

## Summary of meeting outcomes

### Meat Industry Consultative Council

31 August 2016

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The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 31 August 2016. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

#### **Food safety program compliance report (July to December 2015)**

The Council noted the food safety compliance report for the meat and poultry sector during the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. During this period there were 2371 acceptable rated audits (with 71% A rated, 24% B rated and 5% C rated), with 384 failed audits (13.9%). It was noted that the meat industry sector has maintained a compliance rate of 87% of businesses recording an acceptable audit result and licence numbers have remained steady along the number of audits being completed. Inspections undertaken during the period included 1611 acceptable rated inspections with 268 failed inspections (8.5% failure rate).

The top three audit items that had higher observed levels of critical issues during the period were Process Control, Hygiene and sanitation, and Analytical testing. The Food Authority is developing strategies to address these specific areas by publishing the auditor guidance document to focus more on inherent food safety risks, by updating the Meat Retail Food Safety Program for implementation in 2016/17, and by developing and incorporating targeted training programs into the sector. A further breakdown on audit data from the key meat license permissions was noted.

Enforcement activities during the period included the issue of 271 improvement notices, 95 penalty notices, 3 warning letters and 3 prohibition orders to businesses in the meat and poultry sector as well as several product seizures. There were no reported food-borne illness outbreaks in the sector during the reporting period.

#### **Abattoir NLIS Operation Mary**

Members received an update on Operation Mary, a project being conducted by the NSW DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety compliance team to monitor traceability compliance throughout the production chain from producers to saleyards and to abattoir processors. The assessment team has conducted inspections of sixteen sheep and goat abattoirs, focussing on National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and/or equivalent documentation for sheep and goat consignments; completeness and accuracy of mob based NVDs; uploading of data and timelines to the NLIS data base, to inform the overall traceability of carcass to Property Identification Code (PIC).

Generally in NSW all plants had a very high rate of compliance. The common issue in the saleyard and abattoir project was property to property transfer with the biggest non-compliance area being the requirement for a farmer to record all applicable PIC's that the animals had been on for the NVD. All recommendations in the final report will be actioned over the next 12 months and a further update will be provided to Council members.

#### **Country of Origin legislation reforms**

A paper was tabled outlining changes to the Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) requirements for food which will move from the Food Standards Code to come under the Australian Consumer Law. The new standard commenced on 1 July 2016 but stakeholders have a 24 month transition period for compliance to 1 July 2018.

The Council was advised that the ACCC has developed extensive guides which are available on their web-site to enable businesses to seek more answers and information. This includes an on-line decision tool to assist businesses in deciding on types of labels to display on their foods. For specific questions it was suggested members should contact the ACCC.

### **AWOSS training update**

Members were advised of two upcoming opportunities for industry to participate in nationally recognised Animal Welfare Officer Skill Set training (AWOSS) programs.

The first opportunity is free training being offered by the Food Authority to red meat abattoirs to the end of the year in partnership with TAFE NSW (and may continue into 2017 support dependant). This course involves an 8 hour workshop and practical assessment at a NSW working abattoir. A NSW domestic processor workshop has been scheduled for 24 September.

The Food Authority also supports a poultry processing AWOSS program in partnership with the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE (SQIT). This two day course will attract some training costs (costs for the theory component to be absorbed by the Food Authority). If plants want to do the practical component with the trainer then additional costs will be incurred by the company. Further information and dates on when this training will be held will be distributed to members. The Council supported the proposed industry training opportunities.

### **National Anti Microbial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019**

The Council received a presentation on the national strategy developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Department of Agriculture in partnership with government and industry stakeholders to minimise the spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to ensure that over time there is continued access to effective antimicrobials. This strategy has been developed because of global issues with increasing resistance to modern drugs and medicines in both human and animal health.

The key objectives of the strategy are to increase awareness and understanding of AMR and its implications; to implement effective AMR practices across human health and animal care settings to ensure appropriate prescribing and use; to develop nationally coordinated surveillance of AMR and antimicrobial usage; and to conduct further research and partner on development of new antibiotics.

In NSW preliminary scoping work to progress the national AMR strategy has been undertaken between NSW DPI and NSW Health, and further workshops will be held to determine next steps and responsibilities. In terms of potential impact on the meat and poultry industry, there may be a review of current AMR use by the industry and surveillance opportunities through the use of new or existing testing data from producers. Further updates will be provided to the Council.

### **FSP implementation**

Members noted an update on the targeted audit improvement training and education program for the retail meat sector which was completed during the last quarter of the 2015/16 financial year using a revised Food Safety Program (FSP). The program was well received by businesses and demonstrated that only a few minor amendments will be required to the FSP document prior to its final completion and roll out to the wider industry later in the year. Copies will be provided to the Australian Meat Industry Council when available.

### **OIE PVS Evaluation Report – Australia**

A report was tabled for information on an audit conducted late last year by a European team of four OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) certified PVS (Performance of Veterinary Services) assessors against Australia's OIE PVS methodology. The OIE team visited sites and institutions in all Australian States and Territories and met with government, public and private sector vets, livestock producers, and other stakeholders.

The highlights of their observations included:

- Shortage of veterinary personnel and laboratory capacity, especially in smaller jurisdictions. In the event of a biosecurity issue this would be difficult.
- There was a perceived conflict of interest in terms of systems for employing meat inspectors in some Australian abattoirs (with company employed meat inspectors at domestic abattoirs and Australian Government Accredited Veterinarians involved in the export of live animals contracted by the private sector). They are interested in the approval and training process for accredited inspectors.
- Effective veterinary inspection and management of on-farm of diseases.

A task group of Commonwealth and jurisdictional representatives has met to review findings of the evaluation and to work through issues raised.

### **Regulation of Australian Agriculture – Productivity Commission report**

The Council noted an update on the Productivity Commission review on the burden of regulation on Australian farm businesses. The report covered a broad range of issues and was released for public consultation on 21 July 2016. Public submissions for the draft report are now closed.

### **Meat Industry Levy (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006**

Members received an update on the staged repeal of *the Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2006*. A Regulatory Impact Statement and the proposed *Meat Industry (Meat Industry Levy) Regulation 2016* was released for public consultation from 23 May to 20 June 2016 and the proposed Regulation remakes the 2006 Regulation without amendments. This was supported by the NSW Farmers' Association at their 2016 Annual Conference and by the NSW MICC at the 13 April 2016 meeting. The 2016 Regulation was approved by the Governor on 10 August 2016 and will commence on 1 September 2016.

### **Communications update**

Members received an update on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the meat industry sector, including several articles in *Foodwise* and food safety related social media posts.

### **Biosecurity legislation update**

Council was updated on the development of new legislation under the Biosecurity Act 2015 being conducted by the Department. Work is underway to draft the Regulations and develop a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for stakeholder consultation towards the end of this year. It was noted that there will not be much change in the legislation that will impact on the meat and livestock sector, and emergency response procedures currently in place will not change. On the animal health side there will be some areas that will be of interest to members when the RIS is released for comment. The Food Authority will keep members updated on this process.

*The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held in early 2017 (date to be advised).*