

NSW Seafood Industry Forum

The primary objective of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is to contribute to the Food Authority's goal of ensuring the production and sale of seafood products that are safe and suitable for human consumption, by advising on policy and practices introduced into provisions of the Seafood Safety Scheme as it relates to seafood and developed through a consultative process. Other government agencies may seek to use the broad expertise and experience of the Forum members to obtain advice on matters beyond the scope of the provisions of the Seafood Food Safety Scheme.

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Seafood Industry Forum – Summary of meeting outcomes

8 May 2024

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on 8 May 2024. Issues considered by the Forum are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum members: Danielle Adams (Clarence River Fisherman's Co-operative Ltd), Mark Boulter (Food and Beverage Importers Association), Olivia Churchill (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Gary Howard (NSW commercial Fishers' Industry Association), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Debra Doolan (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Lisa Szabo - Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Melissa Walker (Policy and Program Manager White Spot).

Invited attendees: Christina Wong (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Derrick Addison (Food and Beverage Importers Association).

Apologies: David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Ben Rampano (Senior Aquatic Policy & Project Officer), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations).

Industry updates

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

- The new Sydney Fish Markets building is almost finished. Sydney Fish Markets recently released Seafood Handling Guidelines, which include guidelines for both buyers and suppliers. [Seafood Handling Guidelines](#).
- Land-based agricultural businesses are benefiting from abundant rainfall, whereas those located further inland are struggling with low levels of rainfall.

- Industry is awaiting further details on the new consumer labelling laws for hospitality businesses that will need to show if seafood is either: Australian (A), imported (I), or of mixed origin (M).
- The Forum was advised that Safefish is holding Food Recall Workshops for Seafood businesses with the Sydney event scheduled for 17 June 2024.
- The Commercial Fishers sector is reporting good outcomes for its members out at sea, and the Newcastle Co-operative fish shop also doing well.
- The retail sector experienced lower-than-expected sales over the Easter period. Despite an increase in customer accounts, demand for higher-priced seafood products decreased, as consumers turned to lower-priced alternatives.

1) Matters raised relating to the Seafood Food Safety Scheme

Food Safety Compliance Report

Members were updated on the seafood industry compliance activities for the period July to December 2023. 93 % of licensed seafood businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a 2% drop compared to the previous two financial years. A total of 160 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 24 regulatory interventions (improvement notices, prohibition orders, or warning letters). The Regulatory Operations team may need to adjust its planned activities and frequency of compliance monitoring depending on emerging risks and strategic priorities. Complaints, inspections, and investigations relating to seafood businesses will continue to be managed on an as needs basis.

2) Other matters raised

Staged Repeal

The SIF was informed that the process for staged repeal of *Food Regulation 2015* (the Regulation) is ongoing. The Food Authority awaits a consultation regulation document and once appropriately authorised, the draft regulation and a regulatory impact statement will be provided for public consultation.

The SIF will be pro-actively informed of the consultation draft.

White spot response and program update

The NSW Chief Veterinary Officer / Group Director of Animal Biosecurity updated the forum on the recent detection of White Spot Syndrome Virus (WSSV) in wild school prawns in northern NSW. The detection was confirmed by the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness following positive results from Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute. The detection was part of the national White spot detection program that has been in place since 2017. There was no evidence of clinical disease in the prawns sampled.

NSW DPI will work to investigate and undertake further surveillance and sampling, as required to inform the next steps for this detection. NSW DPI is working closely with the affected stakeholders to implement actions to contain this recent detection and minimise the risk of spread through movement restrictions using a Biosecurity Control Order.

Communication messages issued throughout the response have reassured consumers that white spot does not pose a threat to human health or food safety, and that NSW seafood, including prawns, remain safe to eat.

Further information is available at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquatic-biosecurity/aquaculture/aquaculture/white-spot>

NSW DPI will continue to engage and lead NSW input into national discussion of future white spot management. NSW will continue to work with key stakeholders on development of future white spot management approaches.

Biosecurity update

NSW DPI's Animal Biosecurity unit updated members on Biosecurity (Abalone viral ganglioneuritis) Control Order 2024 which was implemented on 24 February 2024 for a duration of 2 years. This prohibits the importation of live abalone sourced from South Australia. The ban was put in place following the detection of Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) near Port MacDonnell in South Australia. As a result, retail and wholesale seafood businesses in NSW are no longer allowed to import live abalone from South Australia.

[Biosecurity \(Abalone viral ganglioneuritis\) Control Order 2024](#)

The Order is designed to control the risk of AVG through the live trade of abalone into and within NSW. Current restrictions for other jurisdictions remain unchanged, with the movement of live abalone from Tasmania and Victoria prohibited unless specific conditions are met.

Any live abalone imported into NSW must not have come into contact with:

1. wild caught Tasmanian, South Australian, Victorian central or western zone abalone, or
2. South Australian or Victorian aquaculture abalone, or
3. associated holding water or fittings.

The following regulations apply to abalone from specific zones: Fittings used with abalone from Tasmanian, South Australian, Victorian central or western zone, or South Australian and Victorian aquaculture must be appropriately cleaned and disinfected before being moved into NSW.

Additionally, any abalone wastewater that has been in contact with abalone from outside the NSW wild abalone fishery or Victorian eastern zone abalone fishery must be disposed of directly to the sewer when moved into NSW.

If a NSW retail or wholesale facility suspects AVG in any tanks, with observations of sick or dying abalone, the business can contact the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888** for advice.

To help reduce the risk of AVG to wild abalone populations, seafood consumers are requested to:

- Throw abalone shells, gut and any leftover abalone waste in the bin. Do not discard any seafood waste in waterways
- Not use any part of an abalone as bait in NSW - **it is illegal**
- **Report immediately** to NSW DPI any observations of abalone showing symptoms: 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888
- [Do not release live aquatic animals, including abalone, without a permit into any NSW waters](#) other than immediately at point of capture (e.g. for undersized animals)

AVG is a viral disease which impacts blacklip, greenlip and hybrid abalone. Symptoms can include curling of the foot, swelling of the mouth, weakness, and death of abalone.

AVG is not known to occur in NSW wild abalone stocks in NSW. There is no evidence that AVG has any effect on human health.

Publication and protection of SIF Members' personal information

Members were advised that government agencies have a requirement to protect the privacy and personal information of the Seafood Industry Forum members. The Food Authority is also required to be transparent about the legislated requirements for consulting with industries regulated under its legislated Food Safety Schemes.

All personal information will only be collected and used with informed consent. Members will be asked via email following this meeting to provide this consent in writing.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is 18 September 2024.