



Meat Industry Consultative Council

Wednesday 12 August 2015

Summary of meeting outcomes

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 12 August 2015. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

NSW Food Safety Strategy

The Council received an overview on the NSW Food Safety Strategy for 2015-2021 which was released in February this year. The Strategy provided a good opportunity for the Food Authority to articulate the robust systems it has in place and its future direction and goals as Australia's first and only through-chain food regulatory agency that works across all the high risk sectors to manage food safety. In the Strategy the Food Authority recognises that food safety is a shared responsibility with government, industry and consumers. The Food Authority will continue to work closely with industry on targeting programs to increase food safety, mitigate risks and reduce the prevalence of foodborne illness in this state. Members acknowledged that the Food Authority's shared responsibility framework for food regulation with NSW Department of Primary Industries Biosecurity will continue to give greater certainty and confidence to NSW industry and consumers.

Food Safety Program compliance report 1 January to 30 June 2014

The Council noted the Food Safety Program compliance report for the meat and poultry sector for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. Activities during this period included 1,840 acceptable rated audits, 280 failed audits (13.2%) and 3,475 inspections (1.4% failure rate). In comparison to the previous financial year the failure rate for audits in the meat sector was 12% and 1.9% for inspections. There was an 11.5% non-compliance rate for the meat retail sector which has decreased over the last few years.

Graphs presenting comparative trend analysis for the meat and poultry sector over the last four years for the top four license permissions were noted, along with audit data analysis and distribution of critical defects identified at audit. It was noted that the defects have been standard across licence permissions with the vast majority related to the food safety program, analytical testing, and process control issues (such as cross contamination, cleaning and failure to complete monitoring records). The Food Authority will continue to target these areas during future audits and through its training programmes and communications with licensees.

Enforcement activities in the sector during the period were noted, including two prosecutions for breaches of the Food Standards Code relating to the prohibited use of sulphur dioxide (SO₂). The Food Authority will continue to provide more information to licensees about the risks associated with using these chemicals.

Members noted that the Food Authority's Audit Systems & Verification Unit is developing two projects for this financial year to look at what it can learn from the data it is collecting and to implement targeted compliance and educational programs to improve compliance rates across the meat retail sector.

KPMG report on impacts of food regulation in NSW

The Council noted a profile on the results of a KPMG study commissioned by the Food Authority in 2014 on the impacts of food regulation in NSW. As a regulator the Authority has responsibility to ensure the outcomes it achieves are done at minimal cost. The study was conducted to establish some independent evidence base on the impacts of food regulation through the supply chain in NSW, as well as to look at the benefits and opportunities for improvements. A report outlining the key findings for the meat sector was tabled, and members were advised that the full KPMG report will be published on the Food Authority website by the end of the year.

The Food Authority thanked and acknowledged the support of industry associations, businesses and individuals who had worked with KPMG to assist with this study.

FSANZ working group on microbiological criteria for poultry

The MICC received an overview on work currently underway by FSANZ to review microbiological criteria in the Food Standards Code. It was advised that as a means of progressing this, a decision had been made to form specific commodity based working groups to revise and/or develop additional guidance materials. The Food Authority will continue to liaise with FSANZ regarding the review process and timing for participation of relevant industry groups.

It was noted that work done by the Food Authority with SafeFood Queensland to develop Key Food Safety Indicator (KFSI) targets for poultry meat will be used in the review process. A draft guideline for process hygiene criteria in poultry is expected to be developed for further comment by regulators and industry in the next few months.

Pig rodenticide incident

The Council noted an update on work being undertaken to manage issues associated with rodenticide detections in offal from Australian piggeries. This issue had arisen following the detection of high levels of rodenticide in a Queensland piggery earlier in 2014 and consequent testing in export registered piggeries which had detected this residue in three facilities. This is now a national issue and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture has developed a draft MRL for 1st generation rodenticides in pork products which is currently in the FSANZ approval process.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries Biosecurity has developed a publication *Best practice use of rodenticides* for further information on this issue to assist the industry and can be found on the website.

Review of animal welfare systems at NSW non red meat abattoirs – Final report

The MICC noted the final report on the review of animal welfare systems at 35 non red meat abattoirs licensed in NSW which was commenced by the Food Authority during 2013 following an animal cruelty incident at a NSW turkey plant. The review showed a significant improvement in animal welfare controls in this industry sector with all abattoirs having fully documented animal welfare control systems in place which are assessed at the Food Authority's audits and by other certifying companies. Specialised animal welfare training has been provided to senior managers of large and medium abattoirs which will see continued improvement in animal welfare controls within these operations. Standardised technical control systems for small and medium abattoirs have been implemented to ensure that all abattoirs have comprehensive animal welfare controls in place and operating at the highest standard. The Food Authority will continue to conduct more targeted work with small producers. The report tabled at the meeting will also be available through the Food Authority's website.

Review of retail meat food safety plan – status report

A paper was tabled advising that the Food Authority has commenced a project to review and update the generic food safety program issued to licensed butcher shops in NSW (the retail meat food safety program). This is being conducted to ensure that the information on requirements in the program is up-to-date and specific yet easy to follow. It is intended that all licensed butcher shops in NSW will receive an inspection from a Food Authority auditor by 1 August 2016 where the new food safety program and monitoring book will be provided free of charge. Licensees will also be provided with detailed information on Country of Origin meat labelling during these inspections. This will give opportunity for licensees to discuss the requirements in the program and to raise any questions with the auditor.

It was also noted that another important document for meat retailers to be aware of on *Guidelines for the Safe Manufacture of Smallgoods* is available on the Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) website. This was prepared last year by the MLA in conjunction with the Australian Meat Industry Council.

Staged repeal of the Food Regulation 2010

A paper giving an update on the staged repeal of the *Food Regulation 2010* was tabled for information. Members were advised that the meat industry sector had given the highest response during the consultation period to the use of the Regulation and on the types of improvements they would like to see incorporated into the proposed Regulation. It is hoped that the new Regulation will come into effect on 30 October 2015.

Year in review – meat sector

The MICC noted a report entitled *A year in review – NSW meat food safety sector* which was tabled for information. The paper captures a summary of work done by the Food Authority in the last 12 months with particular emphasis on activities and achievements in the meat sector during that period. This information will inform the Food Authority's annual report to be published by the end of November 2015.

Communications update

Members noted a paper tabled providing 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 a factsheet and article in *Foodwise* issue 37 on Country of Origin labelling for unpackaged raw meat; the final report on the *Review of Animal Welfare Systems at NSW Non Red Meat Domestic Abattoirs*; and issue of the *Wild Meat Field Depot Food Safety Plan*.

The next meeting of the MICC will be held in early 2016.