoke about how they normally investigate such activities in joint operations with NSW Fisheries and NSW Police.

The group was told that the Authority is also working with Sydney Fish Markets and Sydney University on a research project on the Ciguatera issue, and that this will be taking place over 2 years.

### **NSW Food Authority recall process**

A paper was tabled following queries last meeting about how the NSW Food Authority investigates recalls, and how they are triggered. A poster showing the recall process was also tabled for members' information, and they were told that this is given to food businesses to explain how a recall works.

Members were told that the Authority's use of social media to distribute recall information has proven popular with the public.

### **Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) requirements for unpackaged and packaged seafood (NSW Food Authority paper)**

A paper was tabled for members, providing information on the CoOL requirements for packaged and unpackaged seafood. Included was a table of examples of declarations Authority officers have observed. The table showed the circumstance and the applicable CoOI declaration.

Specific clarification on the definitions of 'Product of' and 'Made in' in relation to Country of Origin claims was provided. Further information will be put in future editions of *Foodwise*.

### **Joint submission by NSW Food Authority and NSW DPI to Senate inquiry into seafood labelling (NSW Food Authority paper)**

Members were provided with a paper detailing the Authority's Joint submission to the inquiry into seafood labelling.

There was some discussion on the definition of the term 'Local' and use of the Fish Names Standard. The Professional Fishermen's Association asked that it be noted that they were unhappy with the Authority's submission to the inquiry.

The forum was told that a response to this submission is due at the end of October.

### **Country of Origin Labelling and fish name compliance project (NSW Food Authority paper)**

A paper outlining the CoOL and fish name compliance project, due to be completed mid November 2014, was presented to members. They were informed that Penalty Notices and enforcement action information is gathered from the Authority and Council from the Name and Shame website and then used to plan inspections on premises and targeted compliance projects. Members were interested in this, and requested they be provided with a report on fines issued for CoOL from the Name and Shame website.

The issue of black market sales was raised, and it was suggested that these gap areas should be included in such projects.

### **Guidelines for thawing and refreezing product (NSW Food Authority paper)**

At the last Forum meeting there was a request for some guidelines for thawing and refreezing product. A paper was tabled, outlining the requirements in the Code, and also recommendations from the NSW Food Authority. Members were informed that it is good business practice to inform their consumers if product has been previously frozen and then thawed, however it is not technically a legal requirement, and there is no food safety issue if product is thawed under temperature control. There was some discussion about this being more of a quality issue that degrades the product.

Members requested a copy of the fact sheet on thawing and re-freezing, so they may include this in their industry newsletters.

### **Guidelines for sashimi (NSW Food Authority paper)**

Members were presented with a paper detailing guidance around food safety controls for Sashimi. While there is little current foodborne illness data to suggest that Sashimi requires additional controls or oversight, however there is awareness that this product is becoming increasingly popular over time, and being drawn from a broader range of species and countries, which in time could cause an issue. Members acknowledged that there will be an increased risk factor in the future.

*The next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum will be held on a date yet to be decided, in April 2015.*