

Meat Industry Consultative Council

Wednesday 28 August 2013

Summary of meeting outcomes

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 28 August 2013. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

Food safety program compliance report January to June 2013

The MICC received and noted an update on the Authority's compliance, enforcement and inspection activities during the period 1 January to 30 June 2013. It was noted that from the figures presented there were a high level of businesses receiving an 'A' rated audit. There are still issues in terms of compliance by some meat retailers, with the 14% failure rates substantially coming from the meat retail sector. Ensuing programs will be formulated to endeavour to reduce this failure rate. It was noted that only two of the 16 businesses that failed their follow up audit then failed a subsequent audit. It was advised that there are currently 11 meat businesses in the Audit Improvement Program (AIP) with a further 21 meat businesses being monitored to ascertain if they are to be returned to the regular monitoring program or added to the AIP.

Members noted that export poultry audits have resulted in all NSW export poultry abattoirs receiving an acceptable audit finding.

It was reported that the Authority is in the process of updating the generic food safety program for butchers; this will re-emphasise the importance and requirements around businesses having effective controls in place in relation to the use of preservatives and being fully compliant with labelling requirements.

During the reporting period there were two prosecutions in response to a food borne illness complaint; and there were 174 improvement notices and 34 penalty notices issued to businesses in the meat and poultry sector, with an increase in the number of businesses failing to comply with the permitted level of preservatives in their products. A number of warning letters were issued primarily for licensing and labelling breaches.

Red meat abattoir animal welfare assessment summary report

The MICC noted a paper on the compliance status of animal welfare requirements in NSW red meat domestic abattoirs. It was reported that all targets have been met and that all abattoirs are aware of the requirements. The report highlights the recommendations resulting from the review of all domestic red meat abattoirs and how these recommendations have been addressed. The Authority indicated that it appreciated the assistance provided with respect to the provision of industry training.

Poultry abattoir animal welfare assessment summary report

The MICC noted a paper on the compliance status of animal welfare requirements in NSW poultry and rabbit domestic abattoirs. It was reported that there is a high level of compliance with respect to animal welfare in these abattoirs, although for some small premises it is difficult to provide evidence to ensure that all animal welfare processes are robust. 33% of medium sized businesses and 67% of small businesses were found to have limited or inadequate documented animal welfare systems in their food safety programs. It was further noted that large businesses have good animal welfare systems in place. The Authority will be developing fact sheets to assist small operators to ensure that they can verify their processes and it is anticipated this will be completed by early 2014. A total of seven recommendations were found as part of the assessment and these are being addressed. Council members were asked to provide any comments with respect to this report at the next MICC meeting.

Poultry abattoir microbiological verification survey

Members noted a paper regarding the survey of existing pathogen monitoring systems currently undertaken by major poultry processors in NSW. The survey had been sent to processors to ascertain what data is being collected. Data is due to be received from processors by the end of September 2013. The results of the survey will be used in the development of process indicators to enable compliance with the Poultry Primary Production and Processing standard in order to reduce the levels of *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* in processing.

New country of origin labelling requirements for unpackaged meat

The MICC noted a paper on the present position for the country of origin labelling of unpackaged meat. On 18 July 2013, a revised country of origin labelling standard commenced and the requirements were extended to include beef, veal, lamb, hogget, mutton and chicken. The standard requires that the country (or countries) of origin be labelled on or in connection with the food display. Due to the onerous nature of these requirements for businesses that only sell Australian meat, regulators are currently considering a number of compliance options so that businesses can comply with the standard in a way that best meets individual business circumstances. The Authority has been asked by the Implementation Sub-committee for Food Regulation (ISFR) to lead the national development of an acceptable and practical single sign option, with the final agreed option to be included within fact sheets produced by the Authority.

FSANZ review of the microbiological limit for *Listeria monocytogenes*

Members received an update on a review by FSANZ of Standard 1.6.1 – Microbiological Limits for Food. The initial part of the review of Standard 1.6.1 is the development of microbiological criteria for *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat (RTE) foods in line with international approaches. The importance of control of this pathogen particularly in reference to vulnerable populations was reinforced to members. The review will also include acceptable levels of *L. monocytogenes* in products that will not support pathogen growth. Once the review is complete, the Regulatory guidelines for the control of Listeria will be reviewed and updated by the ISFR Meat Implementation Working Group (MWIG) to align with any changes.

Primary Production and Processing Standard (PPPS) for Meat and Meat Products—implementation progress update

The MICC received an update on development of the PPPS for Meat and Meat Products and noted that work is currently progressing to have the Australian Standard referenced in the FSANZ Food Standards Code. Additional requirements will cover 'back to farm' operations and traceability. This will be sent to FSANZ for final review.

Primary Production and Processing Standard for Poultry—implementation progress update

Members noted an update on the implementation of the PPPS for Poultry Meat. It was reported that the Authority has conducted a series of seminars organised by NSW Farmers' Association in Mittagong, Prospect, Beresfield and Mangrove Mountain to assist growers to understand the requirements of the Standard and provide a forum where they could ask questions. The main issues raised by growers were licence fees, the duplication of existing requirements and the inconsistent implementation of the Standard between NSW and other jurisdictions. To reduce the administrative burden, the Authority has been assessing company programs for compliance with the Standard prior to the commencement of farm inspections. As a result, producers will continue to conduct procedures and the Authority will verify these procedures whilst liaising directly with the processors. A standard checklist will be developed and the farm audits will commence in early 2014.

Updated Charter and procedural guidelines for MICC

Members noted a paper advising that the Charter and Procedural Guidelines for the MICC is to be updated. The changes include the removal of the reference to the previous ministerial/Cabinet appointment process, the clarification of the role of the Authority's CEO in appointing members and alternates, and the removal of names of members from the document but reference made to who the members represent. This document will be posted on the Authority's website and made available to members when finalised.

The date for the next meeting of the MICC is to be advised.