

FOODWISE

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



Low THC hemp brings high hopes for NSW industry

In a huge boost to the state's existing low THC hemp industry, the Australia and New Zealand Forum on Food Regulation recently approved the sale of low THC hemp as food.

After considering the advice of Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) that it had not identified any food safety or public health risks associated with low THC hemp food products, the Forum members agreed to amend the Food Standards Code at a meeting in Adelaide on 28 April 2017.

Hemp is largely regarded as having excellent nutritional properties as it contains a near perfect ratio of Omega 3 and Omega 6 and high levels of protein.

Welcoming the decision, NSW Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair said the approval was exciting news for the existing hemp industry, allowing it to continue to thrive and produce a healthy and sustainable product for consumers.

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Department of
Primary Industries
Food Authority



Meet the Helpline team

The Helpline is the first point of contact for the food industry and consumers wanting to know about food safety.



Food businesses and prospective businesses can call 1300 552 406 or email contact@foodauthority.nsw.com.au to find out about licensing, Food Safety Supervisor training and a variety of other matters relating to food safety. Online forms are also available on the Food Authority website to make enquiries about food safety or applying for a licence easy.

Consumers contact the Helpline with questions about food labelling, to enquire about making a complaint about suspected food poisoning, concerns or questions they have in relation to food preparation practices they have witnessed or to simply ask advice about what food is safe to consume when pregnant.

An important customer service focus for the Helpline team is to resolve as many interactions as possible on first contact.

In 2016, an average of:

- 90% of all enquiries were resolved directly by the Helpline team
- 90% of callers waited no more than 15 seconds to speak to a team member
- 90 interactions per day were handled by the team. A busy day, most likely a Monday, could see the team managing over 110 interactions

A key tool used by the Helpline is the Food Authority website foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

The complaints process

While most complaints are received by phone, the Helpline also takes complaints by email and through online forms, as well as social media, namely Facebook and Twitter.

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The Helpline gives priority to complaints about a situation that will or has the potential to cause harm, or if there is a pattern of similar situations that suggest an ongoing or broader issue.

When Helpline team members assess a complaint, they will ask for information including a description of the issue and the product as well as the details of the business that sold the food item. If it's a suspected case of food poisoning, further details relating to the consumption of the product are also requested.

The Helpline in action - Allergen recall

A real life example of the crucial role the Helpline plays in the effective management of food safety incidents involved a complaint that was received about the suspected presence of dairy in a chocolate promoted as dairy free. This initiated an investigation that resulted in a national recall of the chocolate.

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia contacted the Helpline, after being



contacted by a mother in Tasmania whose children had suffered an allergic reaction after eating the chocolate.

As the chocolate was manufactured in NSW, the complaint fell under the jurisdiction of the NSW Food Authority.

The Helpline assessed the complaint after collecting critical information about the product and forwarded it to the Compliance team.

The Compliance team promptly tested the chocolate and found that recently introduced ingredients had not yet been tested by the manufacturer for the allergens.

The investigation found that 27,648 units of the chocolate had been distributed nationwide. As a result, a national recall was conducted by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) and the product was removed from shelves. Print and social media communications actively advised consumers of the recall.

Due to the timely response by the Helpline team, and thorough processing of information, a potentially harmful product for those suffering from a milk allergy, was removed from shelves at point of sale.

Calendar dates

JULY 2017

16–19

foodpro, International Convention Centre Sydney (ICCS)

17–18

Australian Institute of Food Science & Technology 50th Anniversary Convention, ICCS

20

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

20

Sydney Fish Market Seafood Excellence Awards

AUGUST 2017

9

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

23

NSW Shellfish Committee

29

Meat Industry Consultative Council

SEPTEMBER 2017

11–14

Fine Food Australia, ICCS

12–13

NSW EHA State Conference, Penrith

13–14

FRP Workshop, Penrith

22

Sydney Royal Taste of Excellence Awards (RAS)

Celebrating excellence in our food industry

In a demonstration of its commitment to working closely with industry partners, the Food Authority annually sponsors various awards in competitions within the NSW Royal Agricultural Society's (RAS) Sydney Fine Food Show.



Alfred Oesch - Bega Cheese, Lisa Szabo – CEO, Food Authority, Gary Reid – Chair of the RAS of NSW Dairy Produce Committee and Brock Gilmour – CEO, RAS of NSW

NSW Food Authority CEO, Dr Lisa Szabo was proud to present the Food Authority Perpetual Trophy for *Champion Specialty Cheese* to Heritage Burnie for their Heidi Raclette, and *Champion Cheddar Cheese* to NSW dairy producer, Bega Cheese for their Bega rindless cheddar traditional recipe.

It was great to see such a strong contingent of NSW producers on the winners roll - a testament to the quality of the dairy industry in this state and the high standard of our produce.

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The sponsorships are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate talented food producers in NSW and promote excellence and innovation in the food industry.

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Producing the goods at the Cheese and Dairy Produce Show

The Cheese & Dairy Awards night was held in February which saw winners from all categories in the Sydney Royal Cheese & Dairy Produce Show, crowned as Champions.



Dave Merchant – Lion Dairy & Drinks NSW, Lisa Szabo – CEO, Food Authority



Jim Doyle and Hilary Steward from Doyle's Oysters with Lisa Szabo, CEO, Food Authority

Making a Rock star entrance

First time entrants became first time winners at the Fine Foods Award Lunch in April when Doyle's Oysters took out the win for their *Champion Sydney Rock Oyster* Exhibit. Their Plate and Bistro Oysters were judged as being firm and tasty, with a great appearance and in top condition.

CEO of the NSW Food Authority Lisa Szabo had the honour of presenting the NSW Food Authority perpetual trophy to Jim Doyle and Hilary Steward. After receiving the award, Jim stated "we are proud of our achievement and feel that we are a pretty good testament to persistence and attention to detail with the quality of the product being the consistent driver in all that we do. The Clyde River is the true secret to the quality of all oysters grown here and we feel really privileged to work on this beautiful river". Congratulations Doyle's Oysters!

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Providing opportunities in partnership

The Food Regulation Partnership (FRP) is a relationship between the Food Authority and local councils in NSW who work together to ensure all retail food services businesses are inspected and comply with food safety regulations. The Food Authority supports local councils in their role as the enforcement agencies, by providing training, technical support, networking opportunities, guidance and assistance.

The Retail Food Service Information Session which is held three times a year across NSW, is a key support initiative, providing the opportunity for all retail food businesses and regulatory agencies to discuss food safety matters of importance in the retail food sector.

The Food Regulation Forum, a body established under the NSW Food Act, attend these sessions. They meet after the session to provide guidance to the Food Authority regarding the FRP. Representatives on the Food Regulation Forum include:

- an independent chairperson
- Local Government NSW
- Environmental Health Australia
- Development and Environmental Professionals Association
- Local Government Professionals Association
- NSW Small Business Commissioner

- NSW Food Authority

Outcomes of the latest meeting held 6 April in Parramatta can be found at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/rp/food-regulation-forum

FRP Retail Food Service Information Session (Goulburn) - SAVE THE DATE

The next Retail Food Service Information Session will be held at the Mercure in Goulburn on Thursday 20 July 2017 in association with Goulburn Mulwaree Council.

FRP Workshop (Penrith) - SAVE THE DATE

The NSW Food Authority in partnership with NSW enforcement agencies host a biannual FRP Workshop for environmental health officers. The next FRP Workshop is planned for 13-14 September 2017 at Penrith Panthers and will provide the latest information on food safety, and encourages networking and professional development opportunities. It is being held in conjunction with the NSW EHA state conference which will be held 12-13 September.

Further information regarding these important events will be made available shortly.

DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety – from backyard to the food bowl

April saw the first combined DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety stand at the Sydney Royal Easter Show – which proved a huge success.



The aim of the stand was to demonstrate what biosecurity is, and the risks that urban and peri urban backyards pose as hot spots for the potential introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases which may threaten human health, food security and industry access to global markets. Food safety messages were demonstrated in the kitchen with a range of everyday risks and habits that occur in the home.

The DPI Biosecurity Warrior encouraged visitors to take up the challenge and undergo Biosecurity & Food Safety Training which involved identifying the 'do's and the 'don'ts' of biosecurity and food safety in six areas of the home and backyard; the chicken coop, veggie patch, garden (weeds), pantry, fridge and sinks and benches.

The stand was built to resemble a suburban backyard leading into a kitchen which was located in the Woolworths Food Farm, the Show's educational hub offering parents and children a range of interactive 'paddock to plate' activities.

With over 920,000 visitors walking through the gates at this year's Show – the highest number since 2004, it provided an extraordinary opportunity to engage directly with visitors to promote the message that biosecurity and food safety starts at home – it's a shared responsibility.

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NSW Minister for Primary Industries, The Hon. Niall Blair, MLC is inducted as a Biosecurity Warrior

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All trained Biosecurity & Food Safety Warriors walked away with a Biosecurity Warrior headband, a Training Manual and a fridge thermometer to ensure the temperature of their fridge at home stays between 0°C and 5°C so that food stays safe.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Niall Blair, DPI Director General Scott Hansen and DPI Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety Bruce Christie visited the stand to share the biosecurity and food safety messages and along with the visiting families, were inducted as Biosecurity Warriors.



Our Chief Biosecurity Warrior - DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety Deputy Director General Bruce Christie, visits the stand



Promoting the message that "biosecurity and food safety starts at home" to our newly inducted Biosecurity Warriors



Visitors were asked to identify the do's and don'ts of food safety in our kitchen

Cut melons in the retail sector

The Food Authority recently carried out a survey on cut melons and papaya, focusing on microbiological quality and handling practices in greengrocers and supermarkets.



Despite cut melons and papaya being classified as potentially hazardous foods, testing revealed the microbiological quality of the products to be very good, even when stored at room temperature for the day.

The survey identified room for improvement in food handling practices including cleaning and sanitation of food contact surfaces and equipment and that fruits should be sold on the day they are cut.

As a result of the Survey, we recommend businesses:

- understand the difference between detergent and sanitiser, why it is important to use both and why it's important to clean and sanitise often and between cutting different types of fruit to avoid cross contamination
- avoid the practice of re-trimming melons, especially if the fruit is displayed at room temperature
- aim to cut small amounts of fruit and often, especially if displaying at room temperature.

You can access the full report on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/science/market-analysis/cut-melons. A summary of the report is also available.

Showtime for showbags

Each year, Biosecurity & Food Safety officers participate in a Showbag Inspections program to undertake inspections of all food items contained in Showbags which are proposed for sale at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Multiple key government agencies are involved in the program with inspections held in advance of the Show to determine the suitability of Showbag contents.

In preparation for the 2017 Show, we worked in partnership with colleagues from Parramatta City Council to assess compliance of the proposed foods for inclusion in the Showbag to ensure they were adequately labelled. The assessment revealed several products that required amended labelling and two foods were discontinued due to the concerns raised by compliance officers.

It was a great team effort that allowed the inspection to be completed in a timely manner. This year was the first time a joint approach between agencies had been taken, which proved a great success and will be repeated ahead of the 2018 Sydney Royal Easter Show next year.

Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation

The Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation, chaired by the Australian Government Assistant Minister for Health, Dr David Gillespie, met in Adelaide on 28 April 2017.



The Forum comprises all Australian and New Zealand Ministers responsible for food regulation, and the Australian Local Government Association.

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Ministers agreed the food regulation system is producing strong food safety outcomes overall, and identified and agreed the following three priority areas for both countries for 2017-2021 to further strengthen the system:

1. To **reduce foodborne illness**, particularly related to *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*, with a nationally-consistent approach. Ministers requested a draft national strategy, noting New Zealand has an existing *Campylobacter* strategy, for consideration at the next Forum meeting that outlines specific interventions across the food supply chain. This strategy is to be developed in collaboration with industry, includes improved transparency through monitoring across the food chain, be based on contemporary evidence, and engages the community.
2. To **support the public health objectives** to reduce chronic disease related to overweight and obesity. This will include evaluating the effectiveness of existing initiatives and identify potential new initiatives, such as how the food regulation system can facilitate healthy food choices and positively influence the food environment.
3. To **maintain a strong, robust and agile food regulation system** that gives confidence to consumers that their food is safe, and that the system can manage new and innovative industry approaches.

Other items discussed included:

- Low-THC Hemp seeds as food
- Review of mandatory fortification of bread – final report
- Sugar labelling
- Fats and oils
- Health Star Rating System update and 2-year progress review

Further and more detailed information from the Forum can be found in the [communique on the Food Regulation website at \[foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/content/forum-communique-2017-April\]\(http://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/content/forum-communique-2017-April\)](http://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/content/forum-communique-2017-April)

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Proud sponsor of the AIFST 50th Anniversary Convention



Australia's premier food industry event, the Convention brings together the largest grouping of Australia's food industry.

Demonstrating our commitment to food safety, the Food Authority is proud to be the Major Sponsor of the Australian Institute of Food Science & Technology (AIFST) 50th Anniversary Convention taking place from 17-18 July 2017 at the International Convention Centre Sydney. The Convention will be co-located with the popular foodpro exhibition (16-19 July).

Australia's premier food industry event, the Convention brings together the largest grouping of Australia's food industry.

Themed ***The Future of Food***, it will explore cutting edge science, emerging technologies and leading innovations set to enhance and drive the Australian food industry forward for decades to come.

A prestigious line-up of speakers and sessions will cover the consumer of the future, future technologies and innovations advancing the food industry, managing emerging threats and vulnerabilities, navigating the export and regulatory market, and insights into current scientific research that will underpin the next 50 years of the Australian food industry.

Themed ***The Future of Food***, it will explore cutting edge science, emerging technologies and leading innovations set to enhance and drive the Australian food industry forward for decades to come.

For more information, including registration details and access to the full program, visit: aifst.asn.au/annual-convention/aifst-50th-anniversary-convention-17-18-july-sydney

Gluten free resources for meal preparation

Eating away from home can be a daunting experience for people with coeliac disease. While acknowledging that many food service providers offer gluten free meal options, a 2015 study by Coeliac Australia reported that for 62% of gluten free diners, fear of cross contamination prevents them from eating out while only 9% trusted a gluten free claim.

A 2015 study by Coeliac Australia reported that for 62% of gluten free diners, fear of cross contamination prevents them from eating out.

To help combat this issue, Coeliac Australia has developed resources to assist food service providers in the preparation and service of gluten free meals including a best practice document *Gluten Free Standard for Food Service Providers*, an online training program as well as a gluten free accreditation program.

For more information visit coeliac.org.au/food-industry/

Biosecurity Legislation – update

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* was passed by Parliament in September 2015 and from 1 July 2017, will replace 10 existing Acts and parts of four others.



Overview

The Act will provide greater flexibility and improved capacity in the response, management and control of biosecurity risks, and supports the vision of the Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 that biosecurity is a shared responsibility between government, industry and the community.

It will provide for a range of tools and powers that can be used to support risk-based decision making and allow for increased efficiency and decreased regulation.

Where are we now?

- The supporting legislation; including the Regulations, is currently in the final stages and will pass through the Parliamentary approval process for commencement on 1 July. This will align the management of biosecurity risks with the tools and powers contained in the Act and follows extensive consultation with the community, government and industry during 2016 and early 2017. The Biosecurity Order

(Permitted Activities) 2017 is being finalised in close consultation with technical staff. The Biosecurity Order (Permitted Activities) 2017 will enable actions that would otherwise be contrary to a requirement of the Regulation.

- A report on the submissions received during public consultation on the Regulation has been prepared for the Legislation Review Committee of NSW Parliament.
- The Biosecurity Regulation 2017 will be available on the Department of Primary Industries website in the week starting Monday 5 June, while the Biosecurity Order (Permitted Activities) 2017 will be available on the NSW Parliament website in mid-June.

Training

- **Online training** was launched in April, and with over 150 people from DPI, Local Land Services (LLS) and Local Control Authorities (LCAs) registering in the first week,

engagement has been positive. Over 640 officers have completed the 10-module online training course which is compulsory for Authorised officers and available to other staff of DPI, LLS and LCAs who will be involved in the delivery of the Act in their day-to-day roles.

- A program of 46 **face-to-face workshops** complementing the online learning commenced across NSW on 2 May, and will run through until the end of June. The workshops cover compliance procedures, appointment of Authorised officers and guidance on new regulations and the use of compliance tools. They provide participants with the opportunity to apply the tools and powers of the Act through a range of scenarios across the spectrum of biosecurity issues.
- Training and education materials for the general community will also be available from mid-late 2017.

Banksia Food for Sustainable Thought Award – call for entries

The Banksia Foundation is committed to inspiring excellence in sustainability, and has developed the Banksia Awards program to recognise and reward it.



The **Banksia Food for Sustainable Thought Award** recognises demonstrated leadership, innovation and achievement in addressing matters of food security, beyond production, through sustainable food practices.

Through the awards program, the Banksia Foundation raises the profile of the current sustainability issues facing Australia, empowering others to further progress towards sustainable development in Australia.

Since its establishment in 1989, the Banksia Foundation has recognised over 400 individuals, organisations and companies across Australia who, through their tireless efforts in making a positive difference to our environment, have forged a path towards a more sustainable future for generations to come.

The **Banksia Food for Sustainable Thought Award** recognises demonstrated leadership, innovation and achievement in addressing matters of food security, beyond production, through sustainable food practices.

Key areas of this award are food security, stakeholder engagement and education and submissions are encouraged from Government,

business, community, organisations, educational institutions, not-for-profits, social enterprises and individuals.

For further information about the Banksia Awards, including details of other categories, criteria, as well as the entry and judging process, visit the Banksia Foundation website at banksiafdn.com/

All submissions must be received by 24 July 2017.

Key areas of this award are food security, stakeholder engagement and education and submissions are encouraged from Government, business, community, organisations, educational institutions, not-for-profits, social enterprises and individuals.

FSANZ – Work plan outlining proposed changes to the Food Standards Code out for comment

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has called for submissions on its work plan.

The work plan outlines the applications and proposals to change the Food Standards Code that FSANZ is working on, including expected timing of calls for submissions and for finalising projects.

FSANZ Acting Chief Executive Officer Peter May said the work plan is a particularly important document for stakeholders who want to stay up to date with progress on applications and proposals.

The FSANZ work plan is a three-year plan and is required to be published by 30 June each year and revised quarterly, although FSANZ updates the plan more frequently.

The closing date for submissions is 13 June 2017.

For more information on how to make a submission, and to access the FSANZ work plan, visit:

foodstandards.gov.au/media/Pages/Work-plan-outlining-proposed-changes-to-the-Food-Standards-Code-out-for-comment.aspx

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New resources

- Annual Food Testing Report 2015-2016
- Manufacturing and Wholesale Inspection Program – Information Pack
- Cut Melons Survey
- Risk Assessment of the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme
- Risk Assessment of the Seafood Food Safety Scheme
- Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance Policy
- Biosecurity and Food Safety Enforcement Policy

All resources listed above are available on our website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

MEAT



This industry sector has recorded an improvement in compliance rate of

96%

of this period.

The improvement in the compliance rate was a result of the introduction of the Audit Notification letter which was implemented in October 2016.

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 510 inspections and 1,259 audits of licensed meat businesses were conducted. This industry sector has recorded an improvement in compliance rate of 96% for this period.

The improvement in the compliance rate was a result of the introduction of the Audit Notification letter which was implemented in October 2016. Licensees are now being provided with these letters to advise that their audit has been scheduled. This is having a positive impact on the compliance level as licensees are reviewing their documents and ensuring they are audit ready. The improved compliance rate is also attributed to the successful implementation of the updated Retail Meat Food Safety Program & Retail Dairy for licensees, who have provided positive feedback to compliance staff during audits.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the meat sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	1244	1259
Total inspections	659	510
Acceptable audit rate	86%	96%

MEAT

Meat Industry Consultative Council, April 2017

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 12 April included:

Figures from the **Food Safety Program Compliance Report**, 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 include 1,382 audits (59 failed audits) and 553 inspections (27 failed inspections). There were 134 overall enforcement actions, including the issue of 95 Improvement notices, 32 penalty notices, 4 warning letters, 1 prohibition order and 2 seizures.

The Committee noted the top three audit items where issues were identified during the period were within process control (35%), hygiene & sanitation (15%), and analytical testing (13%).

However, it was noted that there was an increase in compliance rates across all top four licence permissions (Meat Processing, Meat Processing RTE, Meat Retail and Meat Retail RTE). This is as a result of changes recently implemented in the retail meat audit program.

The Committee noted the top three audit items where issues were identified during the period were within process control (35%), hygiene & sanitation (15%), and analytical testing (13%).

The current overall compliance rate for the meat industry sector is 95.2% which is a significant improvement on the previous reporting period which was 87%. This is very positive and a good result for the sector.

An update was given to the Committee on developments of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy**. Members were advised that along with the data available from the MLA study done in 2014 which showed low levels of antibiotic resistance in cattle, with the assistance of DPI, the MLA and APL are undertaking additional and similar studies to look at the prevalence of antimicrobials in sheep, lambs and pigs. Added to that, the Department is partnering in a three-year study which looks at the prevalence of *Campylobacter* in NSW. These studies will also be used to get a good understanding of antimicrobial resistance levels.

Across the board it is anticipated there will be good data about the low prevalence of critical antimicrobial use in the primary industry sector.

Members were advised that the updated **Retail Meat Food Safety Program & Retail Diary** was successfully implemented with licensees from 1 December 2016. The updated program focuses on achieving outcomes and as a result there has been a noticeable improvement in audit compliance rates. It has also received positive feedback from licensees.

Members noted a paper regarding the successful implementation of changes within the **retail meat audit program to improve audit compliance rates in this sector**. These initiatives included: provision of an audit notification letter to licensees advising that their audit has been scheduled, provision of updated audit guidance to auditors outlining expectations when identifying corrective actions and a review of all failed audits to ensure they have been completed in line with audit guidance and policies and to reinforce transparency in the process.

The implementation of these initiatives has seen the audit compliance rate reach its 95% target level which continues to be maintained.

The Council was advised that ***Campylobacter* has now been approved by the Department of Health as a notifiable disease**. This will assist in providing more data on this pathogen and give a better idea of its prevalence.

Other items discussed included an update on the **NLIS Traceability Project, retail delicatessen and *Listeria monocytogenes* survey, National Abattoir & Poultry Standards & Guidelines Projects** as well as an update on the **Biosecurity legislation program** (refer to article *Biosecurity Legislation – update*).

SEAFOOD

White Spot

White Spot is a contagious viral disease of crustaceans that was detected in a prawn farm in south east QLD last December. White Spot infects crustaceans, but poses no risk to human health. The outbreak is being managed by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries who are working closely with the QLD prawn industry to contain the outbreak and eradicate it.

Protection of the NSW prawn industry is paramount.

While there is currently no evidence of White Spot in NSW, to help minimise the risk of it being introduced, the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has established an importation order that places restrictions on the importation into NSW of any uncooked decapod crustaceans (such as prawns, crabs, yabbies, Moreton Bay bugs and lobsters) as well as polychaete worms (such as marine bait worms) from a designated area encompassing all affected areas in south east QLD.

White Spot is a contagious viral disease of crustaceans that was detected in a prawn farm in south east QLD last December. White Spot infects crustaceans, but poses no risk to human health.

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 328 inspections and 191 audits of licensed seafood businesses were conducted. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate of 93% with no serious enforcement actions being taken.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the seafood sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	228	191
Total inspections	152	328
Acceptable audit rate	88%	93%

In addition, all fittings that have been used to catch decapod crustaceans or polychaete worms within the closed area are prohibited from entry into NSW unless they have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being used in NSW waters.

NSW DPI has maintained regular contact with prawn farms in NSW as well as commercial fishers with prawn endorsements. Regular communication will continue to all key stakeholders including recreational fishers reminding them that prawns meant for human consumption should not be used as bait.

Surveillance in NSW is also underway, with samples from each of the three prawn farms in production currently

being tested. Some testing of prawns from commercial farms have already occurred as well as some limited samples of wild prawns from NSW, all have returned negative results.

The outbreak is being managed by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries who are working closely with the QLD prawn industry to contain the outbreak and eradicate it.



Inspections of fishing vessels



Conducting inspections on fishing vessels that are in continuous operation has proved challenging in the past for officers in the Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance team.

As a result, a dedicated fishing vessel inspection program was recently implemented to ensure that licensed vessels receive inspections at the required frequency. This involves officers contacting licensees directly to organise an inspection time that is suitable to all parties, and that does not impact their normal operations.

The inspections have identified that licensees are maintaining their vessels to an extremely high standard.

To date, over 330 vessels have been inspected with additional inspections scheduled each week. The inspections have identified that licensees are maintaining their vessels to an extremely high standard with 99% resulting in an acceptable result.

Carbon monoxide treatment of fish

In November 2016, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) issued 'Imported Food Notice 19/16 (Carbon monoxide treatment of fish)' advising importers of restrictions on the use of carbon monoxide in the processing of fish, and to advise fish importers of steps required to ensure they only import fish that complies with the *Imported Food Control Act 1992*.

The notice was issued in response to allegations that some suppliers of fish are using carbon monoxide during fish processing operations – which also has the potential to mislead consumers by hiding the age and condition of fish.

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code includes provisions

restricting carbon monoxide in fish which include:

Standard 1.3.1, which regulates the use of colours and colour fixatives in food (food additives), does not permit the use of carbon monoxide in fish.

Standard 1.3.3—4 expressly prohibits the use of carbon monoxide in the processing of fish where its use results in a change to, or fixes the colour of, the flesh of the fish.

Under the *Imported Food Control Act 1992*, importers are responsible for ensuring the food they import complies with Australian food standards and should take all reasonable steps to ensure imported fish has not been treated with carbon monoxide.

Importers are responsible for ensuring the food they import complies with Australian food standards and should take all reasonable steps to ensure imported fish has not been treated with carbon monoxide.

More information, including steps importers need to consider before importing fish can be found on DAWR's website at agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/food/notices/ifn-19-16

DAIRY



FORUM: Country of Origin labelling for the dairy industry



Dairy Australia, with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), is presenting a forum for the dairy industry on the new country of origin labelling requirements.

While the new scheme commenced on 1 July 2016, full details have now been released in the lead up to the new requirements becoming mandatory on 1 July 2018. Further information is available here: foodlabels.industry.gov.au/

The forum will provide an opportunity for the ACCC to outline the new requirements, with a focus specifically on implications for Australian dairy products. This will be followed by an open discussion on dairy issues, with an opportunity to ask questions.

This forum will aim to help businesses comply with the new requirements and ensure labelling decisions are based on consistent and comprehensive information directly from the regulator. An opportunity to participate in the discussion either in person, or via web is available – see details (right).

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 78 inspections and 428 audits of licensed dairy businesses were conducted. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 99% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and this has been maintained for an extended period due to the correct implementation of food safety controls. The third party auditor (TPA) program for dairy farms continued to maintain a high standard across this sector.

There were no serious enforcement actions taken against licensed dairy business during this period.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the dairy sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	347	428
Total inspections	145	78
Acceptable audit rate	93%	99%

FORUM DETAILS

Date: Tuesday 13 June 2017

Time: 10:30am – 12:00pm AEST

Venue: Dairy Australia, The Paddock
Level 4, IBM Centre
60 City Road, Southbank

- Register to attend in person: go.pardot.com/l/99032/2017-05-09/7srh2v
- Register to join the meeting via the web: go.pardot.com/l/99032/2017-05-10/7srh3g

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This forum will aim to help businesses comply with the new requirements and ensure labelling decisions are based on consistent and comprehensive information directly from the regulator. An opportunity to participate in the discussion either in person, or via web is available.



Evaluation of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme

The Food Authority is seeking feedback from dairy farmers, dairy transport operators and dairy factories on how to improve dairy food safety in NSW. An independent research company has been commissioned to survey NSW dairy licensees in the next few weeks.

This work is part of an evaluation of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme (the Scheme) which is one of six food safety schemes administered by the Food Authority and forms an important part of its day-to-day operations.

The purpose of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme is to:

- Ensure food for sale is both safe and suitable for human consumption

- Prevent misleading conduct in connection with the sale of food
- Provide for the application in NSW of the Food Standards Code

The administration work includes licensing of over 1,000 businesses, management of a third-party auditor program for primary producers, auditing of manufacturing and milk transport businesses, investigating foodborne illnesses and provision of educational material to assist industries with their food regulation compliance obligations.

To ensure food safety schemes continue to be effective and efficient, regular evaluations need to be conducted to identify if improvements need to be made.

While the Dairy Food Safety Scheme is one of the longest running food safety schemes administered by the Food Authority, this is the first time it has undergone a formal evaluation.

The evaluation will:

- Document the current implementation of the Scheme
- Compare the Scheme's objectives with achievements and recommend improvements if required
- Determine if efficiencies can be gained through risk analysis
- Document benchmarks at key control points in the supply chain

If you would like more information regarding the Scheme evaluation process, email elizabeth.devries@foodauthority.nsw.gov.au

Raw Milk Cheese Decision Support Tool - now available



Roquefort is the most popular raw milk cheese in France

The Raw Milk Cheese Decision Support Tool was developed to assist cheese producers and food safety managers to assess whether

a particular raw milk cheese, and process, satisfies Australian regulations for the safe production of raw milk cheeses.

The tool includes modules to check against requirements for milk quality and to evaluate cheese processing activities. Approval must be obtained from the food safety regulator in each jurisdiction before raw milk cheese can be produced.

The Raw Milk Cheese Decision Support Tool is now available to download and can be accessed at foodsafetycentre.com.au/RMCtool.php

The tool includes modules to check against requirements for milk quality and to evaluate cheese processing activities. Approval must be obtained from the food safety regulator in each jurisdiction before raw milk cheese can be produced.

EGGS

Egg Industry Consultative Committee, March 2017

Issues considered by the committee at its meeting in Sydney on 7 March included:

Figures from the **Food Safety Program Compliance Report**, 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 identified that 107 audits, 2 failed audits, 38 inspections, 4 foodborne illness investigations were carried out; and 3 Prohibition Orders, 4 Improvement Notices, 6 Penalty Notices and 14 Corrective Action Requests (CARs) were issued.

The Committee noted the top three areas where issues were identified during the period were within construction, hygiene & sanitation, and process control.

The low level of enforcement actions highlight the high compliance rate for the period, which was 95%.

The Committee noted the top three areas where issues were identified during the period were within construction, hygiene & sanitation, and process control.

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 20 inspections and 107 audits of licensed egg businesses were conducted. This industry sector has recorded a high compliance rate with 100% of businesses recording an acceptable audit.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the egg sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	81	107
Total inspections	49	20
Acceptable audit rate	96%	100%

An update was given to the Committee on developments of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy**. Members were advised that the Commonwealth is looking at improved surveillance for the food supply chain, and one of the areas identified was higher resistance to antibiotics coming in from overseas. It was confirmed that a Contract had been signed by the Commonwealth and that AECL were involved in the development of this. They acknowledged that this process was a great opportunity for the egg industry which is a relatively low user of antimicrobials both nationally and internationally compared to other industries and advised they were looking to take a leadership role to frame consideration of this matter.

Other items discussed included an update on **Foodborne illness** (refer to article *Salmonella snapshot*), **Review of Egg Stamping Implementation in NSW** (refer to article *Egg Stamping Implementation Review*), and a **Biosecurity legislation program** update (refer to article *Biosecurity Legislation – update*).

An update was given to the Committee on developments of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy**. Members were advised that the Commonwealth is looking at improved surveillance for the food supply chain.

EGGS

Salmonella snapshot



Salmonellosis cases linked to *S. Typhimurium* (pictured) are on the decline

Australia has higher salmonellosis rates (human illness) than Wales, England, Canada, New Zealand and USA. While recent data from NSW Health show that the overall number of *Salmonella* cases is still trending up, something interesting is happening with *Salmonella* Typhimurium (*S. Typhimurium*) rates across the country over the last couple of years.

Australia has higher salmonellosis rates (human illness) than Wales, England, Canada, New Zealand and USA. While recent data from NSW Health show that the overall number of *Salmonella* cases is still trending up, something interesting is happening with *Salmonella* Typhimurium (*S. Typhimurium*) rates across the country over the last couple of years.

S. Typhimurium has been the dominant subtype across Australia, typically accounting for over half of all salmonellosis cases up to 2014. It was also commonly found on farm, and linked to many raw egg outbreaks.

However, the recent data shows that after 2014, Salmonellosis cases linked to *S. Typhimurium* are on the decline.

In fact, NSW outperformed other states with a 39% decrease since 2014 compared to a national average decrease of 24%.

NSW outperformed other states with a 39% decrease since 2014 compared to a national average decrease of 24%.

There are several factors which have likely contributed to such a large decline in NSW. These include:

- A commitment and a focus from all industry sectors and NSW DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety to work together to see a reduction in salmonellosis cases
- Development of the NSW Food Authority *Food Safety Guidelines for the Preparation of Raw Egg Products*
- Adopting a tough approach on raw egg products
- Training for local government EHOs in raw egg guidelines and enforcement, and
- Revamped Food Safety Supervisor modules focussing on raw egg products and cleaning and sanitising.

While this is positive news regarding *S. Typhimurium*, unfortunately other types of *Salmonella* are still on the increase. NSW has a target to reduce foodborne illness by 30% by the year 2021 and to meet this goal we will all need to show continued commitment to improving standards to help turn the overall rate towards decline.

EGGS

Review of Egg Stamping Implementation in NSW

The NSW Food Authority has reviewed the implementation of mandatory NSW egg stamping requirements that were introduced in November 2014 under the National *Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Products*.

The review considered implementation costs and egg producers' experiences and sentiments regarding egg stamping and its implementation.

A total of 100 NSW egg producers representing over 95 percent of NSW egg production capacity were surveyed during the review and it was pleasing to learn there was overwhelming industry support for the egg stamping requirement.

The review found that implementation costs for hen eggs were generally between half and two thirds lower than the costs estimated by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission when the national egg standard was being developed. Implementation costs for duck and quail eggs were higher than hen eggs and the Food Authority will undertake further work in an effort to reduce these costs.

The review also showed that egg producers valued the improved product traceability in terms of both food safety and product integrity, for example identifying where egg substitution was occurring in the marketplace.

100 NSW egg producers representing over 95% of NSW egg production capacity were surveyed during the review.

The final report, *Review of Egg Stamping Implementation in NSW* is available to download from the Food Authority website at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/industry/egg_stamping_review.pdf

Free range egg labelling – new national information standard



After a lengthy consultation period with industry and consumer groups, the new national free range egg information standard came into effect on 26 April 2017.

The new information standard, registered under the Australian Consumer Law, states the meaning of the term free range eggs as eggs laid by hens that:

- had meaningful and regular access to an outdoor range during daylight hours during the laying cycle
- were able to roam and forage on the outdoor range
- were subject to a stocking density of 10,000 hens per hectare or less

In addition all eggs labelled as 'free range' must have the stocking density prominently displayed on the packaging.

For further information on the term 'free range' as well as labelling and display requirements, you can access the *Australian Consumer Law (Free Range Egg Labelling) Information Standard 2017* as well as the Explanatory Statement on the Federal Register of Legislation at legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017L00474

The information standard has a 12 month transition period and commences on 26 April 2018.

PLANTS

Rockmelons and Food Safety



In July 2016, the National Food Incident Response Protocol was activated in response to an outbreak of *Salmonella* that affected multiple states and territory jurisdictions. The incident received widespread media coverage and resulted in significant market interruption and financial loss for the company at the centre of the outbreak. Over 150 people were infected with *Salmonella* after consuming contaminated rockmelons.

Significant food safety failures on the farm (based in the Northern Territory), including the washing and handling of melons, were contributing factors to the outbreak occurring. These issues are not new, with previous outbreaks also occurring overseas and in Australia in 2006.

Following the 2016 *Salmonella* outbreak, staff at the NSW Department of Primary Industries conducted a food safety training workshop for rockmelon growers in the Griffith area, ahead of the local harvest season commencing around February 2017.

The workshop was held in November 2016 and attended by most growers in the area. The workshop covered the key food safety risks in rockmelon growing and packing, and a summary of the 2016 outbreak. All growers

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 29 inspections and 67 audits of licensed plant product businesses were conducted. This industry sector has recorded a compliance rate of 90%.

The table shows comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the plant sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	51	67
Total inspections	42	29
Acceptable audit rate	81%	90%

thought the workshop was useful and were confident that food safety risks would be addressed with some minor modifications to their processes.

The workshop was followed up with food safety compliance inspections, and testing of wash water quality for *Salmonella*, chemical sanitiser strength and pH. The inspections identified areas of concern, including:

- a lack of sufficient sanitiser strength in wash water used in packing
- high pH levels which would have rendered the sanitiser levels ineffective
- hygiene of the packing equipment and sheds which increased the risk of *Salmonella* contamination, and
- a failure of industry audit/oversight to identify these issues

All growers took steps to address these risks once identified, and no food safety incidents were linked to rockmelons during the harvest season.

A further workshop was held with major retailers, the Australian Melon Association, and other groups in late April 2017 to discuss the findings of inspection in the Griffith area. An outcome of this meeting is that retailers will investigate strengthening requirements for rockmelon producers and guidance for auditors who inspect packing operations on behalf of supermarkets. This is likely to be achieved through the Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (HARPS), which seeks to streamline auditing across the supermarket chains and ensure that key food safety risks are identified and managed. The approach through HARPS should ensure a high level of awareness and risk management for rockmelon producers in Australia, and reduce the likelihood of a major incident.

VULNERABLE PERSONS



Central Processing Unit Inspection Project



Following a significant foodborne illness outbreak in aged care facilities in early 2015, it was determined that a review of the policy and procedures implemented by both the NSW Food Authority and individual facilities should be conducted.

The NSW Food Authority licenses 11 facilities as a Central Processing Unit (CPU) under the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme. These facilities produce approx. 90,000 meals per day which are distributed to various hospital and aged care facilities across NSW.

What we did

Between July 2015 and June 2016, Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance Officers conducted in-depth inspections of all licensed CPU facilities to determine if the food safety controls being used within the industry are adequate and effective.

A project specific checklist was developed and used to determine each facility's compliance with their

Inspections and audits

From October 2016 to March 2017, 159 inspections and 817 audits of licensed hospitals and aged care businesses were conducted. This industry sector has maintained a high compliance rate with 99% 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 comparable data for compliance and audit activity in the vulnerable persons sector between the same reporting periods for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017.

Reporting period	Oct '15 – Mar '16	Oct '16 – Mar '17
Total audits	800	817
Total inspections	208	159
Acceptable audit rate	98%	99%

food safety program and with the provisions of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) and *Food Act 2003* (NSW).

The project also examined the controls recommended by the NSW Food Authority's *Guidelines for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons* as well as the audit policies and procedures.

The 11 facilities were inspected with the following processing activities assessed:

- Short shelf life cook chill (n=8)
- Extended shelf life cook chill (n=7)
- Cook Fresh (n=3)
- Fresh cut fruit and vegetables (n=3)
- Vacuum packaged RTE meats (n=3)
- Frozen meals (n=2)

Nine of the facilities were inspected by two senior officers over a 2-day period with an average inspection time of 18 hours per facility. Two small facilities plating frozen foods had a 1 day inspection. These increased assessment times were required to ensure that all food processing operations could be reviewed in detail to ensure that the food safety control systems were fit for purpose and effective.

What we found

This industry maintains a very high level of compliance with food safety standards.

This project has identified a number of areas that can be further improved to ensure that all food produced within this sector is done so within accepted

VULNERABLE PERSONS



best practice standards. The project has also recommended that additional controls are implemented within this sector, such as mandated product testing, to ensure that businesses can demonstrate their high levels of food safety controls. The Department has informed industry of these recommendations and they have been welcomed.

The outcome

The inspections highlighted several areas for improvement in both the audit process and at the licensed CPU facilities.

Recommended minimum audit times have been introduced for Third Party Auditors (TPA) to ensure that they are allowing sufficient time to audit larger facilities.

Reports of each inspection were provided to the facility and those that received a marginal or unacceptable outcome received a follow up audit to ensure corrective actions were taken to fix outstanding issues. An additional review of these facilities will take place in 2017.

A number of actions identified as a result of the inspections have already been completed. These actions include (but not limited to):

- Update TPA Manuals to include information on recommended minimum audit hours. This change has been communicated to TPA's as well as to the sector
- Conduct a training session on allergens and labelling

- Develop and distribute a labelling cheat sheet
- Distribute copies of the Food Recalls and Withdrawals fact sheets as well as the Process Flow Chart.

The introduction of mandatory microbiological testing for CPU facilities producing extended shelf life cook chill products, vacuum packaged RTE meat and texture modified foods is being considered to ensure that these processes are routinely validated as producing safe food.

This industry maintains a very high level of compliance with food safety standards.

Risk Assessment of the Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme

The NSW Food Authority recently updated the risk assessment for food service to vulnerable persons.

This risk assessment examines new scientific literature and information, considers feedback from industry on practical risk management measures, examines outbreak data and uses the collective evidence to support existing risk management approaches or suggest alternative approaches.

At the time the risk assessment was undertaken, there were 1,471 facilities licensed with the Food Authority to serve food to vulnerable persons using a variety of preparation methods, which include:

- preparation and serving of raw or ready-to-eat (RTE) foods
- preparation and serving of freshly cooked foods (cook fresh or cook serve)
- preparation and serving of previously cooked foods without further heating (leftovers)
- serving of foods previously cooked using cook chill (with or without reheating).

The risk assessment examines the food safety hazards associated with these methods and the control measures specified by the Food Authority and implemented by

businesses. The assessment recognises the need to find the right balance between protecting the patients/residents from foodborne hazards and maintaining a sufficiently nutritious and interesting diet to ensure their quality of life.

You can access the updated Risk Assessment of the Vulnerable persons food safety scheme at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/scienceandtechnical/risk_assessment_vulnerable_persons.pdf

MANUFACTURING

Call for submissions – The form of the food ('as prepared') rules for the Health Star Rating System



The Health Star Rating (HSR) Advisory Committee (HSRAC), responsible for overseeing the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the HSR system, is reappraising the form of the food ('as prepared') rules in *The Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator*.

The Health Star Rating (HSR) Advisory Committee (HSRAC), responsible for overseeing the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the HSR system, is reappraising the form of the food ('as prepared') rules in *The Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator* (healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/guide-for-industry-document).

The *Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator* includes provisions for products that may be unfairly compared to other products when based on the form of the food as presented for sale. This covers items such as powdered soup, sauce mixes or drink flavourings, which are not intended to be consumed as sold and must be prepared prior to consumption, and which once prepared can reasonably be compared with similar products. However, products may be prepared in multiple ways despite specific directions or instructions for preparation. As a consequence the HSR, calculated according to current guidance, may not be representative of the way that the product is being prepared and consumed and may be misleading in these instances.

On 28 April 2017 the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation noted suggestions from stakeholders to improve the HSR system, including the 'as prepared' rules, and asked the HSRAC to address these concerns as a matter of priority.

The Guide for Industry to the HSR Calculator includes provisions for products that may be unfairly compared to other products when based on the form of the food as presented for sale.

The first stage of public consultations on the 'as prepared' rules is now open. It is primarily intended to support:

- validation or rejection of the issues raised; and
- the identification of potential options for the 'as prepared' rules.

Submissions can be made on the Australian Department of Health's Consultation Hub at consultations.health.gov.au/population-health-and-sport-division/as-prepared-rules-for-the-hsr-system/

This initial public consultation on the 'as prepared' rules will close at 11.59 pm 30 June 2017.

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MANUFACTURING

Information Pack for food manufacturers and wholesalers

An information pack was recently developed for businesses within the NSW Food Authority's Manufacturing and Wholesale Inspection Program (MWIP).

While businesses that manufacture or wholesale food in NSW are not required to be licensed with the Food Authority, they are required to have inspections, and to notify the Food Authority of their operations.

The MWIP is based on risk and performance. The type of food being produced will determine the Priority Risk Classification assigned to the business and the frequency of inspections conducted by the Food Authority

- P1 - Annual Inspections
- P2 - Inspection every 24 months
- P3 - Business may be subject to an inspection if a complaint is received about the business or its products or as part of a compliance operation undertaking monitoring on a category or sector of the food industry.

Additional inspections will be undertaken for businesses where food safety issues have been identified during an inspection. The Food Authority will provide formal clarification to food businesses about their risk rating and inspection requirements.

It is the responsibility of food businesses to identify food safety

issues, implement measures to control risk and remain up to date with legislative requirements to ensure they are producing safe food for their customers.

The MWIP Information Pack contains important information to advise businesses what they need to do to be inspection ready and ensure their food safety obligations are met.

The *Manufacturing and Wholesale Inspection Program Information Pack* can be found at foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/industry/manufacturers-and-wholesalers

foodpro 2017 returns to Sydney for 50th year

foodpro, Australasia's iconic food manufacturing event, returns 16 – 19 July 2017 to the new International Convention Centre at Sydney's Darling Harbour.

Since it first ran in 1967, foodpro has played an important role in the growth of the food processing, manufacturing and packaging industries, contributing to the development and significance of the industry.

foodpro 2017 provides a unique opportunity to connect, network and do business with industry peers. The event will showcase products and innovations from specialist suppliers

around Australia and the world, relevant to all aspects of the food manufacturing industry including: meat and seafood, value-add processing, beverages, dairy, fresh food and shelf foods.

The event will feature four key precincts: food processing technology, food packaging, plant equipment and food technology. A new initiative will also be launched in partnership with Food Innovation Australia Ltd (FIAL): The Supply Chain Integrity Zone will focus on traceability and audit compliance solutions for small manufacturers.

foodpro will also co-locate with the 50th Annual Convention of Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology (AIFST).

EVENT INFO

When: 16 – 19 July 2017

Opening Hours: Sun: 11am - 5pm;
Mon & Tue: 10am - 5pm;
Wed: 10am - 3pm

Where: Sydney International Convention Centre Darling Harbour

Registration: Register online for free entry at foodproexh.com/wise using promo code WISE

Continued from front page...



Low THC hemp seeds will soon be able to be used in food products such as smoothies, salads, pastas and cereals

Welcoming the decision, NSW Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair said the approval was exciting news for the existing hemp industry, allowing it to continue to thrive and produce a healthy and sustainable product for consumers.

“It’s already sold in more than 21 developed countries including the USA, Canada and the UK – it is now time for Australians to reap the benefits,” Minister Blair said.

A 2012 report prepared by the Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) estimated the approval of low THC hemp as a food could potentially increase the total Australian hemp seed yield from 93 tonnes in 2011, of which most was grown in NSW, to between 250 and 380 tonnes per annum.

Minister Blair said low THC hemp was already legally grown in NSW under strict licensing conditions and it is a hardy and sustainable crop that has enormous potential for both domestic and export markets.

“It is set to provide a major economic boost, particularly in our regional areas,” he said.

“This is an exciting time for food producers and the industry at large.

The NSW Government supports innovation and I cannot wait to see low THC hemp seed on our menus mixed with our salads, pastas and cereals.

“To put some perspective around potential market value, in the US alone the Hemp Industries Association estimates the value of hemp based foods, supplements and body care sales to be between US\$150-170 million per annum.”

Australian producers are already working on developing drought resistant varieties for domestic and international markets to further improve its viability as a crop.

The decision to amend the Food Standards Code comes with provisions imposing strict limits on the levels of THC and cannabidiol (CBD) allowed in hemp foods and also prevents the marketing and labelling of the foods to suggest psychoactive effects or branding that links it to illicit cannabis.

Existing concerns raised by some agencies regarding impacts the approval may have on roadside drug testing have been addressed through consumption trials undertaken as part of the approval process.

Forum members were satisfied with findings of that trial showing it was highly unlikely consumption of low THC foods will result in a positive road side reading.

There will be a six month implementation timeframe before the amendment to the Food Standards Code comes into effect.