

NSW Food Authority Seafood Industry Forum

Wednesday 29 May 2013

Summary of meeting outcomes

The NSW Food Authority Seafood Industry Forum (SIF) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday, 29 May 2013. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are detailed below.

NSW Food Authority food safety program compliance report

The Forum noted a report on the Authority's compliance, enforcement and inspection activities during the six month period from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012. This included a breakdown of acceptable audits vs. unacceptable audits for each licence permission in the seafood sector and percentage of critical Corrective Action Requests (CAR's) issued. An overview of enforcement activities and of one significant foodborne illness investigation conducted during the period was also tabled.

The SIF noted the compliance report and that the Authority is generally comfortable with the compliance program in the seafood industry sector.

FSANZ Proposal P1019 Carbon monoxide as a processing aid for fish

The SIF noted a progress report on the proposal currently under consideration by FSANZ to remove the current permission within the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code for the use of carbon monoxide as a processing aid for fish. The practice of using carbon monoxide in fish processing is intended to stabilise the red colour of fish. A copy of the Authority's submission to FSANZ was tabled for information and Forum members were complimentary of the way in which the Authority presented both sides of the argument to FSANZ.

SIF members noted the report and the Authority undertook to keep them updated on this issue.

Animals on fishing vessels

The SIF noted a paper providing advice concerning the issue of pet dogs on licensed fishing vessels. The Authority's general operational policy is to prohibit animals on vessels such as trawlers where such animals can't be completely separated from food contact surfaces and areas at all times. In cases where separation is not possible such as estuary boats, animals are prohibited from entering the vessel at any time, and the Authority will take action if an animal is sighted on these vessels after the issue of a warning. The Authority will provide further information on this issue to industry.

Product substitution and use of Australian Fish Names Standard

The Authority provided a report to the Forum on the issue of product substitution, which occurs where a food has been falsely described by the manner in which it is labelled, advertised or offered for sale, and the use of the Australian Standard Fish Names to assist enforcement where substitution occurs. The Forum noted a brief outline of the compliance program in place to assist with detection of product substitution. The Authority has developed multilingual fact sheets to assist industry which provide links to the Seafood Services Australia website and the Australian Standard Fish Names page to encourage the use of standard fish names. Members were asked to facilitate and encourage the use of the standard fish names by operators within their respective industry sectors.

Seafood through-chain risk management strategy

SIF members received a presentation giving an overview of the Authority's through-chain risk management approach for seafood in NSW. This included a schematic diagram detailing the food safety intervention checks required. The purpose of the presentation was to identify that there are appropriate systems in place for each level of operation in the seafood sector from cultivation and

harvest through to consumption. It was agreed that this information would be of value to the wider seafood industry to make them aware of the controls in place for each sector of the industry.

The Authority will further refine this information for discussion at the next Forum meeting.

Foodborne illness associated with seafood

The Forum considered a paper on foodborne illness linked to seafood in Australia and noted that in comparison with other commodities, illnesses linked to seafood are generally low. In most cases where outbreaks have occurred these have been linked to consumption of higher risk foods such as raw oysters that have been contaminated with norovirus, and this has a significant negative impact on the seafood sector as a whole. Members noted that the majority of foodborne illness investigations conducted by the Authority are not seafood related which reflects well for the industry.

DISPLAN Seafood emergency response plan in NSW

The Forum noted an information paper on the emergency response planning processes in place for the Authority to deal with responding to emergency events. It was noted that the Authority also has clear protocols in place for dealing with specific events relating directly to seafood. Members discussed the importance of testing emergency plans and noted that the Authority conducts exercises in conjunction with the Sydney Fish Market.

Food Regulation 2010 Statutory remake review

SIF members were updated on the processes involved in the statutory remake of the Food Regulation 2010 which is required under the Government's automatic staged repeal process to ensure regulations remain effective, relevant and work well. The first step of this process is to consult with industry consultative committee members and licence holders via a survey. Members were encouraged to provide feedback to the Authority on their views of the Regulation. The Authority will continue to update Forum members throughout the remake process.

The next meeting of the SIF will be held on 16 October 2013.