



SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From the Australia and New Zealand
Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation
(ISFR)

ISFR24, 23-24 May 2023

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 the **Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation (ISFR)**, through face-to-face meetings (and/or videoconferencing where required), 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, collaboration helps jurisdictions to minimise the impact of these differences as much as possible.

Summary of key matters of interest to local government discussed at ISFR24

ISFR24 was held via video conference on 23 and 24 May 2023. A summary of key items of interest is provided.

Australia's Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy (the Strategy)

Australia's Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2018-2021+ (the Strategy) launched back in 2018 remains ongoing. The Strategy focusses on sector-specific initiatives (poultry, eggs, horticulture and food service), food safety culture, consumer and industry information, research, monitoring and surveillance, and national engagement.

Implementation of the Strategy is well underway with a scorecard produced at the end of 2021 tracking the achievements of the [Strategy](#).

Food Safety Culture

ISFR's Food Safety Culture Working Group tabled their final report, summarising the results of a pilot study which was undertaken as part of the Strategy: to develop a shared understanding of food safety culture across the food regulatory system and in food businesses. The pilot involved governments (states and local councils) and food service businesses (mostly small-to-medium enterprises). Food businesses were either chosen by

governments or volunteered to participate. One of three focus areas was chosen by each jurisdiction: preparing and serving raw and lightly cooked egg products, serving vulnerable populations, or allergen management. For further information, please refer to the Food Safety Culture – Pilot summary and Lessons learnt [link to summary report as endorsed at ISFR24].

Implementation of Horticulture Standards

In 2022, new [primary production and processing standards](#) (Standards 4.2.7, 4.2.8 and 4.2.9; Proposal P1052), were introduced for berries, leafy vegetables and melons. These new requirements will take effect in February 2025. Guidance material, to support implementation, is being developed in collaboration with Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), industry, existing (Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) accredited) food safety scheme owners, and governments.

Implementation of Food Safety Management Tools Standard

In 2022 new [food safety management tools](#) (Standard 3.2.2A; Proposal P1053) were introduced, applying new regulatory measures to food service, caterers and food retail businesses that handle potentially hazardous food.

New regulatory measures include food handler training; food safety supervisor; and evidence to substantiate food safety management of key processes. These are planned to take effect in December 2023, following a 12-month period for implementation.

FSANZ and all jurisdictions responsible for enforcing the new standard, are working together on developing and promoting tools and support resources, such as informing affected food businesses, food business webinars, training of Environmental Health Officers, updates to [Safe Food Australia](#), new food safety info bites and production of animations to raise awareness of the new standard. Tools and guidance to improve food safety knowledge, risk management and food safety culture are considered integral to the effectiveness of these new regulatory measures.

Local Government activities and Jurisdiction Reports

Key matters which may be of interest to local government:

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

A significant foodborne illness outbreak occurred during the reporting period. Investigation commenced when ACT Health was contacted advising 11 of the 15 participants at a workshop were reporting food poisoning symptoms. The workshop was catered by an ACT food business. In addition to the original group, several complaints were received advising of unwell people from events where food was provided by the same food business.

Following the investigation, 59 confirmed and probable cases (norovirus) from 140 people exposed across 5 ACT sites and 1 NSW site. Epidemiological, clinical and environmental health investigations suggested the illness were caused by norovirus infection.

Food inspections were undertaken at Summernats 2023 (a large event attracting over 125,000 attendees, 28 food vendors). No significant food safety issues were observed.

The National Multicultural Festival resumed this year following a 2 year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 270,000 people attended the three-day event where the Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) conducted a total of 283 food safety inspections. There was a high rate of food safety compliance however there were eight disposals of unsafe food (mainly due to temperature abuse issues).

New South Wales (NSW)

Under the Food Regulation partnership, NSW continues to work closely with local councils to deliver a high standard of food surveillance activities in the retail and food service sector.

Training is based on the needs of the authorised officers and has delivered professional development in respect of 'Food safety culture and allergens', 'Food safety management tools' (based on Proposal P1053) plus 'Dishwasher education and compliance strategy' for the period.

Collaborative projects with local councils include the wrap up of the 'Food notification project' and the commencement of the 'Food safety culture/allergen management project' which assesses a retail food business's allergen management to measure their food safety culture. This work will contribute to the ISFR Food Safety Culture Working Group developments and is currently being reported upon.

NSW continues to explore all avenues to deliver a shared food inspection data platform.

Each enforcement agency lodged their annual food surveillance activity report for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. A state summary report has been prepared and is available on the NSW Food Authority website.

Efforts to reinvigorate the NSW Scores on Doors food safety ratings program involved the review of current resources for enforcement agencies and consumers. As reported by enforcement agencies in their annual activity reports, participation has increased to 69 local councils which captures around 65% of eligible retail food businesses. A renewed engagement and communication strategy coupled with the refreshed resources will be rolled out in an attempt increase participation and awareness of the program. This will occur mid-2023.

South Australia (SA)

SA Health continues to work closely with local government as dual regulators in the food regulation system. This includes the recent roll out of training and other resources relating to the implementation of Standard 3.2.2A - Food Safety Management Tools.

Queensland

Local government annual reporting of performance measures have been reviewed and updated to include quality of compliance activities, acknowledging local governments' ability to make changes to licensing systems.

The guideline *Reporting of information by local governments under the Food Act 2006* has been reviewed and amended.

The local government reporting process for publication has been reviewed. Local government reporting methods have been improved by introducing *Microsoft Forms* to expedite data collection and analysis. A dedicated webpage has been created, simplifying reporting to ensure timely publication. Reporting of new performance measures commences for the 2022- 2023 financial year.

A new online mobile food business register is now live. The new register improves the currency of information by allowing local government updates to be entered directly into the register. The currency of the new mobile food business register relies on local governments regularly updating their mobile food business license data.

Tasmania

Public Health Services within the Department of Health are overseeing the implementation of Standard 3.2.2A – Food Safety Management Tools within Tasmania. Implementation workshops for EHOs have been held within the state and online. To build upon the information provided in the workshops Tasmanian specific implementation resources have been developed and provided to EHOs (template letter to send to food businesses; EHO guidance material; food safety supervisor infographics). Additional implementation information and support for EHOs will be provided throughout the second half of 2023.

Public Health Services are currently working with other State Regulatory Bodies to create enhanced guidance material for EHOs that will assist in the consistent assessment and approval of new distillery and wine making businesses.

Victoria

Implementation of the FoodTrader platform (on-line food business registration/notification portal and backend database) will commence for temporary and mobile food premises from mid June 2023 (Stretrader will be decommissioned).

Northern Territory (NT)

The Environmental Health Leadership Group meets monthly and consists of key personnel from the Environmental Health services in Top End and Alice Springs. Meeting include discussion on standards implementation and national considerations.

The Environmental Health Program has recently developed a Strategic Plan and associated Business Plan to realign the direction of the program.

Western Australia

WA Health has developed a package of resources to support Local Government and relevant food businesses with the implementation of Standard 3.2.2A – Food Safety Management Tools. This includes a guide for food businesses, translated fact sheets, letter templates and online webinars to provide information to assist with understanding the new requirements.

New Zealand

The Ministry for Primary Industries New Zealand Food Safety is in the process of reviewing oversight arrangements and considering a domestic food assurance system to strengthen oversight and consistent implementation of the *Food Act 2014*, which will include:

- setting national outcomes/standards for regulatory functions.
- monitoring the performance of regulatory functional delivery.
- support and assistance for regulatory partners.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)

FSANZ reported it continues to support the Food Regulation System priorities through its work on data sharing & data analytics; non-regulatory tools to support standards developed under Proposals P1052 – Primary Production and Processing Standard for Horticulture & P1053 – Food Safety Management; ongoing standards development work on Proposal P1060 Review of the Egg Primary Production and Processing Standard; Health Star Rating system; Branded Food Database; as well as FSANZ modernisation.