

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee

Tuesday 19 September 2017

The NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee held a meeting in Sydney on Tuesday 19 September 2017. Specific issues considered by the Committee at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee: David Bremner (The Riverina Dairy Pty Ltd), Helen Dornom (Dairy Australia), Ruth Kydd (Dairy Connect), Michael McNamara (Director, Pecora Dairy), Jane Sherborne (Dairy NSW Chair), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement, NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo, Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), Craig Shadbolt (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat).

Apologies: Sally Carter (Bega Cheese Ltd), Erika Chesworth (NSW Farmers' Association), Sarah Mandelson (CEO Serendipity Ice Cream), Diane Riini, (Parmalat Australia Pty Ltd). Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety, NSW DPI), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance, NSW DPI), Christine Middlemiss (Group Director, Animal Biosecurity & Food Safety and Chief Veterinary Officer, NSW DPI), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications, NSW DPI).

Food safety program compliance report

The Committee noted the dairy industry compliance report for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. During this period 780 audits and 178 inspections were conducted (with 21 failed audits and 16 failed inspections), and enforcement action included the issue of 22 Improvement notices, 1 Penalty notice and 2 Warning letters. There were no food borne illness investigations in the dairy sector during the reporting period. The current compliance rate for the sector is 97%, which is above the food safety strategy target of 95%.

A detailed breakdown of compliance data for the dairy sector showed that the main areas in which defects are being raised continue to be within process control, analytical testing and pre-requisite programs. A report on the verification program with key food safety indicator results for the last three years was noted. These results showed that bulk milk cell counts, total plate counts and pickup temperatures are targeting within the normal performance expectations.

The overall high compliance rate for the dairy industry sector is an excellent outcome.

Antimicrobial resistance update – potential dairy related issues

Members were updated members on work underway within NSW DPI to develop a strategy to manage antibiotic use as part of the National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy. A review is currently being conducted of all antimicrobial resistance activity which will inform the development of an agency position on AMR and future strategy for managing this issue in line with the goals of the national strategy. The Department will work together with NSW Health on a combined “One Health” approach to AMR management and will continue to consult with the dairy industry sector on the development of future strategies to mitigate AMR risks. The Department is also planning to do a survey of dairy farmers through Sydney

University on their use of antibiotics and how they source information on these products. It is anticipated this will be finalised by October/November 2017.

The committee was informed of survey work that Dairy Australia has been doing with vets over several years to gauge their use of antibiotics and other drugs and to see if there have been any improvements over this time. Dairy Australia is also providing input to the national strategy and to work being done through the Australian Quality Steering Group and OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health). This work is important to ensure that antibiotics are seen as being available for treatments and for the industry to be able to demonstrate their effective usage.

It was noted that there is currently a low prevalence of AMR across the dairy industry.

NSW Dairy Food Safety Scheme Evaluation report

The committee received a presentation on results of the NSW Dairy Food Safety Scheme Evaluation which assessed the milk supply chain including farm, milk transport and dairy manufacturing during the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016. Preliminary findings of the evaluation included:

- The scheme has been implemented and administered effectively over the years.
- There were only a few dairy related foodborne illness outbreaks and 15 recalls of NSW manufactured dairy products during the study period.
- Overall compliance of the whole sector was very high for the review period.
- Quality of the milk has been outstanding.
- There was a high degree of confidence in the Food Authority as the regulator.
- The key findings were that farmers, processors and transport businesses all understood food safety risks within their respective operations; however, there was concern on the amount of documentation required and on audit costs and duplication.

The final report and recommendations on the Evaluation will be shared with the committee when available.

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 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

Consequent discussions stressed the importance for industry to provide input during the consultation period. The current export requirements, which have been in place for many years, sunset in 2020 and this legislation will take its place. It is important that the new legislation is fit for the future of the industry and will help facilitate new innovations and not drag industry backwards. Ultimately the legislation must be fit for purpose here before it will be fit for purpose for export.

PASE (Package Assisting Small Exporters) Project

The committee noted a report on a project being coordinated by Dairy Australia and funded under the Package Assisting Small Exporters (PASE) program administered by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to assist small dairy businesses wishing to access export markets. A working group including State regulators met last week to finalise industry training and information programs and the NSW Food Authority has committed to hosting two training/information sessions to assist licensees wanting to access export markets with their understanding of regulatory requirements, costs and on-going skills to embed a food safety culture and achieve business continuity.

PFAS information

A paper was tabled for information on 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.

Communications update

An update was tabled on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the dairy industry sector, including articles in *Foodwise* on the Dairy Food Safety Scheme Evaluation, Country of Origin labelling for the dairy industry, and the Raw milk cheese decision support tool that is now available. Other communications relevant to the dairy industry included media releases, social media posts and food recalls. Members were also advised that a food labelling self-assessment tool is now available for industry on the Food Authority website to assist in making decisions about food labelling.

Biosecurity legislation update and emerging issues

Members received an update on work underway to deliver awareness on biosecurity duty across the State following the introduction of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* on 1 July 2017. The Department is working closely with industry, the community and other interested stakeholders through education and training to assist them in developing programs to manage and mitigate biosecurity related risks. The Department's authorised officers have also undergone significant training to be reauthorised under the Act.

Other issues raised by committee members in relation to biosecurity included:

- There has been a lot of confusion on biosecurity because of various industry programs currently being implemented at state and national levels with different requirements (including the requirement to implement a biosecurity plan for Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS) and changes in relation to the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program). Dairy Australia is in the process of developing an App to assist dairy farmers in putting together a personalised biosecurity plan for their farms which is hoped will be available by the end of this year.



- Associated professions also carry responsibility for biosecurity as well as individual farmers, for example delivery drivers going in and out of farms would carry a percentage of risk. It was suggested people visiting dairy farms should be required to wear overshoes as is done overseas.
- The importance for farmers to be aware of requirements if a national animal emergency disease outbreak were to occur, including preparedness if a livestock standstill program is put in place to stop movement of livestock in such an event.
- Concerns were expressed that programs need to instigate thinking by farmers about what they need to do in developing a biosecurity plan as opposed to ticking a few boxes on a website or template.

Members were encouraged to advise the Department of any industry specific communications or publications on biosecurity issues so that links can be provided on the *Biosecurity & food safety* page on the Department's website.

The next meeting of the NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee will be held in early 2018 – date to be advised.