

## SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From the Australia and New Zealand

Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation

(ISFR)

ISFR19, 28-29 April 2021

### The Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation

Food regulation authorities in Australia and New Zealand work together to ensure food regulations are implemented and enforced consistently. This work is done through ISFR, through in-session meetings, out-of-session business and separate collaborations. ISFR was set up by the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) to foster a consistent approach across jurisdictions to implementing, monitoring and enforcing food regulation. ISFR's role applies equally to imported, exported and domestically produced food.

[ISFR members](#) are either heads of agencies or senior operational experts who can make and implement decisions about compliance and enforcement issues in their jurisdictions.

ISFR is not an enforcement authority in its own right. It allows Australian and New Zealand food regulators to discuss common approaches to implementation and develop agreed strategies to achieve a consistent approach to the way food regulations are implemented, interpreted and enforced across jurisdictions.

While all jurisdictions involved in food regulation work together on implementing and enforcing food regulation, there are sometimes differences in the way jurisdictions administer food law. Due to ISFR's consultative nature, it helps jurisdictions to minimise the impact of these differences as much as possible.

### Summary of key matters of interest to local government discussed at ISFR19

ISFR19 was held via videoconference on 28-29 April 2021. A summary of key items of interest is provided.

#### COVID-19

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand website ([FSANZ website](#)) is being used as the central COVID-19 communications hub for food regulation matters. Technical and communications experts drawn from the Food Regulation System contribute to identifying and developing advice to stakeholders on matters relating to food and COVID-19. The FSANZ website acts as a gateway to more specific information available from the Australian and New Zealand governments and Australian state and territory government websites.

#### Australia's Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2018-2021+ (the Strategy)

While jurisdictional capacity is reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, key areas of work to implement the Strategy continue to be progressed. Where necessary timelines are being revised taking into account that some activities (including stakeholder consultation processes) will need to proceed at a slower pace. There is a desire across the Food Regulation System for continuing a coordinated approach to reducing foodborne illness nationally, targeting the most relevant parts of the food supply chain.

## Local Government activities and Jurisdiction Reports

Key matters which may be of interest to local government:

### Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Regulatory resources are currently focused on the ACT COVID-19 safe events and COVID compliance. Business as usual activities are focused on food sampling, food complaints/poisonings, and food business registrations.

### New South Wales (NSW)

In order to administer the NSW Food Act 2003 authorised officers must have either the appropriate qualification or necessary experience. To support Environmental Health Officers with this requirement the NSW Food Authority delivers the Authorised Officer (Local Government) Food Surveillance training course.

This program helps enforcement agencies to build capacity for their authorised officers. It provides a pathway for both new and experienced officers to gain or refresh their skills and knowledge in order to competently conduct food surveillance activities. The course covers thirteen core food surveillance topics over six days of intensive classroom-based training. This annual training is in high demand each year and there is no cost levied by the NSW Food Authority.

Funding has been secured to develop the course to an online program. Tocal College (NSW) has been engaged to develop a training package that permits a flexible learning environment. It is hoped the program will be rolled out in time for 2021-22.

### South Australia (SA)

The South Australian Public Health (Notifiable Contaminants) Regulations 2020 (the Regulation) came into force on 19 July 2020 and requires specific microorganisms to be reported to SA Health when they are found in food and water by the analysing laboratory service

Section 109 of the *Food Act 2001* (the Food Act) requires that the Department submit to the Minister a report on the administration of the Food Act for the year ending 30 June 2020. Data for the Food Act activities for 2019/2020 was collected and presented in the Department for Health and Wellbeing 2019-20 Annual Report and published on [SA Health website](#).

### Queensland

The Department of Health continues to work with local government to administer and enforce the requirements of the Food Act 2006 and Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. The Department is finalising the development of a small business regulatory reform initiative to create a digital food safety hub, known as the Food Pantry. This initiative provides food businesses with a streamlined, across government online experience for legislative, licensing and training requirements and includes educational materials such as self-assessment checklists, fact sheets, templates and posters. It aims to create a digital solution that better facilitates information between regulators, small to medium businesses, and their consumers to improve food safety in Queensland.

### Tasmania

A number of projects of interest to Environmental Health Officers have been completed or are nearing completion. This includes – determining smoked fish to be ‘regulated fish’ for the purposes of the Primary Produce Safety (Seafood) Regulations 2014 and work to progress a minor amendment to section 133 of the *Food Act 2003* which is required to support the rollout of the mobile food businesses database which has been developed to support and simplify the regulation of mobile food businesses in Tasmania. The amendment process is aiming for completion in 2021.

## Victoria

The Victorian Government Department of Health has developed, and is currently rolling out, a range of tools to support local council Food Act Authorised Officers. The tools include:

- Moodle training on risk-based assessment (inspection) of food businesses; and
- Online training sessions to meet Authorised Officer requirements regarding best practice allergen management. The training considers current research (from national industry bodies such as the Allergen Bureau) and best practice food industry control measures. The training covers food allergen management practices and incorporates a methodology for preventative surveillance /enforcement during routine inspections. The training also includes guidance on leading an effective and efficient investigative response to cases of anaphylaxis and recall given that the Victoria's anaphylaxis notification scheme continues to show that most notifications continue to be from unpackaged foods from food premises.

A guide to the *Victorian Food Act 1984* for council officers is nearing completion. The guide will sit alongside the Enforcement Guide which has already been provided to council Food Act Authorised Officers.

## Northern Territory (NT)

NT Health will be participating in a Food Summit being held by Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) in Alice Springs 24/25 June 2021.

The aim of the event is to develop community lead policy and advocacy recommendations that can lead to a change in people's access to healthy foods in both remote and urban Aboriginal communities. The focus will be on addressing affordability, availability and barriers to families having access to healthy foods daily in remote and urban Aboriginal communities in the NT and wider central Australian region.

## Western Australia

The Department of Health has developed a training package on *Salmonella* risk management in primary production of eggs and is able to provide individualised support and training to local government. Guidance has also been drafted on key surveillance activities in the food service and retail sector that aims to reduce *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* risks.

Stage 2 of the Play it Food Safe campaign was rolled out across Western Australia from mid November 2020 to the end of April 2021 using a range of digital media to promote the campaign materials targeting 4 key priority areas – egg safety, chicken meat safety, separate and chilled messaging. Curtin University have been commissioned to complete the campaign evaluation.

The Department of Health has collaborated with local government to develop a range of educational posters and stickers for food retailers. Posters and stickers are available to food retailers from their relevant local government.

## FSANZ

FSANZ reported it continues to support the Food Regulation System priorities through its work on data sharing & data analytics, Proposals P1052 Primary Production and Processing Requirements for Horticulture and P1053 Food Safety Management tools, review of Standard 4.2.5 - Primary production and processing standard for eggs and egg product, Health Star Rating system, Branded Food Database as well as its work on FSANZ modernisation.

FSANZ also reported on its continuing work on Health Claims and assistance on Pregnancy Warning Labels.