

# Summary of meeting outcomes

## NSW Seafood Industry Forum

15 May 2019

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The NSW Seafood Industry Forum held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 15 May 2019. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

### **Attendees**

#### ***NSW Seafood Industry Forum members:***

Tricia Beatty, Professional Fishermen's Association Inc  
Mark Boulter, Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc.  
Robert Gauta, Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd  
Robert McCormack, NSW Aquaculture Association Inc.  
Lief Hendrikz, Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd  
Kerry Strangas, Master Fish Merchants Association

#### ***NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:***

David Cusack (Chair), Manager Food Standards & Programs  
Mark Mackie, Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit  
Jeffrey Go, Senior Veterinary Officer, Aquatic Biosecurity  
Ian Sanders, Director International Engagement  
Jenine Ryle, Secretariat

#### ***Apologies:***

Sarah Britton, NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity, NSW DPI  
Bruce Christie, Deputy Director General Biosecurity & Food Safety, NSW DPI  
Anthony Mercer, De Costi Seafoods/Tassal Group Ltd  
Olivia Churchill, De Costi Seafoods/Tassal Group Ltd  
Ross Fidden, Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd  
Erik Poole, Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd  
Lisa Szabo, Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority, NSW DPI  
Greg Vakaci, A/Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance  
Craig Shadbolt, Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints, NSW DPI  
Emily Staniforth, Director Customer Service & Engagement, NSW DPI  
Geneveive Bonello, Manager Stakeholder Engagement & Communications  
Melissa Walker, Team Leader, Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs, NSW DPI

### **Industry updates**

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors. Issues raised included:

- Updates on various research and communication projects including - FRDC funding secured for ciguatera testing research project (testing methodologies within the supply chain); kudoa testing work stalled through lack of samples; ongoing mudcrab tagging trials investigating applicability of technology and scope - NSW Mudcrab Quota System; Liaising with NSW Fair Trading re gas 'type B' certification for prawn trawlers; updated FRDC resources re aquatic animal welfare matters; media campaign promoting underutilised species via the Supporting Seafood Futures Program; release of winter Prawn Recipe Book; NSW Seafood Excellence Awards occurring on 25 July; Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries research project on trace elements; Sydney Fish Markets

project looking at isotypes traceability (snapper, barramundi and prawns); live product temperature tracking.

- Industry members continued to express concern with the Department of Agriculture (DA – formerly DAWR) led National Carp Control Plan.
- Members noted that further seafood testing had occurred relating to the Williamstown contamination site – results are being considered by the Williamstown PFAS Expert Panel and due to be released shortly.

### **Country of Origin Labelling requirements for seafood**

Industry members sought clarification regarding the enforcement of Country of Origin Labelling requirements for seafood. Members were advised that the Australian Government (Commonwealth) reformed the Country of Origin labelling requirements for food in 2016 – the reforms moved CoOL obligations under the Australian Consumer Law.

Accordingly, regulation of CoOL requirements has transferred to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the State departments of Fair Trading.

It was discussed that National Measurement Institute (NMI) Officers have been undertaking CoOL checks on behalf of the ACCC as part of their weights and measure compliance work. NMI Managers' contact details will be circulated to members by Mark Boulter for members information. It was noted that any further enforcement action would need to be undertaken by the ACCC (and/or NSW Fair Trading).

The Food Authority will send a link to the Food Authority's factsheet on 'labelling requirements for unpackaged seafood'.

[http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/labelling\\_requirements\\_for\\_unpackaged\\_seafood.pdf](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/retailfactsheets/labelling_requirements_for_unpackaged_seafood.pdf)

### **Food Safety Compliance Report**

Members noted a report on seafood industry compliance activities between 1 July 2018 and 31 December 2018. During this period 146 audits and 105 inspections were conducted with 5 failed audits and 3 failed inspections. The compliance rate for the seafood industry for the period was 97%, which is an increase of 1% from the previous six-month period.

It was noted that 66 inspections were conducted under the fishing vessel inspection program and a high compliance rate of 98% recorded an acceptable inspection rate for the period.

The top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues during the reporting period continue to be within process control (39%), analytical testing (25%) and food safety program (25%). Enforcement actions during the period under review included two Improvement Notices and one warning letter. The Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance team is very satisfied with the high compliance rate recorded for the seafood industry sector.

### ***Listeria monocytogenes* limits in Ready-to-eat (RTE) food**

Members noted that the Authority's Food Safety Schemes Manual outlines the mandatory testing that is required to be done by licensed businesses - for seafood this relates to open oysters, packaged oysters, cooked and smoked seafood.

The Appendices in the Manual reference the Food Standards Code and the microbiological limits for *Listeria monocytogenes*. The limits were revised to acknowledge that RTE food which supports the growth of *L. monocytogenes* increases the risk that the food will contribute to listeriosis. The revised limits are:

- For RTE foods that support the growth of *L. monocytogenes*, the previous limit 'not detected in 25 gram' will still apply.

- Where RTE foods do not support the growth of *L. monocytogenes*, a new limit 'not exceeding 100cfu/g' can be used.

### **White Spot Disease – Queensland situation update**

An update paper was tabled noting that Queensland resumed production of farmed prawns in south east Queensland in mid-2018, and no reports of mortality due to WSD occurred through to harvest of those prawn crops in early 2019. White spot syndrome virus (WSSV) was not detected in Queensland in late 2018 in either farmed prawns or wild crustacean surveillance, and early 2019 surveillance results are being finalised.

The first round of WSSV surveillance undertaken in polychaete worms by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) has found no evidence for presence of WSSV, and the second round of sampling is currently underway.

The NSW government has now also completed the second round of testing for the national surveillance for WSSV (as part of proof of freedom activity), with all prawns tested returning negative results for the virus. NSW will continue to extend its advisory campaign to key stakeholders as the Queensland response to white spot continues.

### **Abalone national surveillance**

An update paper was tabled noting the national coordinated active surveillance for abalone pathogens in wild and farmed abalone. This forms part of a key initiative of the Australian Government's 2015 Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper to facilitate improved early detection of pest and diseases and generate information to support trade/market access.

NSW DPI has been involved through a national working group to ensure that the surveillance plan and sampling protocols are scientifically robust and fit for purpose. Sampling of abalone has been undertaken across six sites in NSW (Disaster Bay, Eden, Merimbula, Bermagui, Ulladulla and Gerringong). Test results are not expected until 2020.

### **Carbon monoxide (CO) in fish**

A paper was tabled regarding the use of CO in fish. Standard 1.3.3 – Processing Aids in the Food Standards Code clarifies that carbon monoxide must not be used in the processing of fish where its use results in a change to or fixes the colour of the flesh of the fish. The variation also clarifies that this prohibition does not extend to carbon monoxide that is naturally occurring or naturally present in smoke being used to process fish as a food.

Members noted that the compliance remit for CO in imported fish products sits with DA; currently there are no seafood processors licensed in NSW to undertake a smoking treatment technique; NSW DPI has not received any complaints in recent years on domestic or imported products regarding this matter.

### **PFAS Update**

A paper was tabled noting updates since the Forum's October 2018 meeting. In particular, FSANZ (December 2018) updated its website information to comment upon a recent update by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA); updates for the Richmond site were published by the NSW EPA in November 2018 and April 2019, including information for the Hawkesbury River and updated information was published in December 2018 for Jervis Bay and the Shoalhaven River.

The NSW Food Authority participates in the PFAS Taskforce and the NSW Expert Panel for PFAS and will continue to inform the Seafood Industry Forum of developments (standing item). Information about PFAS sites in NSW, fish sampling and any fishing advisories can be found at the NSW EPA website:

<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/contaminated-land/pfas-investigation-program>

### **Communications Update**

Members were updated on communications in the seafood sector since the last meeting. This included:

- The Food Authority is planning a social media campaign to highlight the need for vigilance by consumers, food retailers and manufacturers during Food Allergy Week (26 May – 1 June 2019). This will include fish allergies.
- NSW DPI is preparing a plan to improve aquatic biosecurity practices by preparing education materials for key stakeholder including recreational fishers, other recreational water users and marinas. Feedback from industry will be welcomed as the plan is developed.
- NSW DPI is planning to deliver a new campaign about identifying and reporting pest fish in 2019-20. It will include priority pest species across the state. The Forum and industry stakeholders will be kept up to date with progress of this campaign.
- DA is working on evolving a recent video produced by Queensland Seafood Industry Association and the Qld Dept of Agriculture and Fisheries on invasive species (especially those arriving on boats) so it can be used nationally to highlight the importance of vigilance around biosecurity
- The 2019 DPI Easter Show stand theme was 'Fish on Show' – it was well received by many visiting stakeholder and received an agricultural pavilion gold award for the Department.

### **Biosecurity Update**

Forum members were updated on the steady increase in *Salmonella* Enteritidis cases in humans in NSW since May 2018. The illness is usually linked to people who have come into contact with the organism overseas, however there are now over 200 reported cases in Australia with no history of international travel.

Members were also advised that food businesses across several sectors have recently been disrupted by animal activists conducting vigils outside plants, drone surveillance, multiple break-ins, theft of animals and privacy breaches. Members were advised that NSW DPI has a project planned this year to look into these issues and will work with industry.

The meeting also received a brief update on work being undertaken by the Department's compliance team since expansion of its function to include auditing of programs in the biosecurity area as well as food safety areas. The compliance team itself has doubled in size (50 field staff across the state within three regions), and whilst work with the food programs remains unchanged, officers are now involved in implementing audit programs in other areas such as exhibited animals, zoos, animal research, poppies, medicinal morphine, hemp, interstate movement of fruit and vegetables and cannabis ID.

### **International Engagement**

The Department's International Engagement Team supports agriculture through a variety of activities including input to government missions and delegations. The team promotes NSW's agricultural capability, informs investment responses, identifies new markets and industries, and provides input to missions and delegations, and agriculture policy at both state and federal levels. The team actively promotes the high-quality biosecurity and food safety credentials of NSW food and fibre products, meeting the demands of premium consumers in particular the Asian market.

The Team's Director Mr Ian Sanders advised that there was a Singaporean company interested in investing in onshore salmon production and that a couple of NSW companies will be engaging with the Team in early June to see if they can progress this opportunity further.

Subsequent to the 15 May Forum meeting, the following information has been provided by the International Engagement Team for the information of Forum members (recent supporting projects relating to the seafood industry):

- Supported Australian Oyster Coast's export endeavour to Hong Kong and Guangzhou market with an Oyster Market Launch in Guangzhou in August 2015;
- Worked on Murray Cod's export exploration to the Asian markets particularly mainland China market, 2015 & 2016. This included introductions to delegates at Fine Food;
- Assisted Professional Fishmen Association's Seafood Delegation to China exploring export opportunities of wild-caught eels and mix-fin fishes, 2017;
- Responded to at least 5 foreign investment enquiries in aquaculture sector as well as assisting about 5 seafood producers seeking to attract investment funding from China.

### **Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance Regulatory Priorities 2019-20**

Members were advised that they will be consulted in the coming months regarding the Department's Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance Team's Regulatory Priorities for the 2019-20 period. These priorities are reviewed annually and are determined in consultation with stakeholders. Critical Core Functions for the team include:

- Audit, inspection and certification services to verify a safe and secure food supply, the welfare of exhibited and research animals and to maintain and provide access to markets for NSW primary producers;
- Investigation of unlicensed/unregistered operations and complaints;
- Responding to and investigating foodborne illness outbreaks and pest and disease issues and assisting in emergency management operations as necessary.

*The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is 2 October 2019.*