

FRESH NOODLE PROJECT

The issue

As part of our regular monitoring activity to ensure all industry sectors meet the compliance target set in the *NSW Food Safety Strategy*, it was identified that fresh noodle manufacturers required a targeted program to increase compliance with provisions of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) and *Food Act 2003* (NSW).

The intrinsic properties of fresh noodles are such that if not stored below 5°C, pathogenic microorganisms may grow and some may produce toxins. Therefore, it's important to ensure that fresh noodles are manufactured with appropriate food safety controls in place.

What we did

Between January and April 2016, the Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance Officers undertook a project to increase food safety compliance by NSW based businesses manufacturing fresh noodles.

During their inspections, officers focussed on food hygiene and structural compliance, preservative use, labelling and temperature control.

What we found

In total, 25 inspections were conducted. Each inspection measured the baseline compliance level of noodle manufacturers in four core areas:

- use of preservatives
- process control and hygienic production/packaging
- product labelling, and
- temperature control (cooling, storage and transport)

In all cases, there was an increase in compliance rates between the initial inspection and follow up inspections relating to each of the four core areas.

Use of preservatives – it was found that excess preservative use was due to an absence of policies and/or procedures to accurately and consistently measure preservative amounts during processing. Poor understanding of the food standards that limit preservative use in noodle products was also found to be a contributing factor.

Process control and hygienic production/packaging and temperature control – the primary reasons for non-compliance

included the absence of procedures in place to cool potentially hazardous foods (PHF) within the correct time-frames/temperatures; the absence of temperature control procedures in place for storage of PHFs; the absence of temperature control procedures during transport of PHFs; and poor hygiene across all of these processes/procedures.

Product labelling – Directions for storage and use, declaration of ingredients and warning/advisory statements were the primary



labelling components identified as issues across the industry.

Lack of understanding of labelling requirements and language translation errors appeared to be the primary reasons for labelling non-compliance. Several businesses required additional assistance to ensure packaged food products complied with labelling requirements.

The outcome

There was a significant increase in compliance as a result of the inspection program with the overall compliance rate reaching 96%. This was largely due to the high level enforcement action undertaken, which included the issue of:

- 15 Warning Letters
- 8 Improvement Notices
- 49 Penalty Notices, and
- 9 Prohibition Orders

The project highlighted a number of traditional and cultural practices relating to the manufacture of fresh noodles, specifically those around temperature control and monitoring. Compliance was achieved through the education of proprietors and

food handlers.

While this project resulted in a significant improvement in compliance within this sector, it is important to ensure that this level of compliance is maintained in the future. Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance Officers will continue to monitor this sector through an increased compliance presence to ensure standards are maintained.

Next steps

- Review and identify factsheets that require translations including:
 - Cooling of cooked potentially hazardous foods
 - Food recall program requirements and template
 - Food product general labelling requirements
- Maintain the regular inspection program to ensure compliance standards continue to be met.



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