

FOODWISE

NSW Food Authority – partnering with the NSW food industry to ensure food is safe in NSW – from paddock to plate



Looking to produce raw milk cheese?

To manufacture raw milk cheese in NSW, a business must be licensed, and must have their raw milk cheese process approved by the Food Authority before production can commence.

In order to gain approval, a production process pro forma must be completed. This is a written description of the steps used to make a particular product. The pro forma should demonstrate to the Food Authority that the production process used is effective in reducing the numbers of *L. monocytogenes* to a safe level and assess its compliance against Standard 4.2.4 of the Food Standards Code (the Code).

Businesses need to demonstrate to the Food Authority that the production processes they use are effective in reducing the numbers of *L. monocytogenes* to a safe level.

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Department of
Primary Industries
Food Authority



Exercise Border Bridge

Biosecurity incursions can be significant in their reach and impact, are often unpredictable and complex to manage, and don't necessarily stop at borders.



EXERCISE BORDER BRIDGE

NSW & QLD 2018

It is critical that the emergency preparation and response capability is strong across all jurisdictions to ensure adequate protection of our \$15 billion primary industries sector, our environment and community.

Exercise Border Bridge is a large-scale exercise involving the NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Local Land Services, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, as well as Australian plant and livestock industries.

Exercise Border Bridge will assess the ability of NSW, QLD and the Commonwealth to respond jointly to a biosecurity incident that impacts both jurisdictions simultaneously.

The scenario will be based on a pest and disease incursion - one which affects livestock, and the other will be a threat to plant production industries.

These are exercises only, and not activities being conducted in response to a real pest or disease incursion and there are no changes in the movement of plant and livestock during the exercise.

The focus of the exercise will be the use of legislation, IT systems and existing arrangements to respond

to the biosecurity incident. Both NSW and QLD have recently introduced new biosecurity legislation, so the exercise provides an opportunity to assess how it will be implemented in a cross border scenario.

This exercise program is an important part of building government and industry's capability to prepare and respond effectively and efficiently to biosecurity emergencies. It will help us identify any gaps in these capabilities and to better prepare for pest and disease incursions that have the potential to damage Australia's food and fibre production industries. It will also assess the ability of the National Biosecurity Response Team to integrate and contribute to a cross border biosecurity response.

For more information on Exercise Border Bridge, visit dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/borderbridge

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RTO Forum

In October, the Food Authority hosted its annual RTO Forum for registered training organisations delivering Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) training in NSW.



Dr David Cusack (NSW Food Authority), addressing attendees at the RTO Forum

The FSS provides practical skills and knowledge on food safety for food handlers in the retail and food service sectors.

The RTO Forum is an important part of the Food Authority's engagement with training organisations. The event provides an opportunity for both the Food Authority and RTOs to learn from each other about the changing landscape for the vocational training sector.

This year we were able to report the success of NSW specific training modules delivered by RTOs in assisting state reductions of *Salmonella* foodborne illness incidences and recent compliance projects. The NSW FSS qualification provides students with unique food safety messages about safe egg handling, cleaning and sanitising, and managing allergen requests from customers.

The NSW FSS qualification provides students with unique food safety messages about safe egg handling, cleaning and sanitising, and managing allergen requests from customers.

The NSW FSS program also provides another avenue to deliver new food safety messages for food handlers. RTOs were advised about the new mandatory declaration for Lupin coming into effect in May 2018. The Food Authority also invited RTOs to provide feedback on new training materials currently in development which will provide students with information about the legal responsibilities of food businesses under the NSW *Food Act 2003*.

The Food Authority is very appreciative of the level of engagement by RTOs delivering food safety training in NSW.

PROJECT - *Listeria* in delicatessens

A cluster of eight listeriosis cases was detected in 2016 and attributed to foods sold through retail delis.



Listeriosis is a preventable foodborne illness, caused by *Listeria monocytogenes*, and commonly linked to delicatessen (deli) meats and soft cheeses.

The investigation linked listeriosis cases with a ready-to-eat (RTE) meat product, its manufacturer and retail delicatessens through Whole Genome Sequencing. Listeriosis is a preventable foodborne illness, caused by *Listeria monocytogenes*, and commonly linked to delicatessen (deli) meats and soft cheeses.

Cross-contamination is a major contributing factor to *L. monocytogenes* contamination RTE foods. Control of *L. monocytogenes* cross contamination and adequate sanitation is essential to reduce the risk of listeriosis from the deli environment.

In a joint project with Canada Bay and Northern Beaches Councils that ran between November 2016 and March 2017, a total of 31 retail delis were surveyed. The survey gathered information on the prevalence of *L. monocytogenes* in the deli environment to determine which areas were most susceptible for *Listeria* spp.

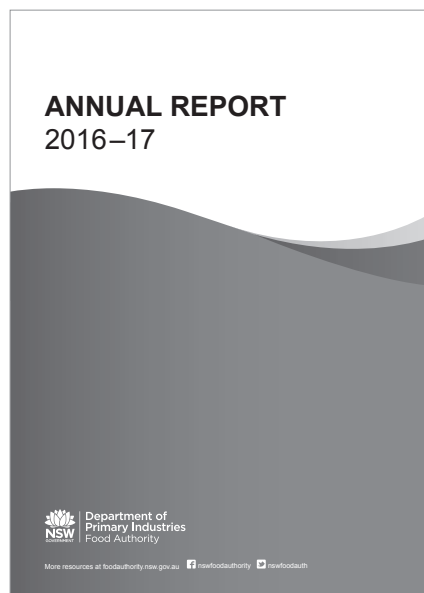
Food and swab samples were obtained and submitted for testing for the presence of *Listeria* spp. and *L. monocytogenes*. Some food samples were additionally tested for Standard Plate Count (SPC), coliforms, faecal coliforms and *E. coli*. Compliance ratings were recorded and business staff were surveyed with a questionnaire.

Overall, compliance was generally found to increase with the size of the business. Individual compliance criteria - sanitising of surfaces and equipment, skills & knowledge, and structure and pest control - increased with the size of business. An exception to this was hygiene, and temperature control.

Although no *L. monocytogenes* was found in any of the food samples, *Listeria* spp. results gave a useful insight into transmission of *Listeria* from the environment. Certain areas were found to be a higher risk including display area floor, food display cabinet sliding doors and display benches.

Further information can be found in the Project Outcomes report which outlines the *Listeria* in Delicatessens Project including the issue, what we did, what we found, the outcome as well as the next steps. This can be accessed at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/projectoutcomes/Listeria_in_delicatessens.pdf

NSW Food Authority 2016–17 Annual Report now available



The Annual Report outlines the body of work undertaken by the NSW Food Authority throughout the year and provides a detailed snapshot of food safety achievements in NSW. A highlight of the period was once again the ongoing and valued relationship the Food Authority shares with its industry partners. These successful partnerships forged through sector committees including egg, poultry, meat, plants, vulnerable persons, retail, seafood and shellfish are evidence of the collaborative approach to developing a food safety culture across the state's food industries.

Other notable achievements of the 2016–17 reporting period include:

- continued to deliver on outcomes identified in the NSW Government Food Safety Strategy 2015–2021, a six-year plan to drive and further enhance NSW's reputation as a supplier of safe, quality food. The 95% compliance goal was achieved in the 2016/17 financial year with an average 95.1% audit and inspection compliance rate across food industry sectors. Foodborne illness caused by *Salmonella* Typhimurim dropped by 39% in NSW
- the remake of the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation, that came into effect 1 September 2016 following extensive consultation and preparation into the remake of the Meat Industry Levy 2006, to determine it would be remade without amendments
- the launch of the NSW Food Authority's interactive food labelling hub, designed to help consumers find easy to understand food labelling information and as an important regulatory labelling information resource for industry, a 'one stop shop' for both audiences
- significant contribution and role in the national work that resulted in the approval by the Australia and New

Zealand Forum on Food Regulation of the sale of low THC hemp as food

- excellent compliance outcomes as part of the Fresh Noodle Project, an initiative implemented at a specific industry sector identified as underperforming as part of the Food Authority's ongoing monitoring activities to ensure industry meets compliance targets
- significant role in the coordination and leadership of the Department of Primary Industries response to the presence of PFAS at various sites across NSW, providing sample collection, analysis of results, support and advice to the Expert Panel, industry and consumers

You can read the full report on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/corporate/annual_report_2016_17.pdf

A highlight of the period was once again the ongoing and valued relationship the Food Authority shares with its industry partners.

Calendar dates

FEBRUARY 2018

19

Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Awards Night (RAS), Sydney

MARCH 2018

5–9

Exercise Border Bridge

23–3 April

The Sydney Royal Easter Show, Sydney

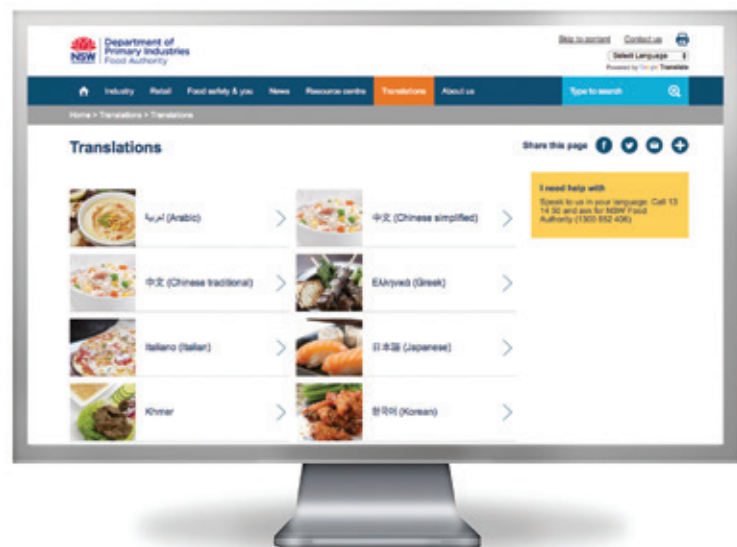
APRIL 2018

5

Retail & Food Service Information Session and Food Regulation Partnership Forum, Kiama

Transforming Translations

Communicating food safety messages to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities is a high priority for the NSW Food Authority.



The Food Authority hosts a number of resources on the website that have been translated into Arabic, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Greek, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Macedonian, Serbian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Recent feedback from members of the CALD community has resulted in a recent refresh of this section to enable these resources to be more accessible. The changes incorporate visuals and a simple structure prompting users to choose a preferred language, which then directs you to the relevant resources.

You can view the new Translations page at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/translations

The Food Authority hosts a number of resources on the website that have been translated into Arabic, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Greek, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Macedonian, Serbian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese.

PROJECT - Hot Bread Shops and Raw Eggs

Many of the hot bread shops in the Sydney Metropolitan area sell pork or chicken rolls which include the option of a variety of salad ingredients, pâté, and raw egg butter/mayonnaise.



While these businesses account for a fraction of the food produced, and sold in Sydney, in the past they have accounted for some of the largest outbreaks of *Salmonella* in NSW.

The number of *Salmonella* cases and outbreaks typically rise during the summer months due to hotter weather conditions. The association between illness and hot bread shops is not unique to NSW, with large outbreaks also being recorded in other states.

The main factors contributing to *Salmonella* outbreaks include:

- lack of appropriate skills/knowledge in relation to safe food handling
- the use of raw egg foods not in accordance with the *Food Safety Guidelines for the Preparation of Raw Egg Products* (the Guidelines)
- poor hygiene and inadequate cleaning/sanitising of food contact surfaces, and
- temperature abuse of food items.

Throughout January and February 2017, DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety (BFS) officers, in conjunction with environmental health officers from eight self-nominated local Councils, implemented a proactive strategy to improve food safety compliance in 39 hot bread shops across the Sydney Metropolitan area. The businesses were nominated by Councils based on poor food safety compliance and/or a history of raw egg use in ready-to-eat (RTE) foods such as raw egg butter/mayonnaise.

The project was designed to increase compliance with the Guidelines; improve cleaning and sanitation practices; and improve food handler skills and knowledge via education and enforcement action. Businesses processing RTE raw egg products were subject to environmental swabbing to test for the presence of *Salmonella*.

The operation found some businesses were processing RTE raw egg products in a way that did not comply with the Guidelines. To reduce risks of foodborne illness outbreaks occurring, businesses needed to improve practices in hygiene, sanitation, pest control, temperature control, and food handler skills and knowledge.

The businesses found to be selling raw egg mayonnaise and/or raw egg butter either switched to a safer alternative or are now strictly complying with the Guidelines. Compliance was achieved through the combined application of education and enforcement tools such as penalty notices and prohibition orders.

With the project producing such positive results, coupled with the onset of summer - the peak period for *Salmonella* outbreaks, BFS will continue to work with Councils to monitor raw egg use in the retail environment. With the warmer weather now upon us we encourage any business processing RTE raw egg products to ensure compliance with the Guidelines or switch to safer alternatives, make sure that equipment is clean and sanitised and that food is kept cool at all times.

You can access the Guidelines on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/retail/raw_egg_guidelines.pdf

FRP Workshop 2107 – the evolving partnership

The NSW Food Authority recently hosted its Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) Workshop 2017 and FRP Food Surveillance Champion Awards jointly with Environmental Health Australia (EHA) NSW at Penrith Panthers.



Mr Paul Braybrooks OAM (Chair Food Regulation Forum) and Dr Lisa Szabo (CEO NSW Food Authority) with the Environmental Health Team from Penrith City Council.

Themed *The Evolving Partnership*, the biennial FRP Workshop played host to more than 120 officers from various councils across NSW. The workshop aims to promote the professional development of EHOs through education, provides opportunities to network and share experiences with their peers and to learn about the latest developments in food safety.

The two day Workshop kicked off with the speed networking sessions where delegates interacted with subject experts on topics such as evolving food trends, the importance of safe

private water supplies, how foodborne incidents are investigated, regulating home-based businesses, experiences in applying the home jurisdiction rule, and more.

The next day commenced with a keynote address by the NSW Food Authority's CEO Dr Lisa Szabo on tackling food safety together in partnership with councils. This was followed by Dr Kari Gobius of Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) who presented insights into current and emerging food safety trends which

impact research, consumers, business and government. Other presentations covered various topics relevant to the important food surveillance work undertaken by Councils' Environmental Health Officers.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the FRP Food Surveillance Champion Awards which were announced at the joint EHA and FRP Dinner, and presented by Dr Lisa Szabo and Paul Braybrooks OAM (Chair Food Regulation Forum) to the following recipients:

- Group City: Penrith City Council Environmental Health Team
- Individual City: Bronagh Curran, City of Sydney
- Individual Country: Lauriston Muirhead, Albury City Council
- Individual Country: Sarah Walsh, Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Congratulations to all the winners from an outstanding field of entrants.

A highlight of the event was the FRP Food Surveillance Champion Awards announced at the joint EHA and FRP Dinner.

Annual Food Testing Report



The Annual Food Testing Report provides a summary of conducted surveys, foodborne illness investigation and compliance samples analysed by the Food Authority's primary testing provider, DTS Food Laboratories (DTS) between July 2016 and June 2017.

The report shows that a total of 4103 samples were sent to DTS for testing during that period. The diversity of foods analysed include meat, seafood, dairy, plant products, packaged food, food from retail outlets and environmental samples (e.g. swabs and feed samples). Most samples were submitted for multiple tests which may have included both chemical profiling and microbiological assessment.

Surveys

During 2016-2017, the Food Authority conducted several surveys with the aim of gathering information to inform future risk assessment work. Surveys include: Microbiological quality and handling practices of cut melon and papaya at retail, rice based desserts sold at room temperature, undeclared allergens in food, microbiological quality of ready-to-eat (RTE) chilled foods and *Campylobacter* in non-poultry products.

Verification program

Four verification programs were carried out:

1. Food Safety Schemes verification program for RTE foods. The microbiological verification program monitors RTE food produced under Food Safety Schemes. A total of 402 samples were randomly collected from 193 businesses and submitted for testing with a total of eight products identified as being non-compliant due to elevated levels of *E. coli* (6) or *Listeria monocytogenes* (2).
2. Egg farm and egg grading facility surveillance program.
3. Poultry verification program.
4. kJ menu labelling verification program.

Audit and compliance investigations

A total of 33 samples were submitted to DTS for testing due to compliance investigations. The most common analysis was for sulphur dioxide (SO₂) levels.

Food Incidents and complaints investigations

1,853 food and environmental samples were submitted to DTS for testing in responses to a foodborne illness investigation and its follow up activities. During the reporting period, one notable foodborne illness outbreak took place: *17 cases of Salmonella Typhimurium were linked to a cafe on the Central Coast. The cafe made several items using raw eggs including mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce and French toast.*

Salmonella linked to the use of raw egg foods continued to be the single most common type of incident investigated by the Food Authority.

More detailed information can be found in *Annual Food Testing Report 2016-2017* available on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/scienceandtechnical/annual_food_testing_report_2016-17.pdf

Julianne's Kitchen back-to-back Champions of Smallgoods



L to R: Robert Ryan OAM President, Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, Julianne Lever and Zlatko Markovski from Julianne's Kitchen and Mark Mackie, NSW Food Authority

The Food Authority's annual sponsorship of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Sydney Royal Fine Food Show is an opportunity for the Food Authority to acknowledge and thank producers in NSW and further afield for their outstanding contribution towards NSW and Australia's world-renowned food industry.

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety had the honour of presenting the winner of the Food Authority sponsored *Champion Smallgoods* Exhibit.

The trophy was awarded to Julianne's Kitchen for their 'Chicken and Madeira Pâté' and was proudly received by Julianne Lever and Zlatko Markovski.

The Food Authority is a proud sponsor of the event which recognises and celebrates excellence and innovation in the fine food industry.

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety had the honour of presenting the winner of the Food Authority sponsored Champion Smallgoods Exhibit.

The trophy was awarded to Julianne's Kitchen for their 'Chicken and Madeira Pâté'.

Stories from the frontline

Biosecurity & Food Safety officers investigate businesses when a complaint is made. Complaints can relate to several issues including:

- a foodborne illness outbreak
- a severe allergic reaction to food following -
 - a customer advising of a particular food allergy and requesting a meal free from the allergen/s
 - an incorrect label. That is, there is no allergen declaration on a label, yet allergens are present in the food product, or
- hygiene concerns at a food business.

To illustrate the work that the Food Authority does during an investigation, online case studies have been made available based on real investigations conducted by Biosecurity & Food Safety officers.

The case studies outline the incident, how it was investigated, the food safety implication and what businesses should do. Case studies can be found at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/case-studies-project-outcomes

Prosecution – Box Village Bakery

The owners of a Sylvania bakery at the centre of a *Salmonella* outbreak that affected more than 200 people in January 2016 were recently fined a total of \$122,000 and ordered to pay \$7,199 professional costs after each was convicted of ten breaches of the *Food Act 2003*.



The owners of the Box Village Bakery, Thi Thu Ngo and Hung Son Le each pleaded guilty to five breaches of selling unsafe food, and five breaches of failing to meet food safety standards and were fined \$61,000 each.

The Food Authority commenced investigation into the bakery after it was notified of an outbreak where each of the affected people had eaten from the premises.

There were 203 documented cases of people who had presented to hospitals and other health care providers with symptoms of gastroenteritis including vomiting, diarrhea and fever after consuming bakery items such as chicken rolls and salads that were linked back to the bakery.

During its investigation the Food Authority issued a Prohibition Order requiring the business to cease operations.

The business was only permitted to reopen and trade after it completed extensive work to ensure the bakery had been thoroughly cleaned and fully compliant with food safety laws.

The Food Authority also conducted skills and knowledge testing with staff and management of the business to improve their food safety knowledge and conducted a number of inspections of the premises subsequent to its reopening to ensure it continued to be fit to trade.

CEO of the NSW Food Authority Dr Lisa Szabo said the court result served as a reminder to all food businesses and individuals as to why food safety systems are crucial.

“Foodborne disease cost Australia \$1.25 billion each year. In New South Wales this cost is estimated to be \$375 million.

“There are currently approximately 4.1 million cases of food poisoning in Australia every year, resulting in, on average, 31,920 hospitalisations, 86 deaths and 1 million visits to doctors each year.”

Operators of food businesses that are convicted of offences are also published on the NSW Food Authority’s Name and Shame register and remain on the register for a period of two years.

During its investigation the Food Authority issued a Prohibition Order requiring the business to cease operations.

The business was only permitted to reopen and trade after it completed extensive work to ensure the bakery had been thoroughly cleaned and fully compliant with food safety laws.

Prosecution - FAL Healthy Beverages

A Sydney beverage company was recently prosecuted and fined \$30,000 by the Food Authority and ordered to pay more than \$25,000 in professional costs after pleading guilty to seven charges of breaching the *Food Act 2003* including failing to declare the presence of milk in their 'Coco Joy' brand of flavoured coconut milk drinks, falsely labelling their product as 'Dairy Free' and failing to implement an appropriate food recall plan.

In NSW all food businesses are required to provide information about the most common allergens, gluten and sulphites in food through correct labelling and information.

CEO of the NSW Food Authority Dr Lisa Szabo said food allergies were on the rise and one in ten babies born in Australia today will develop one.

"This type of offence is of particular concern because it is common for consumers with a dairy allergy to seek out coconut milk products because they can substitute as a dairy free milk alternative."

In NSW all food businesses are required to provide information about the most common allergens, gluten and sulphites in food through correct labelling and information.

A young child in Western Australia with a dairy allergy was hospitalised suffering anaphylaxis after consuming a Coco Joy banana flavoured drink product that was labelled as 'Dairy Free'.

Dr Szabo also said the law requires that a food business engaged in the wholesale, supply, manufacture or importation of food must have a recall plan in place. They must also activate that plan when necessary to ensure the recall of unsafe food.

"FAL Healthy Beverages was slow in carrying out an effective recall of its product and did not comply with the requirement of following a recall plan in place that works," Dr Szabo said.

"We demand a high level of food safety is upheld across the food supply chain because it serves as an important protection measure of public health."

"Consumers deserve to have confidence in knowing the food they purchase is safe to eat and will cause no harm to them or their family."

Details of the case has since been added to the Register of Offences (prosecutions) at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/offences/prosecutions

"We demand a high level of food safety is upheld across the food supply chain because it serves as an important protection measure of public health."

Consumers deserve to have confidence in knowing the food they purchase is safe to eat and will cause no harm to them or their family."

MEAT

Manufacturing uncooked comminuted fermented meat products



To manufacture uncooked comminuted fermented meat (UCFM) products in NSW, a business must first be licensed, and then must make an application to produce these products. All applications must be accompanied by a completed pro forma.

To manufacture uncooked comminuted fermented meat (UCFM) products in NSW, a business must first be licensed, and then must make an application accompanied by a completed pro forma to produce these products.

Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 294 inspections and 709 audits of licensed meat businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 96% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the meat sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	725	709
Total inspections	241	294
Acceptable audit rate	96%	96%

A pro forma is a written description of the steps used by a manufacturer to make a product. This information is required by the Food Authority to determine if a UCFM production process is effective in reducing the numbers of *E. coli* to a safe level and to assess its compliance against Standard 4.2.3 of the Food Standards Code (the Code).

Businesses are required to provide information on product formulation; meat temperature; ingredients used in batter mix per batch; starter cultures; fermentation; smoking; the maturation or drying process; heat treatment; monitoring; as well as the criteria for judging product is ready for sale and packaging and labelling details.

Applications to produce UCFM will not be processed without submission of a completed pro forma. The Food Authority will review the pro forma and must provide approval before manufacture of UCFM products can begin.

The pro forma is available to download at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/licensesandforms/UCFM_proforma.pdf

The Food Authority will review the pro forma and must provide approval before manufacture of UCFM products can begin.



Labelling of game animals harvested in NSW

The correct labelling of game animals harvested in NSW is legally required to ensure that all animals can be fully traced to their place of harvesting, and to ensure all harvesters are licensed with the relevant authorities.



Additional information relating to the correct storage and labelling of game animals is available on the Food Authority website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/meat/game-meat-field-depots

It is the responsibility of field depot operators to ensure that mandatory traceability information is available for all game animals stored within the depot.

Compliance officers will continue to closely monitor the game industry to ensure that all game animals are correctly labelled and that field depot operators are exercising their obligations to review labelling of animals processed through their depots.

The *Wild Game Meat Field Depot Food Safety Program* was developed as a guide to assist industry meet the requirements of the NSW *Food Act 2003*, the NSW *Food Regulation 2015* and the *Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Wild Game Meat for Human Consumption* (AS4464:2007).

The Food Safety Program mandates the labelling information which must be present in the form of a completed carcass tag, which is attached to all harvested game animals when they arrive at a field depot.

In addition, kangaroos and wild deer must also have a correctly issued identification tag attached to each carcass as per the below:

- Kangaroo tags for 2017 are white in colour and are issued by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- Wild deer tags are red or orange in colour and are issued by the NSW DPI Game Licensing Unit. Field harvesters who harvest wild deer must be appropriately licensed with the NSW DPI Game Licensing Unit (dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting/hunting-licences)

The Food Safety Program mandates the labelling information which must be present in the form of a completed carcass tag, which is attached to all harvested game animals when they arrive at a field depot.

SEAFOOD

NSW Seafood Industry Forum, October 2017

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 17 October included:

Figures from the Food Safety Program Compliance Report, 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 include 407 audits and 661 inspections with 28 failed audits and 11 failed inspections. During the reporting period, 28 improvement notices, 12 penalty notices and 4 warning letters were issued.

The Committee were advised that 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 for pathogens as required.

The current compliance rate for the seafood sector is 95.2% which is a good result.

A paper was tabled updating members on work being conducted by NSW DPI together with other jurisdictions to help minimise the risk of spread of White Spot, a contagious viral disease which causes mortality in prawns but poses no threat to human health or food safety. The committee discussed the amendment which was recently made to the *Biosecurity (White Spot Disease of crustaceans) Control Order 2017* to allow for movement of certain decapod crustaceans from the Queensland White Spot infected area

Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 135 inspections and 201 audits of licensed seafood businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate of 94% with no serious enforcement actions being taken.

The table below shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the seafood sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	213	201
Total inspections	146	135
Acceptable audit rate	92%	94%

into NSW, that have been assessed as negligible risk, provided strict biosecurity measures are in place.

Members received a 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.

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. These issues include: methyl mercury, histamine, ciguatoxins, alignment of food additives, non-dioxin like Poly Chlorinated Biphenyl compounds, fish oils and a review of maximum level for lead in fish.

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*.

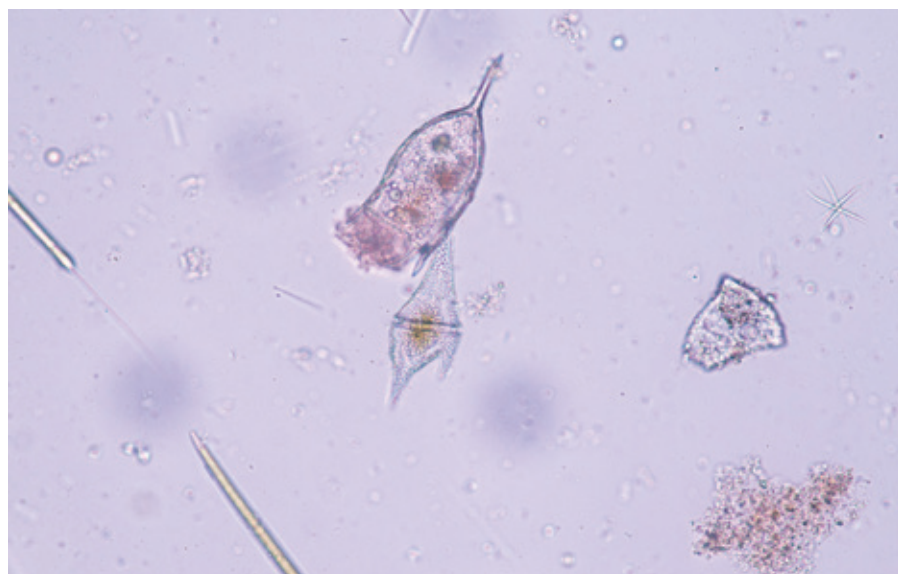
For a full summary of meeting outcomes, visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/NSWSIF_summary_of_outcomes_17_oct_17.pdf

The current compliance rate for the seafood sector is 95.2% which is a good result.



Phytoplankton and biotoxin risk assessment

Phytoplankton are microscopic organisms at the base of the food chain in almost all aquatic ecosystems. Some phytoplankton produce toxic compounds that can accumulate in filter-feeding bivalve shellfish and if consumed, can be harmful to humans.



In each shellfish producing estuary in NSW, local shellfish programs collect samples for phytoplankton and biotoxin analysis to monitor for potential risks from toxic phytoplankton. During the open harvest status, fortnightly phytoplankton sampling and monthly biotoxin sampling is conducted in accordance with the NSW Marine Biotoxin Management Plan and carried out in National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA), Australia accredited laboratories.

Water samples are analysed for the presence of potentially harmful species and shellfish flesh is tested for the three main algal toxin groups found in NSW coastal waters: amnesic shellfish toxin, paralytic shellfish toxins and diarrhetic shellfish toxins.

The current NSW Shellfish Program began in 2003, following the commencement of formal classification on the sanitary status of NSW shellfish aquaculture areas. Phytoplankton and biotoxin monitoring commenced in 2004, with regular routine sample data collected from 2005.

Water samples are analysed for the presence of potentially harmful species and shellfish flesh is tested for the three main algal toxin groups found in NSW coastal waters.

A risk assessment was conducted to review the presence of potentially harmful species and positive biotoxin results during the life of the current program and is now available at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/science/food-risk-studies/phytoplankton-and-biotoxin

In NSW shellfish aquaculture areas, significant phytoplankton blooms have been infrequent. Most harvest area closures have been due to rainfall and/or salinity exceeding the management plan limits used as indicators of microbial and viral water quality. However, increasing demand on coastal resources from an increasing population and the potential for spatial and temporal distributions of harmful phytoplankton to be altered dramatically by a changing climate are key future challenges.

DAIRY



Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 40 inspections and 236 audits of licensed dairy businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 96% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate for an extended period due to the correct implementation of food safety controls.

The table below shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the dairy sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	200	236
Total inspections	67	40
Acceptable audit rate	95%	96%



From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted

40

inspections and

236

audits of licensed dairy businesses.





NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee, September 2017



Issues considered by the committee at its meeting on 19 September included:

Figures from the **Food Safety Program Compliance Report** for 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 include 780 audits (21 failed audits) and 178 inspections (16 failed inspections).

The Committee noted the three main areas in which defects are being raised continue to be within process control, analytical testing and prerequisite programs.

During the reporting period, a total of 22 Improvement notices, 1 Penalty notice and 2 Warning letters were issued and no foodborne illness investigations in the dairy sector took place.

During the reporting period, a total of 22 Improvement notices, 1 Penalty notice and 2 Warning letters were issued and no foodborne illness investigations in the dairy sector took place. The current compliance rate for the sector is 97%, which is above the food safety strategy target of 95% and is an excellent outcome for the dairy industry in NSW.

Members were updated on work underway within NSW DPI to develop a strategy to manage antibiotic use as part of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 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.

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

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 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016. The final report and recommendations on the Evaluation will be shared with the committee when available.

The current compliance rate for the sector is 97%, which is above the food safety strategy target of 95% and is an excellent outcome for the dairy industry in NSW.

Papers were tabled for information on **changes to legislation** 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*.

Other items discussed include the **Package Assisting Small Exporters Project**, information regarding **PFAS**, and an update on work which is underway to deliver awareness on general biosecurity duty across the State following the introduction of the **Biosecurity Act 2015**.

For a full summary of meeting outcomes, visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/nsw_DCCM_outcomes_sept_2017.pdf

EGGS

Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 23 inspections and 68 audits of licensed egg businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 95% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the egg sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	45	68
Total inspections	31	23
Acceptable audit rate	95%	95%



This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with

95%
of businesses recording an acceptable audit result.

Egg stamps - are you a small egg farmer?



If you're a small egg farmer in NSW and are required to stamp eggs prior to selling them, don't forget that the Food Authority can provide you with a one-off free hand stamp to assist you with the costs associated with stamping.

Small egg farms who produce **no more** than 20 dozen eggs (240 eggs) in any week, need to first 'notify' the Food Authority of business details and food activities. This can be done online and free of charge at foodnotify.nsw.gov.au

Once the notification is processed, you will be provided with a free, self-inking egg stamp with a pre-assigned unique code. The stamp kit also includes 1 one-off pack of 5 ink refills.

For more information on egg stamping, visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/eggs/egg-stamping

PLANTS



From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted

14

inspections and

30

audits of licensed plant product businesses.

Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 14 inspections and 30 audits of licensed plant product businesses. This industry sector has recorded a compliance rate of 92%.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the plant sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	29	30
Total inspections	13	14
Acceptable audit rate	90%	92%



VULNERABLE PERSONS



Vulnerable Persons Industry Forum



Dr Lisa Szabo, Jenine Ryle, Alan Edwards, Alison Imlay, Anne McIntosh and Darren Waterson (NSW Food Authority)

The Food Authority plays a central role in mitigating food safety risks across the supply chain by dealing directly with relevant businesses and stakeholders, and providing industry with high-level, science-based information on food safety.

However, the Food Authority cannot do this alone. Effective food safety management relies on stakeholders across the supply chain clearly understanding their roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and interdependencies. The Food Authority also needs to understand the challenges that industry faces so it can work with businesses to help address these.

There are a number of ways that the Food Authority consults with each licensed industry, many via a formal Consultative Committee process with nominated representatives comprising peak industry organisations, government departments and industry representatives.

On 16 November, the Food Authority launched a new format for consultation with the first ever Vulnerable Persons (VP) Industry Forum being held in Sydney. The opportunity to attend

Inspections and audits

From July 2017 to September 2017, the Food Authority conducted 50 inspections and 497 audits of licensed hospitals and aged care businesses. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 98% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result due to the correct implementation of food safety controls and ensuring staff have the necessary skills and knowledge.

The table shows yearly comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the vulnerable persons sector between the same reporting periods in 2016 and 2017.

Reporting period	Jul – Sep 2016	Jul – Sep 2017
Total audits	522	497
Total inspections	78	50
Acceptable audit rate	98%	98%

was extended to all managers who have a key role in food safety management practices.

Almost 180 representatives from the VP sector took up the opportunity and came along to hear from Food Authority CEO, Dr Lisa Szabo and staff from across DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety.

Presentations were given on the latest compliance trends and audit results, how validation works for higher risk foods, and how to avoid a foodborne illness outbreak. Attendees were also provided with an overview of the VP Food Safety Scheme Risk Assessment which is regularly reviewed and updated and based on many factors including the consideration of food as a contributor to quality of life, i.e. balancing food safety requirements, wellbeing, nutrition and enjoyment.

The Forum was also designed to provide a two-way mechanism to consult on important common issues such as new technologies, emergency preparedness, higher risk foods and other emerging issues. All questions raised were documented and are now available on the Vulnerable Persons section of our website.

Feedback from the Forum was positive with attendees indicating that it was an informative session and provided a good networking opportunity with their industry colleagues.

To access the complete set of presentations along with the Q&A document from the Forum, visit foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/vulnerable-persons/vulnerable-persons-committee where you will find them under “Meeting Outcomes”.

MANUFACTURING

PROJECT - Allergen management for importers

Rates of anaphylaxis and susceptibility to allergens are increasing in Australia. Undeclared allergens in food are a significant risk factor for anaphylaxis which can be life threatening.



In 2016, undeclared allergens accounted for 46% of all food recalls nationally and was the most common reason for conducting a recall. Importers of recalled foods are often small to medium sized companies that import specialty foods or ingredients.

The Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) has responsibility for regulating import and export of certain foods into and out of Australia.

DAWR has access to two databases relating to imported food;

- **Agriculture Import Management System** - for food inspected under Imported Food Inspection Scheme ("high risk" and 5% of "surveillance" foods)
- **Integrated Cargo System** - for imported goods, managed by Department of Immigration and Border Protection

Information from both databases was provided to Biosecurity & Food Safety in a project that reviewed compliance and awareness of importers to prevent or mitigate risks to human health through undeclared allergens in imported food products.

Biosecurity & Food Safety officers investigated 117 importers and evaluated their understanding of allergen declaration requirements, their preparedness for a food recall and their food safety culture.

The project resulted in:

- 75 businesses being advised or reminded of requirements to declare allergens in accordance with the Food Standards Code.
- The review of 45 recall plans.
- 30 businesses that originally had no recall system in place, adopting a simple and effective recall action plan.

- 12 businesses who were previously unaware of requirements to declare allergens being informed of what is required.
- Six businesses being added to the MWIP and subject to regulatory inspection.
- 18 businesses being added to the Food Authority database and subject to improved regulatory oversight.
- A benchmark assessment of 75 businesses.

In addition, the food safety culture questionnaire, developed from templates supplied by Food Standards Australia New Zealand, indicated that 90% of businesses knew what their general obligations were in producing safe food.

You can refer to the Project Outcomes report which outlines details around the Allergen Management for Importers Project including the issue, what we did, what we found, the outcome as well as the next steps. This can be accessed at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/projectoutcomes/Allergen_management_for_importers.pdf

Importers of recalled foods are often small to medium sized companies that import specialty foods or ingredients.



Low THC hemp foods gets the OK



From 12 November 2017, hulled hemp seeds from low THC plants and food derived from hemp seeds, such as hemp seed oil, flour, protein powder or mixed foods was legally available for sale and consumption in NSW.

Low THC was already legally grown in NSW under strict licensing conditions,

and the decision to make it available to consumers followed extensive research which identified there were no food safety or public health risks associated with consuming low THC hemp food products, provided they meet the requirements of the Food Standards Code (the Code).

All low THC hemp seed foods must comply with the provisions contained in Standard 1.4.4 of the Code which sets strict limits on the levels of THC and cannabidiol (CBD) used, prevents the marketing and labelling of the foods to suggest psychoactive effects, prevents branding links to illicit cannabis and prohibits any reference to the presence of CBD.

In addition, producers of hemp food products must also comply with the broader requirements of the Code which includes the usual food labelling requirements such as date marking, an ingredients list, a nutrition information panel and having in place a food recall plan in the event that something goes wrong.

For more detailed information on the production of low THC hemp foods, download our factsheet *Low-THC Hemp as Food* on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/retailfactsheets/low_THC_hemp.pdf

Rare roast beef

Rare roast beef is a whole muscle beef portion that has been cooked to a low core temperature (46°C to 58°C).



The *Australian standard for the hygienic production and transportation of meat and meat products for human consumption* (AS 4696:2007), states

that “during cooking the temperature at the site of microbiological concern must be maintained at a temperature of 65°C for at least 10 minutes, unless an approved alternative time and temperature arrangement is in place.”

Typically, the site of concern for most meat products is the core. However, for a high quality, intact whole muscle beef portion (such as rare roast beef) that has not been tenderised, injected or marinated, the site of microbiological concern is the surface of the meat.

The process for making rare roast beef must be fully documented and verified through the business’s food safety program. This will complement verification and shelf life testing.

For more information on how to make rare roast beef which is safe for human consumption, download the factsheet *Rare Roast Beef* at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/rare_roast_beef.pdf

Continued from front page...



Approval must be granted prior to manufacture and sale of any raw milk cheese product.

Essentially, a business must demonstrate that:

- they can source high quality raw milk that complies with the requirements of the Code.
- the market ready cheese will not support the growth of pathogenic bacteria, in-particular *Listeria monocytogenes*.
- during the process of cheese making (fermentation and maturation) there is no net increase in pathogenic bacteria.

A completed pro forma must be submitted with any application to produce a raw milk cheese, and approved prior to manufacture and sale of any raw milk cheese product.

You can access the Raw Milk Cheese Pro Forma on the Dairy Processing page of the Food Authority website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/dairy/dairy-processing

In order to gain approval, a completed pro forma must be submitted with any application to produce a raw milk cheese.

New resources

Case studies:

Foodborne illness

- Listeria delicatessen
- Raw egg in cafe

Allergen management

- Supplier ingredient
- Manufacturer
- Employer function
- School camp

Hygiene

- Wholesale bakery

Factsheets:

- Rare roast beef
- Low-TCH hemp as food

Pro formas:

- Raw milk cheese production process
- UCFM production process

Project outcomes:

- Listeria in delicatessens
- Allergen management for importers

Other:

- Annual food testing report 2016-2017
- Small meat processing facility – example plan