

Food Authority



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

18 September 2024

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on 18 September 2024. Issues considered by the Forum are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum members: Derrick Addison (Food and Beverage Importers Association), Olivia Churchill (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Christopher Melham (NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc), Bradley Willis (Clarence River Fisherman's Co-operative Ltd).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Eric Davis (Acting - Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Debra Doolan (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Melisa Norris (Acting - Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Darren Waterson (Team Leader Audit Systems Support).

Invited attendees:

Apologies: David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc), Lisa Szabo (Acting - Executive Director Biosecurity & Food Safety), Melissa Walker (Policy and Program Manager White Spot).

Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

Industry updates

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

- Members welcomed NSW Wild Harvest Fisher's Inc, formally known as Professional Fishermen's Association Inc to the Forum.

- 12 Months after requirements in the Food Standards Code - standard 3.2.2A (Food Safety Management Tools) commenced for the retail food industry, the fresh seafood retail sector is reporting most of its retailers have now completed Food Safety Supervisor training.
- The Australian seafood industry is waiting to see how proposed national Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) for ready to eat seafood products sold in retail will be implemented, including education, compliance and enforcement. The proposed CoOL changes are being introduced under Australian Consumer Law and not Food Legislation.

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 2023-24 financial year to date. 95 % of licensed seafood businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a 3% rise compared to the previous two financial years. A total of 336 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 38 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

White spot response and program update

The Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity updated the forum on the confirmed detection of White Spot Syndrome Virus (WSSV) in wild school prawns in northern NSW earlier this year. Discussions continue at a national level on the surveillance and management of a White Spot detection program for the Evans, Richmond and Clarence River Control Zones.

NSW DPIRD has national support to ensure that these Control Zones remain separate and that they aren't merged. Surveillance to determine whether White Spot remains in the Clarence River control zone will continue as planned with surveillance in October and November. Further surveillance is planned for March and April 2025 in each of these Zones.

Communication messages issued throughout the White Spot response continue to reassure 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>

Biosecurity update

NSW DPIRD's Animal Biosecurity unit has been liaising with its South Australian counterparts on the Biosecurity (Abalone viral ganglioneuritis) Control Order 2024 which was implemented on 24 February 2024 for a duration of 2 years, with no changes to the control order at this stage.

The order prohibits importation of live abalone sourced from South Australia and was implemented following detection of Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) near Port MacDonnell in South Australia. As a result, NSW retail and wholesale seafood businesses 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.

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.

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

PIRSA has asked DPIRD to consider allowing movement of live abalone from the western SA fishery due to the absence of AVG mortalities in this fishery. NSW DPIRD Aquatic Biosecurity Group is reviewing this request.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is to be advised.