

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From the Australia and New Zealand Implementation Subcommittee on Food Regulation (ISFR - formerly ISC) meeting held in August 2013

ISFR1 - August 2013

The Implementation Subcommittee on Food Regulation:

The Australia New Zealand Implementation Subcommittee (ISC) was formed in 2003 to develop and oversee a consistent approach across jurisdictions to implementation and enforcement of food regulations and standards, regardless of whether food is sourced from domestic producers, export-registered establishments or from imports. The name was changed in 2013, to the Implementation Subcommittee on Food Regulation (ISFR), to better reflect the role of the Subcommittee.

ISFR will develop, or assist in the development of guidelines to facilitate consistent enforcement of food regulations by food regulators, which will also be aimed at minimising cost to industry and meeting the objective of minimum effective regulation.

The ISFR has membership from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, each State/Territory jurisdiction, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), New Zealand, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and a representative of local government. These members will be either heads of their agencies or operational experts at a senior level with capacity to make and implement decisions about enforcement issues in their jurisdictions.

For further information on any of the items below, ISFR encourages local government representatives to contact their state or territory government contact.

Summary of key matters of interest to local government discussed at ISFR1:

1. Implementation of the revised Ministerial Policy Guideline for Food Safety Management for general food services and the retail sector.
2. The Local Government toolkit project.
3. Through-chain investigation protocol for egg-associated outbreaks.
4. National Food Incident Response Protocol.
5. Update on Regulatory Listeria Management Guidelines
6. Updates on jurisdictional developments.

Summary text on these items is as follows:

1. Implementation of the revised Ministerial Policy Guideline for Food Safety Management for general food services and the retail sector.

A working group, with representation from all jurisdictions and local government, was formed earlier this year to implement the revised Ministerial Policy Guideline for Food Safety Management in Australia (retail/food service). The working group has developed a project plan and milestones. The next steps will be to develop a stakeholder engagement plan for key local government and industry stakeholders. It is anticipated that stakeholder engagement will commence toward the end of the year. The working group is considering a range of options to allow food businesses some flexibility in demonstrating compliance.

There will be regular progress reports produced from ISFR over the anticipated two year timeframe of the project. The project will include completion of the 2012 food safety management toolkit project.

2. The Local Government toolkit project.

The reconvened toolkit working group has met and discussed the concept of a minimum set of agreed principles/models/frameworks to be used as a basis of identifying common ground within the local government sector, for use across states and territories. This group will interact with the Working Group on the Ministerial Policy Guideline for the retail sector to avoid duplication.

The approach allows for guideline documents which are consistent, flexible and sensible in their application and which recognises the diversity of approaches to food regulation by the different jurisdictions.

3. Through-chain investigation protocol for egg-associated outbreaks.

A draft guidance protocol for the through-chain investigation of egg-associated outbreaks was developed at the last Subcommittee meeting in February. The investigation guidelines were developed in consultation with key stakeholders including the Australian Egg Corporation Limited. ISFR endorsed the investigation protocol as a guidance document, which will be uploaded to the ISFR page on the Food Regulation website. Separate checklists have been produced for investigation at retail and on-farm/primary production.

4. National Food Incident Response Protocol.

An updated National Food Incident Response Protocol (NFIRP) was endorsed by the Subcommittee in February 2013. The document now provides greater clarity as to what defines a national incident to trigger the use of the protocol. It will be uploaded onto the Food Regulation website.

The Protocol will be reviewed as part of any post-incident review.

It was also agreed that a joint horticulture sector/government incident response protocol be developed by FSANZ, using existing state-based protocols.

5. Revision of regulatory *Listeria* management guidelines.

Regulatory guidelines for the control of *Listeria monocytogenes*, as published by the former Meat Standards Committee in 2008, are being reviewed to ensure currency. A number of other documents will also be reviewed to provide national guidance documents to facilitate industry and government compliance with the Food Standards Code 1.6.1 for meat and dairy products. It is proposed that the amended version of the guidelines will be published on the Food Regulation website once completed and endorsed.

6. Updates on jurisdictional developments.

Key matters were:

- **ACT** - From 1 September 2013 all registered food businesses are required to appoint a Food Safety Supervisor for hygiene and food safety. They must complete prescribed training, which will remain current for 5 years. *Food Stall Guidelines* have been developed to assist businesses, charity groups and individuals at outdoor festivals and events, and are being translated into the 12 most commonly used foreign languages in the ACT. A guide to Food Safety Supervisors has been published to provide general information and FAQs. The University of Canberra will be commencing a course for Environmental Health Officers.
- **NT** - Work is continuing on developing regulations under the *Food Act 2004*. The NT is currently undertaking a review of all food related Standard Operating Procedures dealing with food and food related activities. Major updates on food safety fact sheets for publication are posted on Secure NT.
- **WA** - WA Department of Health is considering re-forming a collaborative group with local government to focus on policy and implementation issues. The review of the *Food Regulations 2009* will commence shortly (around October 2013) followed by a review of the *Food Act 2008*. DoH has uploaded a publication *Food Act 2008 Enforcement Agency Reporting Information* to its Public Health website.
- **Queensland** - Department of Health is currently undertaking a review of the *Food Act 2006* in a state-wide endeavour to reduce red tape (provisions under consideration include the notification of food safety supervisors and clarification of temporary premises). Circulars on common issues under the provisions of the *Food Act 2006* are distributed to support local government. DoH will also commence collating information from local governments in relation to allowing companion dogs in outdoor dining.
- **NSW** - The NSW Food Authority has reviewed the 12 month voluntary trial of 'Scores on Doors' (food hygiene rating scheme), and is now looking at ways to extend participation in the program and build the critical mass necessary to realise the program's potential through consultation with key stakeholders. Reviews of Local Government Compliance and Enforcement and also of the Food Safety Supervisor program are also underway. The Food Authority has undertaken over 170 assessments of Fast Choices compliance since February 2012 and is working one-on-one with outlets to address areas of non-compliance. The Local Government Unit has prepared a number of assistance materials for council EHO's including a communiqué on the transportation of food. The Authority has also produced *Guidelines for food at temporary events, Guidelines*

for mobile food vending vehicles, Food safety for take-away chicken shops and Keeping fresh Asian-style noodles safe to eat. The NSW Food Authority is also conducting intensive Authorised Officer (Local Government) training sessions. The Food Authority continues to meet regularly with local government in a range of fora and is working with 16 councils who failed to meet inspection targets for 2011-2012.

- **SA** - A Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Health and the SA Local Government association establishes responsibilities under the *Food Act 2001*. A joint work plan is established under the MOU. A toolkit is being developed to assist in consistent interpretation of the Food Act and Food Safety Standards. A pilot draft risk assessment system, based on the national Business Sector Food Safety Risk Priority Classification Framework is due to be rolled out in September-December 2013. Most of the recommendations of the State Parliamentary inquiry into Food Rating Programs (scores on doors) have been agreed to by the Minister.
- **Tasmania** - Amendments have been made to the *Food Act 2003* to extend the definition of the term 'Food Safety Program' to cover all documented risk requirements; clarify the ability of Authorised Officers to share information across municipal boundaries; provide for state-wide registration of temporary food stalls; and enhance auditor reporting. Options are being explored for possible changes to the criteria for registering food businesses under the *Food Act 2003*. In April 2013 the Department of Health and Human Services together with the University of Tasmania delivered a short course for EHOs on Food Microbiology, food sampling and surveys. DHHS also presented an information session to EHOs on the new *Tasmanian Food Safety Manual for Education and Care Services*.
- **Victoria** - The Department of Health (DoH) annual Local Government Forum, which attracts about 70% of EHOs is scheduled to be held on 20 August 2013. Training sessions for cook-chill processes for AEHOs completed in August 2013. The DoH has developed guidance to support local government officers to make informed decisions about appointing technicians to undertake food safety work (the training provides a common base set of skills for low risk food safety technicians). DoH is also undertaking a major project with local government on developing better consistency and compliance checks of food premises.

Next ISFR meeting

March 2014, Sydney