



Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport
and Resources

Food Regulation Standing Committee Stakeholder Roundtable Trial Evaluation Report

Final Report

15 May 2018

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1 Executive Summary

The food regulation system is complex. Designing the policy and regulatory framework to support safe, healthy food requires the efforts and affects the interests of governments, public health experts, businesses from all parts of the supply chain and consumers. The Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) Stakeholder Roundtable aims to improve FRSC's engagement with these diverse stakeholders. This paper considers the opportunities to improve the Food Regulation Standing Committee Stakeholder Roundtable initiative.

In April 2016, the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) agreed to trial three 'stakeholder roundtables'. FRSC agreed to evaluate the trial 18 months after the first meeting.

The 'FRSC Stakeholder Roundtable' (the Roundtable) is one of a number of initiatives adopted under FRSC's communication strategy. In parallel to the Roundtable trial, FRSC has more routinely pursued stakeholder engagement activities. This includes stakeholder consultation workshops, consultation papers, a refreshed website and a detailed engagement strategy associated with development of the Australian Foodborne Illness Strategy. The Roundtable initiative is complemented by these other communications and stakeholder engagement initiatives and activities, which are touched on in this report.

The Roundtable is intended to provide FRSC and stakeholders an opportunity to strengthen relationships, share information, and improve awareness of policy development and other activities within the food regulatory system.

The first Roundtable was held in September 2016. Two more Roundtables were held in February and September 2017. In total, 54 people attended the Roundtables, with some attending more than one Roundtable. Host and home jurisdictions and the Food Regulation Secretariat (the Secretariat) dedicated significant time and resources to plan and deliver these events. This 'behind the scenes' effort is a critical factor in the success of the Roundtables.

The purpose of this report is to consider what worked, and what can be improved, in the way the Roundtables are designed and delivered. It is informed by participants' feedback derived from both the feedback forms collected at the conclusion of each roundtable, and email and phone interviews; a desktop review of Roundtable notes, FRSC minutes and papers and information about other stakeholder engagement initiatives.

This report finds that the Roundtables have delivered the key intended benefits. It also identifies opportunities to improve the Roundtables.

1.1 Recommendations

1. That the Roundtable continues with changes to the terms of reference. This Roundtable would be:
 - held at a frequency to be determined by participants, with reference to the timing and frequency of other targeted stakeholder engagement activities
 - hosted in a major city on the east coast of Australia to encourage in-person participation
 - invitation only, with participants drawn from key stakeholders representing health, consumer and industry interests invited to participate (with flexibility to include additional stakeholder groups or technical experts, considering the agenda and priorities of the system)
 - supported by pre-reading materials to enable informed participation, and pre-consultation
 - technologically enabled - alternative communication channels will be provided for participants unable to attend in person such as teleconference, video conference or webinar facilities.
2. That the Roundtable has a standard agenda items on the food system priorities, FRSC workplan and emerging issues, with additional agenda items able to be added by participants.
3. That the Roundtable terms of reference enable any person to provide a written report to the Roundtable for its consideration; to be pre-circulated and included under the standing agenda item 'correspondence received'.
4. That the Roundtable settle a summary of discussion, either in the meeting or offline within a few days of the meeting; that this is circulated to FRSC the next day out of session for noting; and then published on the Food Regulation website.
5. That FRSC settle and provide a short response or comment to the Roundtable within three months of the Roundtable.
6. That a public stakeholder engagement forum is convened. This stakeholder engagement forum would be:
 - held at a frequency to be determined by FRSC, having consideration for the timing of other related 'open invitation' stakeholder engagement activities
 - open to a wide group of participants to increase FRSC's reach for communication and engagement
 - focused on sharing information to improve understanding of, and confidence in, the food regulatory system, priorities for the system and identify emerging issues.
 - Interactive, and encouraging of stakeholder participation
7. That the Secretariat draft a 'summary of discussion' for the stakeholder engagement forum, that this is circulated to FRSC for out of session endorsement; and then published on the Food Regulation website.
8. That FRSC maintain a consultation calendar to enable FRSC to identify gaps and overlap, and pre-plan allocation of stakeholder engagement resources.

2 Background

2.1 FRSC stakeholder engagement strategy

In 2015 FRSC developed new frameworks for policy development and stakeholder engagement.

The policy development framework introduces a structure and common approach for FRSC to consider problems and opportunities for Australian and New Zealand governments in the way food is produced, processed, sold, and promoted (**Appendix 1**). This framework introduced a clear discipline for FRSC to define a problem, quantify the net benefits of addressing the problem, and consider possible regulatory and non-regulatory solutions. Stakeholder engagement is a core element of the policy development framework – every step is informed by two-way communication with affected and expert stakeholders (Newgate: 2016).

The stakeholder engagement strategy was informed by the findings of a 2015 ‘perceptions audit’ (Newgate: 2015). This audit found:

- stakeholders want to engage with FRSC more directly and transparently
- trust in the system is eroding due to a sense, both from industry and government, that FRSC fails to engage with and understand the views of stakeholders.

The stakeholder engagement strategy has two key components. The first focusses on using ‘broadcast’ communication channels – the website, social media presence and standardised communications collateral – to clearly articulate the role of FRSC and the broader food regulation system. The second component focused on more targeted communication – the development of key messages, detailed stakeholder analysis and direct engagement with stakeholders. The FRSC stakeholder roundtable was proposed and has been trialled as an example of direct stakeholder engagement.

2.2 Overview of the FRSC Stakeholder Roundtables trial

On 15 April 2016, FRSC agreed in-principle to trial ‘stakeholder roundtables’ (the Roundtables).

In July 2016, FRSC hosted a facilitated workshop with government and non-government stakeholders to test and refine the proposed purpose, membership, and draft terms of reference for the Roundtables.

The workshop was attended by FRSC members or their delegates and senior stakeholders from a number of industry, public health and consumer groups comprising Choice, the Public Health Association (PHA), the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC), the New Zealand Food and Grocery Council (NZFGC), the Dietitians Association of Australia and Restaurant and Catering Australia (RCA). FSANZ also attended as did the Chair of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG).

On 10 August 2016, FRSC settled the terms of reference (**Appendix 2**), membership, and standardised agenda for the Roundtables, and agreed to proceed with three trial Roundtables.

The Roundtable terms of reference include a ‘statement of intent’: ‘the Roundtable will provide FRSC and stakeholders with the opportunity to strengthen relationships, share information and improve visibility of activities that are being progressed within the food regulation system’.

The purpose of the Roundtables, as described in the terms of reference, is for participants (government and non-government) to:

- consider priorities for the FRSC workplan and discuss key policy issues, including matters that are currently on the FRSC workplan
- undertake environment scanning to inform FRSC about emerging issues
- provide feedback to each other, share information and build trust
- work together to develop the evidence base for FRSC’s advice to the Forum.

Importantly, the Roundtables explicitly exclude focusing on specific Food Standards Code standards. FRSC also agreed that the Roundtables are not a decision-making forum. This means that the discussions at the Roundtables do not bind FRSC or any part of the food regulatory system to a position.

FRSC adopted a standard agenda for the Roundtables. The Roundtable agenda comprised two key items:

- FRSC’s work and role in the food regulation system, system priorities and FRSC’s workplan, and
- a special topic.

Membership of the Roundtables included one FRSC member from each jurisdiction, a common ‘core stakeholder group’ (5 members), and other ad hoc invitees. The ‘core stakeholder group’ included food industry, public health and consumer representative bodies. All ‘core stakeholders’ are national bodies in either Australia or New Zealand. FRSC’s preference was that participation should not be delegated, but in practice stakeholders did delegate attendance. FRSC determined that only one representative per jurisdiction should attend each Roundtable. This was to help keep the number of participants to a manageable level, and to keep roughly even numbers of government and non-government participants. FRSC member attendance could not be delegated. The practical effect of this was that some jurisdictions did not take part in some Roundtables due to availability of the members. Finally, FRSC invited other participants to attend based on their interest and potential contribution to the ‘special topics’.

FRSC Roundtable meetings were held the day prior to FRSC meetings.

The FRSC Chairperson was also the Chair of the Roundtable. The Chair was assisted by external facilitators for ‘special topics’ sessions of the second and third Roundtables.

The terms of reference required that Roundtable discussion be confidential, unless agreed by roundtable participants and endorsed by FRSC.

The Roundtables were typically organised and financed by the host jurisdiction. The Secretariat assisted the host jurisdiction and managed the logistics.

Table 1: Roundtables at a glance

When	Location	Participants	Special topic	Organiser
Inaugural Roundtable 15 Sep 2016 10am – 3pm	Brisbane	21 (11 FRSC members and 5 apologies)	Biofortification	SafeFood Queensland; Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
Roundtable 2 23 Feb 2017 9:30am – 2pm	Sydney	30 (9 FRSC members and 14 apologies)	Why sugar?	NSW Health, Australian Government Department of Health with the assistance of others
Roundtable 3 21 Sep 2017 (9am – 4pm)	Adelaide	30 (9 FRSC members and 4 apologies)	Food Safety Culture – Horticulture through chain approach	South Australia; SafeFood Queensland

2.3 Evaluation Approach

On 10 August 2016 FRSC agreed to evaluate the trial Roundtables within 18 months. At the final trial Roundtable in Adelaide, the Chair undertook to advise the Roundtable participants about the outcome of the review. On 22 September 2017 FRSC agreed that Victoria would conduct an internal evaluation in the form of a review to identify what worked and what can be improved.

The review focusses on how well the Roundtables met the three key objectives: strengthen relationships, sharing information and informing stakeholders about the food regulation system. It particularly considered the question of how to increase the value of the Roundtables for both FRSC and stakeholders.

The evaluation report is informed by:

- FRSC meeting minutes that addressed the report back from the Roundtable
- post-Roundtable notes circulated to participants
- participants' feedback derived from both the feedback forms collected at the conclusion of each Roundtable and interviews conducted in late December 2017 and January 2018 (**Appendix 3**)
- desktop review of FRSC and Forum meeting agendas and papers in the period September 2016 to December 2017
- review of other government stakeholder engagement approaches.

This report is structured to address what worked, and what can be improved, according to three key themes, based on the Roundtable terms of reference 'statement of intent' and 'purpose':

- relationships, transparency and trust
- information exchange, dialogue and improved understanding
- FRSC and food regulatory system activities: better understood and more informed.

Table 2: Number of roundtable participants interviewed by category

Participant category	Number interviewed	Number of participants
Core group stakeholders	7	12
Industry	2	3
Public health	1	2
Consumer	2	3
Other non-FRSC Government	2	4
Special topic stakeholders	11	27
Industry	8	17
Public health	3	10
Consumer	0	0
FRSC members	16 *	15 +
* Two FRSC members that were unable to attend a roundtable were interviewed.		
+ One attendee is no longer a FRSC member.		
Total	34	54

Note: All Roundtable participants were offered the opportunity to be interviewed for the evaluation.

3 What worked well?

3.1 Relationships, transparency, trust

A key objective of the Roundtables was to build stakeholder trust in the policy development process through direct and genuine engagement between stakeholders and FRSC members.

All participants valued the opportunity to participate in the Roundtables. While some stakeholders had pre-existing relationships with individual jurisdictions and FRSC members, the Roundtable was the first time many stakeholders had an opportunity to interact with FRSC itself.

The face to face nature of the Roundtables helped to build relationships between participants. The more direct and informal mode of interacting built personal rapport in a way that written submissions and even teleconferencing cannot. Participants used the coffee and meal breaks both to continue to discuss policy issues in more detail, and further 'get to know' each other.

Stakeholders were impressed with the genuineness of FRSC's commitment to build productive relationships.

The level of engagement with FRSC was impressive.

The roundtables provide an opportunity to address communication between FRSC and stakeholders.

It's a yes for building relationships.

Most stakeholders reported that they feel more engaged in the policy process because of the Roundtables. In response to the question "Do you feel more engaged in the policy process?" stakeholders stated:

Yes - absolutely. The level of transparency is very helpful. Hearing from the stakeholders in person and discussing issues in-depth is valuable.

Yes – it's useful to have these forums where we can attend to represent our stakeholders.

Yes - my sector of the industry feels more engaged in the policy process.

This genuineness of intent was established well before the first Roundtable. By first conducting the perceptions audit, and then inviting stakeholders to the workshop to inform the Roundtables' design, FRSC clearly committed to consulting openly – and even collaborating – with stakeholders.

To enable clear communication about the food regulation system the Australian and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation (Forum), in November 2017, launched a new website that had been developed by the Secretariat. Stakeholders reported that the website helped them understand the food regulatory system in advance of the Roundtables:

The information on the food regulation website has improved.

In preparation for the roundtable I read the attachments and went on the FRSC website.

I was provided with (and have seen) the link to policy pages on the food regulation website.

Over the last 6 months, FRSC has more actively implemented the other stakeholder engagement initiatives, including the stakeholder engagement element of its policy development framework. This further demonstrated FRSC's commitment to a new way of working with stakeholders. For example:

- In June and July 2017 FRSC invited stakeholder input, and convened stakeholder workshops to inform policy development around the issue of energy labelling on alcoholic beverages.

- From the 6 February to 16 March 2018, FRSC conducted public consultation to inform the Review of fast food menu labelling schemes. Two industry workshops were held as part of this consultation.
- In April 2017 the Forum committed to collaborate with industry in developing an Australian Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy. Consultation to facilitate the collaborative development of the strategy commenced on 12 February and closed on 29 March 2018.
- FRSC has also agreed to hold a public health 'policy think tank'. The think tank was held on 22 March 2018 and aims to develop a shared understanding among the public health community of what is, and what is not, possible to achieve in relation to obesity prevention from within the food regulatory system.
- FRSC also agreed to hold a Health Star Rating system symposium on 31 October 2018 to explore ways to promote the system.
- Further stakeholder consultation about pregnancy warning labels on alcoholic beverages is planned for May and June 2018.
- Further stakeholder consultation about sugar, fats and oils and KJ Alcohol labelling are also planned for 2018.
- There is value in FRSC applying the learnings from the Roundtable evaluation as a model for this consultation.

FRSC members shared an expectation that the Roundtables would help to improve relationships between FRSC and stakeholders. FRSC members were particularly mindful of feedback from the perceptions audit that stakeholders think the food regulation policy development process is a 'black box', lacking transparency and public accountability. FRSC members therefore expected the Roundtables to build stakeholder trust in and familiarity with FRSC's processes. Most FRSC members said their expectations about improving relationships were generally met and exceeded in some instances.

3.2 Information sharing, dialogue, improved understanding

The diversity of views explored at the Roundtables enabled all participants to deepen their understanding of the policy issues discussed. In general, participants reported that their central policy positions remained unchanged as a result of the Roundtable, but that the discussion helped to refine their thinking (noting that the more familiar and specific the policy issue was, the less likely participants were to report an improved understanding). FRSC members feel more informed as a result of the face to face discussion at the Roundtables. The free-flowing in-person discussion allowed participants to explore the core interests that underpin stakeholders' and governments' positions on policy issues.

This productive information sharing during the Roundtables was supported by well-pitched, pre-circulated materials. Stakeholders said:

The preparation material was good. It gave me an opportunity to share and canvas opinions from others in our business.

The discussion paper was good pre-reading and posed challenging questions.

I had plenty of information to read in preparation.

Stakeholders valued the pre-roundtable jurisdictional consultation held prior to the horticulture roundtable in Adelaide. These prior meetings gave stakeholders a greater understanding of why government was interested in the topic before attending the roundtable.

The pre-roundtable was good preparation. The Queensland Government did a good job. They listened to industry, wrote up the notes and followed up with a de-brief after the Adelaide roundtable.

The feedback forms provided a mechanism for participants to provide immediate feedback about how to improve the Roundtables. The forms were also seen as an additional mechanism for stakeholders to identify emerging issues or raise concerns for FRSC's consideration. Some participants identified other mechanisms that could also be adopted to deliver these same benefits, including public and invitation-only social media or other technology.

3.3 FRSC and food regulatory system activities: better understood and more informed

Stakeholders valued hearing about the food system priorities and FRSC workplan (the first half of each Roundtable agenda). Stakeholders felt they were able to share their views on the priorities and they would be heard. FRSC also benefited from discussion of the workplan, the 'special topics' and 'emerging issues'. The FRSC workplan has been refined to address issues raised at the roundtables.

Most stakeholders developed a better understanding of the food regulatory system as a result of participating in the Roundtables. Stakeholders already familiar with government and food regulation valued learning more about the food regulation system priorities and FRSC workplan:

Yes, I am now more informed on the food regulatory system and the state-based regulators.

The presentation at the roundtable clarified the aim of the FRSC.

The roundtable improved my understanding of the purpose of FRSC.

Yes, it made the food regulatory system a bit more transparent to me.

By attending the roundtables, I met and got a better idea of who the FRSC members are.

It's good to see the policy process has changed with the new framework.

'Core stakeholders' and FRSC members valued discussions about the priorities for the food regulatory system. FRSC members commented:

Discussions with the core members were very fruitful and provided new input on topics.

The first roundtable was very valuable with blue sky thinking (e.g. digital disruption etc.). It was engaging and questioning if the food regulatory system is going to meet demand in the future.

These roundtables have informed my policy thinking because I now have a better understanding of industry concerns and motivations.

Other stakeholders who had more limited interaction with government on policy issues did improve their understanding of the system, but reported that they were not confident that they understood the way the system works and fits together. One stakeholder commented: "*I do not remember the food regulatory system being explained to me*". These stakeholders were typically invited to attend only one Roundtable. This meant they struggled with the part of the agenda item focussed on the system priorities and workplan, as they had neither a basic overview nor background in previous discussions. One stakeholder said:

I was invited to participate in the first part of the roundtable agenda. This discussion was about things that had occurred at previous meetings. I had no understanding of these matters. I had not attended the previous roundtables.

Some stakeholders said they reviewed the Food Regulation website before attending the roundtable. They said it provided useful information about the system.

The information on the food regulation website has improved.

In preparation for the roundtable I read the attachments and went on the FRSC website.

I was provided with (and have seen) the link to policy page on the food regulation website.

I was in the dark about the history of the roundtable. I went to the website but there were no previous minutes available.

At the second Roundtable participants were invited to speak briefly on what they saw as emerging issues that may require action now or in coming years. Twenty-four issues were raised and recorded in the meeting notes. More than half the stakeholders that completed the feedback form said the emerging issues discussion was either very or extremely useful. One stakeholder suggested each individual party could nominate and provide brief issues papers for discussion at the Roundtables.

4 What could be improved?

4.1 Relationships, transparency, trust

While stakeholder trust in the policy development process has improved as result of the Roundtables and other efforts, this trust remains fragile. Stakeholders reported uncertainty about whether their time and effort would result in further thinking or work by FRSC, or whether FRSC intended to continue to work with them on the issue discussed. Some stakeholders struggled to see the value of participation. Stakeholders were also sceptical about how and why some stakeholders – and not others – were invited to participate.

In answering the question “Do you feel more engaged in the policy process?” stakeholders stated:

Yes - I feel more engaged but I'm not sure of my involvement in outcomes or future opportunities to engage.

No - I see the roundtable as a one-off discussion. I got some minutes but that was it. How do we (stakeholders) get to raise the debate?

I'm undecided because I'm not sure what is happening next. Will I be asked to attend another meeting?

Most stakeholders expected to see progress in policy development as a result of the Roundtables. Not knowing what – if anything – would happen as a result of the Roundtable led to stakeholder disappointment. For example, most stakeholders who attended the ‘horticulture roundtable’ said their expectations were not met:

I would have liked to see an outcome from the session. What are the timelines and next steps?

My expectations were not met. I was left feeling we hadn't finished the job. I didn't know what was going to happen next.

The facilitator's execution of the horticulture roundtable wasn't good. No next steps were explained.

Stakeholders' trust was also diminished by a sense, at least in the horticulture Roundtable, that previous consultation has been disregarded (i.e. consultation by Victoria in 2016 as part of ‘Leafy Greens’ review, and earlier consultation about the development of a Primary Production and Processing Standard for horticulture):

There wasn't any continuity between this meeting and the previous leafy greens paper. The paper wasn't even mentioned.

These stakeholders were keen to see where the policy thinking was heading on the matter. Instead, they reported taking a backward step.

This feedback suggests it will be beneficial for FRSC to form, and communicate, a clear idea about what it hopes to achieve by working with the Roundtable, and how the Roundtables will inform FRSC's future work. This may require some adjustment of the scope and role of the

Roundtables, moving them beyond an information exchange into a collaboration or co-production model of stakeholder engagement.

Which stakeholders were invited to attend, and the way in which they were selected, was not clear to participants. This led to some stakeholders expressing concerns about government having a hidden agenda:

I left with a feeling of distrust in FRSC's decision making. I have less confidence in the system now due to conflicts of interest not being declared by those purporting to represent public health interests.

You really need to know the stakeholders your inviting and the authenticity of their opinions i.e. who are they really representing?

Participants expressed mixed views about the value and perception of having a core group of stakeholders. Some participants liked the concept of a core group of key stakeholders:

The core membership is good.

I think the core membership is good and then split the agenda for different participants.

Other participants stated:

The core membership creates exclusivity. It goes against the original intent of the roundtable.

The current core membership favours a few. FRSC needs a coordinated engagement plan. The food system has a complex variety of stakeholders that need to be engaged and engaged with differently.

For stakeholders to continue to devote time and resources to the Roundtables, their participation and the relationships will need to deliver value to them and the interests they represent. A relevant agenda helps participants justify attending the roundtable:

Because the agenda wasn't strong it was difficult to argue a case to travel.

Justifying travel expenditure is difficult. It helps if the topics are relevant.

If it was somewhere other than my home city I would need to think about the value of attending.

Stakeholders were not clear about how the agenda was set. FRSC members, in the main, said they attend the Roundtables to listen to stakeholders' views. However the agenda and papers are primarily influenced by FRSC. There were stakeholders that said they would like to nominate and provide papers and topics for a Roundtable. Greater collaboration with stakeholders to set the agenda itself, and provide more room on the agenda for stakeholder driven issues would improve trust and a sense of value for stakeholders.

4.2 Information sharing, dialogue, improved understanding

There is room to improve the usefulness of the Roundtable to FRSC. The Chair and other participants provided verbal updates to the FRSC meeting immediately following the Roundtable. A brief summary is subsequently included in the FRSC minutes. The Roundtables are yet to be fully integrated into FRSC, its agenda and policy discussions. The Forum and FRSC agenda paper templates include sections for 'strategic linkages' and 'stakeholder considerations'. In the period October 2016 to September 2017 no Forum or FRSC papers referred to the Roundtables, despite points of common policy consideration.

The stakeholders say they do not know what happened to the information they provided at the Roundtables. They assumed the information is considered by FRSC at its meeting the next day.

I do not know what's happening next or what has happened with the information from the day.

I'm not sure where the information went but I assume it would find its way to the Ministers.

Stakeholders expect and value timely, accurate and meaningful follow-up after the meetings. At the July 2016 design workshop, a recurring theme of the workshop was the desire from stakeholders to receive feedback following stakeholder engagement. While the Secretariat produced and circulated notes following the Roundtables, this communication did not meet the expectations of stakeholders. Very few participants in the roundtables remembered receiving any notes.

I have had no communication since the meeting. Maybe I received some minutes? What is going to happen or happened after the roundtable? When is the next one and have I been cut out of any subsequent meetings on this issue?

Participants were particularly disappointed in the quality of the report (produced by the external facilitator) following the horticulture roundtable.

A report from the day was provided but it was extremely poor quality with no outcomes or next steps mentioned.

Feedback from stakeholders unable to attend the Roundtables highlighted that valuable information from the Roundtable did not flow beyond the closed doors of the Roundtable.

I'm not sure how those that did not attend received insights about the roundtable.

One participant interviewed suggested that the commitment to 'Chatham House rules' prevented circulating information about the Roundtables beyond the participants. A relaxation of strict confidentiality, coupled with collaboration with all participants to settle the post-Roundtable report would improve transparency and increase the value of the Roundtable to stakeholders beyond those present.

4.3 FRSC and food regulatory system activities: better understood and more informed

Stakeholders that participated on an ad hoc basis according to the 'special topic' were less familiar with the food regulatory system than 'core stakeholders'. Of the 11 'special topic' stakeholders interviewed, most reported they now have a better understanding of the system. However, this understanding is still incomplete:

Yes, I have a better understanding but the FRSC system seems more unclear than the FSANZ system.

The roundtable furthered my understanding of the system, but I need more information to fully understand it.

I expected to learn more about how the policy process would work and what the next steps in policy would be.

I do not really understand the system. We are not linked to the system. It is something we want to do better.

I have no idea about FRSC. I thought it was a Commonwealth organised consultation.

This feedback demonstrates the difficulties in communicating a complex system for stakeholders to understand. There is value in FRSC continuing to communicate key messages about the food regulatory system to stakeholders. One stakeholder suggested stakeholders' understanding of the food regulatory system could be improved by having a case-study policy issue to follow through the system. This may be a problematic suggestion to implement given the length of time it can take for policy matters to progress through the system.

Only three of the 11 'special topic' stakeholders felt they knew where the policy topic discussion they attended was sitting in the policy system. Others reported:

No, I do not know, and no next steps were explained.

No, I do not know, and I would like a clearer understanding of this.

Stakeholders see value in FRSC widening its engagement to a much larger audience. When asked 'Who else should be involved in the Roundtables' stakeholders said:

More public health groups

More producers and manufacturers

More industry researchers

One stakeholder suggested 'everyday consumers' should be invited to attend the roundtables.

FRSC has previously trialled (and abandoned) a similar stakeholder engagement model in the past. From 2004 to 2010 FRSC and the Implementation Sub Committee for Food Regulation (ISFR) held six food regulation consultation forums targeted at large groups of stakeholders. The last forum was held in 2010. That forum was attended by 115 people from a diverse range of industry, consumer, public health and government bodies. The agenda included a briefing on the food regulatory system, presentations on key areas of work, a session on identifying issues and a feedback session reporting on issues raised by stakeholders at the previous forum. Participants were also invited to make, and made, suggestions for a 2011 forum. FRSC did not hold a 2011 forum

FRSC did not continue with further forums, on the basis that stakeholders and government did not consider the forums to be successful. The 2015 perceptions audit identified this was most likely due to the forums focusing on 'pushing out' information and what was required was a 'two way dialogue' in which stakeholders were given an opportunity to speak.

A larger stakeholder forum would enable FRSC to engage a wider range and diversity of stakeholders. FRSC's more recent stakeholder engagement experience, and feedback in this review and the perceptions audit, could inform the design of a new forum. FRSC could consider co-designing a stakeholder forum with input from the core group of Roundtable stakeholders.

5 Observations

5.1 Resourcing

Organising an event requires considerable effort, planning, resourcing and budget. FRSC members, host jurisdictions and the Secretariat invested substantial resources into the Roundtables. Most of the resources in organising the Roundtable were related to arranging the special topic discussion. This involved planning, briefing facilitators, developing pre-reading materials and identifying and interacting with large numbers of stakeholders attending the roundtables.

The host jurisdiction typically:

- arranged and paid for the venue
- developed the attendee list and liaised with FRSC in relation to the agenda
- engaged and briefed the facilitator and guest speakers.

The Secretariat:

- issued invitations and acted as the contact point for invitees and stakeholders for all Roundtables
- coordinated the pre-brief for the Chair and other key presenters
- run the logistics on the day
- drafted and circulated meeting notes to participants.

The role of the Secretariat varied with each Roundtable. The third Roundtable required the most resources from the Secretariat. The Secretariat provided administrative support to the

organising group, meeting on a weekly basis over teleconference for a nine week period. In addition, the Secretariat provided input into meeting logistics, prepared and circulated weekly outcome notes and action items and delivered on action items relevant to the Secretariat.

5.2 Logistics

Planning and delivery of the Roundtables are critical to success.

Planning is important. Putting thought into the topic. Briefing the facilitator is critical. Being clear about expectations.

Given the diversity of views and complexity of issues, supporting the Chair with an independent facilitator was well received in principle. Participants appreciated the facilitator of the sugar roundtable topic:

The facilitator of the meeting did a really good job.

The presenters and facilitators at the first two roundtables were very good.

Conversely, many participants were disappointed in the facilitator for the horticulture Roundtable:

The facilitator of the roundtable I attended was very poor and did not understand the topic. This limited discussion.

The facilitator and process of the day let it down.

The facilitator's execution of the horticulture roundtable wasn't good.

The horticulture facilitator was very disappointing. Having set objectives is important.

If I had flown in specifically for the roundtable I would have left feeling disappointed.

Some stakeholders said time was lost in the Roundtable discussions due to canvassing the opinions of a large group of participants. It was suggested that new digital tools such as 'sli.do' could increase time efficiency during interactive discussions.

5.3 Location

Where and when Roundtables are held is important. Some stakeholders indicated that Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne would make it easier for them to attend. Some stakeholders found it difficult to attend the Roundtable in Adelaide. They said it required allowing additional travel time and, in some cases, more than one flight.

There are not-for-profit organisations that have expressed a wish to attend the Roundtables but do not have the financial capacity to cover the costs of attendance.

In the July 2016 design workshop, one stakeholder raised concerns with FRSC that the travel costs and resources for the representatives to attend Roundtables is prohibitive. In September 2016, FRSC considered the matter and rejected the idea of paying travel costs for organisations to attend Roundtables. Stakeholders subsequently provided feedback that attendance is cost-prohibitive:

The funding for not-for-profits needs restructuring to encourage participation.

We couldn't attend in person due to budget constraints. The first two roundtables had no teleconference facilities available.

Alternative communication channels may provide options to involve these stakeholders in the Roundtable meetings. These options include teleconference, video conference and webinar. There is value in FRSC considering implementing one or all these alternative communications options to make it easier for stakeholders to participate in the Roundtables.

5.4 Timing and frequency

FRSC members generally indicated a preference to convene Roundtables to coincide with FRSC meetings. This makes it easier for FRSC members to attend and justify the travel costs.

Stakeholders said they will attend the Roundtable regardless of whether it aligns with the FRSC meeting schedule. The stakeholders' drivers for attending the Roundtables are based on the importance of the policy issues to their organisation. Some stakeholders indicated that members expected them to attend:

It was important for our organisation to be there.

My members expect me to attend these things to understand and influence policy.

The roundtables provide our organisation with an opportunity to influence FRSC and a wide variety of other stakeholders.

It is useful to have these forums where we can attend to represent our stakeholders.

Participants indicated a preference for two or three Roundtables each year. Those involved in organising a Roundtable suggested no more than two per year could be managed given the associated work load.

FRSC is planning to conduct additional consultation this year on topics including energy labelling of alcoholic products, health star ratings scheme and on the foodborne illness reduction strategy. This consultation will be in addition to the Roundtables. It will place increased burden on the Secretariat, FRSC members and staff involved in organising consultations. There may be value in FRSC developing and maintaining a consultation calendar.

5.5 Opportunities to learn from other government stakeholder forums

The stakeholder engagement forums convened by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) could provide a model to guide reframing the Roundtables. These are focused on:

- building stakeholder relationships
- maintaining dialogue with key stakeholders, and
- working together in partnership.

See Appendix 4 for information about these other government stakeholder forums.

6 Conclusion

The Roundtable has delivered the key intended benefits: better relationships between FRSC and stakeholders, encouraging the exchange of ideas, stakeholder awareness about the food regulatory system, and enabling FRSC to access a broad range of interests and evidence to inform policy development.

Most stakeholders who participated in the Roundtables are more engaged with and informed about FRSC's policy development role. Most FRSC members developed a deeper understanding of the breadth of interests affected by the food regulatory system.

As FRSC's stakeholder engagement approach develops, the contribution of the Roundtables will also change to complement these other engagement activities.

FRSC now has the opportunity to increase the value of the Roundtables – to both FRSC and stakeholders – by narrowing the focus, broadening the reach, sharing responsibility for the agenda and improving pre- and post- Roundtable engagement. To deliver this, the key recommendation of this review is to convene both a Roundtable of key stakeholders representing health, consumer and industry interests; and a public stakeholder engagement forum.

This revised model for general stakeholder engagement, coupled with FRSC's increasing

stakeholder engagement around a number of specific issues and interests, will support FRSC to build and maintain relationships and ultimately, confidence in the system.

Thank you to FRSC for undertaking this initiative. I would like to attend these in the future.

7 Recommendations

1. That the Roundtable continues with changes to the terms of reference. This Roundtable would be:
 - held at a frequency to be determined by participants, with reference to the timing and frequency of other targeted stakeholder engagement activities
 - hosted in a major city on the east coast of Australia to encourage in-person participation
 - invitation only, with participants drawn from key stakeholders representing health, consumer and industry interests are invited to participate (with flexibility to include additional stakeholder groups or technical experts may, considering the agenda and priorities of the system)
 - supported by pre-reading materials to enable informed participation, and pre-consultation
 - technologically enabled - alternative communication channels will be provided for participants unable to attend in person such as teleconference, video conference or webinar facilities.
2. That the Roundtable has a standard agenda items on the food system priorities, FRSC workplan and emerging issues, with additional agenda items able to be added by participants.
3. That the Roundtable terms of reference enable any person to provide a written report to the Roundtable for its consideration; to be pre-circulated and included under the standing agenda item 'correspondence received'.
4. That the Roundtable settle a summary of discussion, either in the meeting or offline within a few days of the meeting; that this is circulated to FRSC the next day for out of session for noting; and then published on the Food Regulation website.
5. That FRSC settle and provide a short response or comment to the Roundtable within three months of the Roundtable.
6. That a public stakeholder engagement forum is convened. This stakeholder engagement forum would be:
 - held at a frequency to be determined by FRSC, having consideration for the timing of other related 'open invitation' stakeholder engagement activities
 - open to a wide group of participants to increase FRSC's reach for communication and engagement
 - focused on sharing information to improve understanding of, and confidence in, the food regulatory system, priorities for the system and identify emerging issues.
 - Interactive, and encouraging of stakeholder participation
7. That the Secretariat draft a 'summary of discussion' for the stakeholder engagement forum, that this is circulated to FRSC for out of session endorsement; and then published on the Food Regulation website.
8. That FRSC maintain a consultation calendar to enable FRSC to identify gaps and overlap, and pre-plan allocation of stakeholder engagement resources.

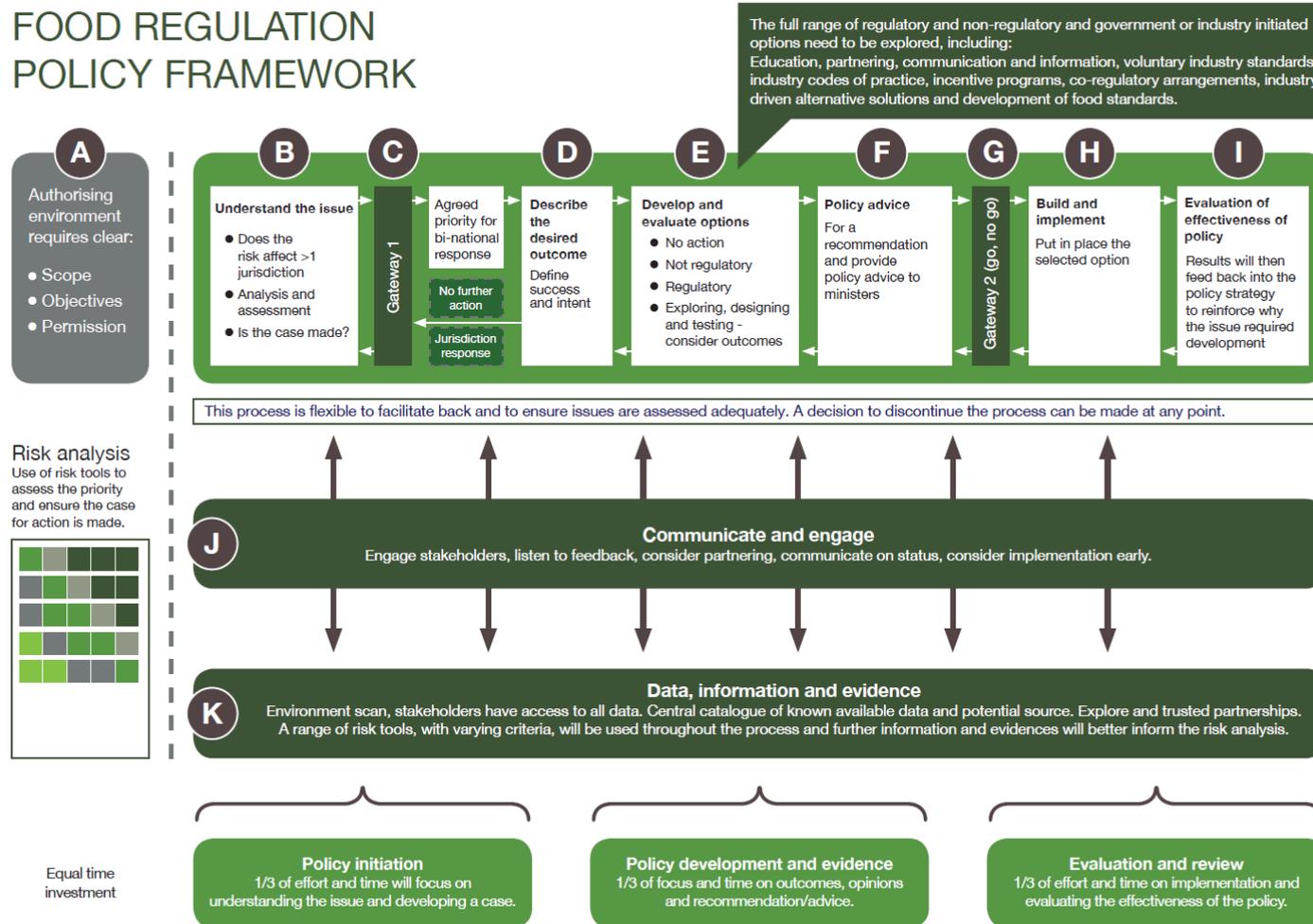
8 References

The following documents were referenced and provide background to the project.

Document Name
Attachment 1 <i>Communications Strategy for the Food Regulatory System March</i> Newgate Australia 2016
Attachment 2 <i>Perceptions Audit Food Regulation Standing Committee December</i> Newgate Australia 2015

Appendix 1 Food Regulation Policy Framework

FOOD REGULATION POLICY FRAMEWORK



Appendix 2 FRSC Stakeholder Roundtable Trial Terms of Reference

Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) Stakeholder Roundtable Trial

Terms of Reference

The Food Regulation Roundtable (the Roundtable) trial is an initiative of the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC). The Roundtable will provide FRSC and stakeholders with the opportunity to strengthen relationships, share information and improve visibility of activities that are being progressed within the food regulation system. The Roundtable will be trialled initially in conjunction with FRSC 40 (scheduled for 16 September 2016 in Brisbane).

Background

The regulation system cut across a number of parts of the supply chain including public health, biosecurity, agriculture, manufacture, retail and consumers. This includes food policy, development and enforcement of food safety standards, livestock health and incident response. The effective mitigation, coordination and management of issues are critical in underpinning confidence in our system.

The food regulation system is complex. FRSC commissioned a consultancy to better understand stakeholder perceptions of the bi-national food regulatory system. It found that stakeholders found potential value in the regulatory system, but unlocking this is challenging. Stakeholders have difficulty with the intricacy of the system, its transparency, lack of clarity regarding engagement mechanisms, and roles and responsibilities. The Roundtable events are one platform to engage with stakeholders and ensure strategic policy development is undertaken with consideration of stakeholder views.

Purpose

The Roundtable events will increase effective collaboration between government and key stakeholders through:

- a. consider priorities for inclusion on the FRSC workplan;
- b. discuss key policy issues, including matters that are currently on the FRSC workplan;
- c. undertake environment scanning so that FRSC members are informed about the emerging issues for both industry and non-industry stakeholders;
- d. avoid focusing on specific standards;
- e. provide a forum for the sharing of information and a mechanism for building trust; and
- f. work together to achieve a stronger evidence base for recommendations to Ministers.

Roles of Roundtable Participants

Roundtable participants are expected to:

- contribute honestly and in good faith;
- have reasonable expectations about the opportunities and limitations of the Roundtable;
- acknowledge that Ministers may make decisions that may not align with the views of each stakeholder.

The focus of the Roundtable will be on ensuring that the views of stakeholders are well understood and are used to inform Ministers (along with input from others).

Confidentiality

All participants must observe Chatham House Rules. Any external communication must be agreed by roundtable participants and endorsed by FRSC.

Roundtable trial period

The Roundtable will be trialled for a period of 18 months with the first Roundtable on 15 September 2016. Evaluation will occur 18 months after the first Roundtable and will be conducted by an external party. The Roundtable Workshop Report (2016) and Newgate Perceptions Report (2015) will form baseline inputs for the evaluation.

Membership

Membership will consist of three levels of representation:

- Government representation:
 - One FRSC member from each jurisdiction (with no delegation to non-FRSC members)
 - FSANZ
 - ALGA
- Core membership comprising senior representatives from key stakeholders in the food regulation system at CEO or senior executive level:
 - Choice,
 - Consumer NZ,
 - the Australian Food and Grocery Council,
 - the New Zealand Food and Grocery Council and the
 - Public Health Association (representing Australia and New Zealand).
- Additional stakeholders will be invited to each Roundtable in reference to the agenda based on relevance and need. Additional members will be agreed by FRSC at the time of setting the agenda. They may represent stakeholder groups or provide technical expertise.

Chairperson

The Chairperson for the Roundtables will be the Chair of FRSC.

Roundtable support

Members will be provided with an agenda, short background paper and other materials as required a week prior to each roundtable. The Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources will provide support for the first Roundtable.

Appendix 3 Roundtable Trial – Questionnaire

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in our short interview. The interview will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

We aim to speak to the participants in the three trial FRSC roundtables.

The aim is to collect information to understand participant's experiences of the roundtable(s) and identify opportunities to improve future roundtables.

All responses are confidential, so please answer as honestly as possible

FRSC Members Questions:

For discussion

1. Thinking about the original goals of the roundtable do you think they were successful?
2. Did the roundtables meet your expectations? How?
3. How did the roundtables inform FRSC's considerations or your thinking on policy matters?
4. How did you prepare for participation in the roundtables? Did you have enough information to participate?
5. Do you see value in continuing to participate in the roundtables?
6. Who else should be involved in the roundtables?
7. What improvements could be made for future roundtables?
8. Is there a way for information and ideas to move more easily between FRSC and the roundtable?

About the meetings

1. How easy or difficult was it for you to attend the roundtables?
2. Do you think the time allocated for the roundtable is satisfactory?
3. How frequent do you think the roundtables should be?
4. Were the feedback forms useful? Do you have any ideas for improving these?

About your experience in organising a roundtable:

1. What did you do? How much of your time was involved?
2. Do you see value in being involved in organising a future roundtable?
3. Do you have any suggestions for improving the organisation of the roundtables?

Core Members Questions

For discussion:

1. Did the roundtables meet your expectations? How?
2. How did you prepare for participation in the roundtables? Did you have enough information to participate?
3. How did the roundtables inform your understanding of the food regulatory system and the policy process?
4. Do you feel more engaged in the policy process?
5. Did the roundtable influence your thinking or actions?
6. Do you think the roundtables have improved or influenced government policy? How would you know?
7. Do you have suggestions about the way for information and ideas to move from the roundtable to FRSC?
8. What improvements could be made for future roundtables?

About the meetings

1. How easy or difficult was it for you to attend the roundtables?
2. Do you think the time allocated for the roundtable is satisfactory?
3. How frequent do you think the roundtables should be?
4. Do you see value in continuing to participate in the roundtables?
5. Who else should be involved in the roundtables?
6. Were the feedback forms useful? Do you have any ideas for improving these?

Roundtable 'special topic' stakeholder participant questions

For discussion:

1. Did the roundtable meet your expectations? How?
2. How did you prepare for participation in the roundtable? Did you have enough information to participate?
3. How did the roundtable inform your understanding of the food regulatory system and the policy process?
4. Do you feel more engaged in the policy process?
5. Do you have a clear understanding of where the topic you discussed is sitting in the food regulatory system policy process? and any next steps?
6. Did the roundtable influence your thinking or actions?
7. Who else should have been involved in the roundtable?
8. What improvements could be made for future roundtables?

About the meetings

1. How easy or difficult was it for you to attend the roundtable?
2. Do you think the time allocated for the roundtable is satisfactory?
3. Were the feedback forms useful? Do you have any ideas for improving these?

Appendix 4 Other government stakeholder forums

Other Government stakeholder forums

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) established the Consumer Consultative Committee in 2001 to provide a forum through which consumer protection issues could be addressed collaboratively between our organisation and consumer representatives.

The committee meets three times a year and provides comment on:

- emerging issues that may be of concern to consumers
- information dissemination strategies to enhance communication with consumers and community and consumer groups
- other matters that are relevant to issues as requested by the ACCC.

Members work in partnership to consult and progress key consumer issues to assist us to:

- improve consumer and community understanding of the role of the ACCC
 - facilitate consumer and community organisations' access to administrative processes of the ACCC
 - educate consumers/users about their rights and responsibilities in relation to emerging consumer issues
 - develop education and information strategies.
-

Other Government stakeholder forums

FSANZ engages with consumers, industry representatives and public health professionals through the following two committees:

- **The Consumer and Public Health Dialogue (CPHD)** is a consultative forum, which aims to build stronger relationships between consumer and public health groups and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). The CPHD is made up of representatives from peak consumer and public health bodies, public health academics and indigenous representatives from both countries. It meets biannually in Canberra and Wellington with a video link-up.

The CPHD helps to broaden FSANZ's understanding of key consumer and public health issues relating to food and helps to inform our communication activities. It also helps us to better target the research that we do.

- **The Retailers and Manufacturers Liaison Committee (RMLC)** provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue between FSANZ and industry. The RMLC allows members to engage in informed discussion about specific issues relating to standards development and standards setting processes and to collaborate on food safety emergencies.

The purpose of the committee is to:

- maintain an ongoing dialogue between members to improve information sharing on issues of common interest
- review, assess and if necessary revises the protocol used in the event of an industry- based food safety emergency (food safety emergencies – a communication protocol).

These groups and committees do not provide scientific advice to FSANZ.