

## Summary of meeting outcomes

### NSW Seafood Industry Forum

15 September 2021

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The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on 15 September 2021. Specific issues considered by the Forum at its meeting are outlined below.

#### Attendees

**NSW Seafood Industry Forum members:** Tricia Beatty (Professional Fisher's Association Inc), Mark Boulter (Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc), Matthew Wilkinson (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd).

**NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** Geneveive Bonello, Manager (Communications Strategic Programs & Partnerships), Kelly Collins (Manager Compliance Education & Behaviour Change Compliance and Integrity Systems), David Cusack – Acting Chair (Manager Food Standards & Programs), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Peter Day (Director Compliance & Integrity Systems), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Josephine Parrett (Manager Customer Service Strategy & Operations), Mark Mackie (Manager Audit Systems & Verification), Ian Sanders (Director International Engagement), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs),

**Apologies:** Danielle Adams (Clarence River Co-operative), Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Kerry Strangas (The Master Fish Merchants Association), Melissa Walker (Team Leader Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs), Lisa Szabo - Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

#### Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with the following issues of concern reported:

- Industry is taking steps to help manage COVID-19 and its impacts on the different sectors.
- In terms of prevention, industry has focused particular attention on the segregation of workers into separate shifts and segregation of delivery drivers from other workers.
- COVID-19 has meant some warehouses are stocked with excess product, caused problems managing product orders, and put pressure on business logistics due to the uncertainty of future lockdowns.
- COVID-19 positive employees are creating challenges for businesses in LGA hot spots. This is causing staffing/personnel problems. COVID is also impacting imported seafood supply chains. Industry is working on COVID-19 contingency plans.
- Sydney Fish Markets has turned to online bidding systems to help keep business functions going.
- Trade has been good during events such as Father's day and industry is hoping to return to normal and is looking forward to a good summer trading season.
- The downturn in tourism is affecting areas that traditionally relied on this.

- Other COVID-18 impacts include loss of markets and difficulties replacing machinery, conducting safety checks on fishing vessels, and conducting training such as First Aid courses.
- A recent World Wild Life Fund for Nature's (WWF) third party audit has deemed some fisheries as non-sustainable, some key examples are; NSW estuary caught school prawns and eastern king prawns caught by ocean trawl. Refusal of one major supermarket chain to support these products has caused problems for fishers working in these industries. The WWF third party certification for these species is currently being reassessed. It is understood that NSW school prawns may be re-classified as WWF compliant which may allow trading to resume with buyers that source WWF compliant product. Reassessment of other species is continuing.
- The Professional Fisherman's Association has entered into a contract with consultants MRAG Asia Pacific to conduct full Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) assessments of four fisheries (Lobsters, Spanner Crab, Ocean Trap Lines and King Fish) with MSC certification being the end goal.
- A Spanish Mackerel Ciguatera project is underway to develop Ciguatera toxin identification kits, with research and development underway. The hope is that Ciguatera toxin identification kits can be developed and used at the Sydney fish markets and eventually for use by fishers.
- Assessment of cadmium levels in lobsters has been finalised and results communicated to China to re-open this market.
- The retail trade at Newcastle is doing well.

### **Food Safety Compliance Report**

The Committee noted a report on seafood industry compliance activities for the 2020-21 financial year. Compliance of the licensed seafood sector remained high with 95% recording an acceptable audit and/or inspection result (a 2% decrease over the previous reporting period). There were 193 audits and 237 inspections during this period. 92 fishing vessels were also inspected. The Compliance & Integrity Systems Team continues to focus its efforts on fishing vessel inspections to maintain a high compliance rate within this sector.

The top three non-conformances observed during this reporting period involved process control, food safety programs and analytical/testing. Enforcement actions included 17 Improvement Notices. The Compliance Team is very satisfied with the high compliance rate recorded for the seafood industry sector during this reporting period.

### **Training for Handling of Seafood products by Fishers / Delivery Vans**

Members discussed the need for training for new entrants into the fishing sector (fishers) as there were concerns raised with the underpinning skills and knowledge of this group.

A previous course run by DPI about 15-20 years ago was very beneficial and it was suggested that something akin to this may address the current skills gap in the fishing workforce.

It was agreed that DPI's compliance education & behaviour change team and its communications team work together with SIF industry members to identify and develop a resource to address needs. It was considered that an online resource would best suit needs. This could also be supported by social media blasts and infographics on key topics. Resources developed by other jurisdictions (e.g. SPFQ) would be reviewed to identify

relevant content. Key issues identified at the meeting for the resource included; hygiene, traceability and temperature control.

### **Sydney Fish Markets Online Systems presentation**

The Sydney Fish Market has enhanced its online platforms to bolster sales in lieu of face to face trading that has been significantly impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns. The committee was informed of the operational logistics of online auction platforms to help buyers make purchases; including transparency to buyers on the number of fish in parcels on items to be auctioned prior to the start of bidding. Images are also being used to enhance the attractiveness of online bidding. The system has proven to be versatile allowing buyers to select on price, location and availability.

### **Communications update**

Nil

### **Biosecurity update**

Jeffrey Go updated members on the recent detection of Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) in a mix of retail, restaurants and wholesale premises in Sydney. All affected premises were de-stocked and cleaned, and as a result, NSW has now been declared AVG free. The committee also noted that AVG has not been detected in wild abalone.

A Control Order has been implemented preventing importation of wild abalone from the Western and Central Zones in Victoria. This is in addition to the existing control order preventing entry of wild Tasmanian abalone into NSW. DPI is also reviewing the current control order preventing entry of farmed Victorian abalone into NSW.

QX parasite has been detected in Sydney Rock Oysters from Port Stephens. QX is not a human health issue and has no food safety implications. Further surveillance is under way to determine the extent of QX spread and whether this is due to recent environmental issues.

### **International Engagement update**

Ian Sanders gave a verbal update regarding the functions of DPI's international engagement team moving to Investment NSW with them working together to identify several sectors for support. Industry was invited to put forward any sectors that might be supported, to complement recent Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC) funding, with a view to open NSW to new markets. Suggested sectors included:

Oysters – utilising the unique qualities of Sydney Rock Oysters

Eastern rock lobsters - to fresh markets.

Eels - to help develop export markets possibly China. (Wild eels are sustainably harvested and sold - not produced by aquaculture).

Abalone – another industry that has lost export markets.

Urchins – (Tasmanian product competing with NSW product which is increasing competition but not export prices) this is another industry needing help.

Tuna – is still in need of assistance to help bring it back to pre-COVID export levels.

*The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is on 11 May 2022.*