

FOOD STANDARDS NEWS



The Newsletter of Food Standards Australia New Zealand

July 2004

OUR 50TH EDITION

We are celebrating the 50th edition of our newsletter. During its 50 editions the newsletter has reported on new and revised food standards, scientific developments, emerging issues, new organisational arrangements, changes in food regulatory arrangements, new appointments, and challenges for industry, governments and consumers alike.

Our newsletter has been well received – and the move to integrate electronic distribution has assisted us to extend our reach by way of the internet and our electronic information service.

My thanks to all who have been involved in its development and publication. The staff involved deserve rich rewards for their tireless efforts.

I am confident our next 50 editions will also attract critical acclaim from our readers.

Graham Peachey
Chief Executive Officer



Official opening for Wellington Office

New Zealand Minister for Food Safety Annette King and Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing Hon Trish Worth recently opened the new office of Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Wellington.

'This expanded new office for FSANZ will take on the role of developing new standards for both countries on labelling and information, including a major body of work on nutrition, health and related claims,' said Ms King.

New Zealand is well represented in the arrangement for standards-setting, and with the increased capability of the Wellington office will enable an expanded role in FSANZ project work. The Nutrition, Health and Related Claims Project is a key example.

The expanded New Zealand office will also make communication easier for consumers, industry and professional groups as more staff will be able to get out and about' said Ms King.

The Hon Trish was unable to be in attendance at the opening but sent a pre-recorded video message celebrating the opening of the new expanded offices for FSANZ.

'I am pleased to see capacity increased in New Zealand through the opening of these new premises and would like to welcome the new staff to FSANZ - including both those who have joined us from New Zealand and those who have moved over from Canberra. I look forward to the Wellington office playing a key role in FSANZ's future,' said Ms Worth.

The opening also introduced the new General Manager Food Standards New Zealand, Dean Stockwell. FSANZ's Chief Executive Officer Graham Peachey, General Manager Food Standards (Canberra), Melanie Fisher, representing the FSANZ Chair, Peter Milne and some of the FSANZ Board members and staff were also in attendance.

Both Ministers confirmed that the newly restructured FSANZ is well placed to deal with challenges in setting food standards that will protect public health and safety, meet the needs of consumers and industry and benefit trade for both countries.

The celebration also welcomed the new member of FSANZ Board, Dr Laurence Eyres and gave an opportunity to thank the outgoing

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Register now...

Food Safety Conference 2004

11 – 12 October 2004

Gold Coast, Queensland

Go to page 3 for more details on the conference or visit the conference website to register online
www.foodsafetyconference.com.au

« *FSANZ Updates continued*

member Professor Ray Winger for his hard work, commitment and contributions to the business of the FSANZ Board.

Minister King officiated the opening of the Wellington office by unveiling a plaque and the cutting of a celebratory cake.

Hon Annette King pictured with FSANZ staff at opening. (L-R) Melanie Fisher, GM Food Standards (Canberra), Margaret Curran, Vicky Scott, Dean Stockwell, GM Food Standards Wellington, Maureen Wempe, Hon Annette King, Tracey Rumble and Dr Bob Boyd.



Food Safety Week 2003 report

The 2003 Food Safety Week theme, 'Cooking for Family and Friends', highlighted the dangers in catering for larger groups of people than normal in a domestic setting. As always the Food Safety Information Council's strategy was to use the media to get food safety messages to as many members of the Australian public as possible.

While the whole population was the main target of this campaign, we particularly wanted to get messages to men as our research in 2002 showed a greater lack of knowledge of basic food safety precautions such as hand-washing among men. The theme was a good opportunity to get messages to this audience, as men who do not normally cook often do so when entertaining at BBQs.

Other activities

Considerable work has gone into responding to requests for information from the public through our website, which receives a steady flow of questions from the public. Where these questions relate directly to consumer food

handling, they are answered promptly with advice from members of our Technical Committee. Where they are about issues outside the Council's mandate, they are passed on to the relevant authorities, such as FSANZ for questions relating to the Food Standards Code or to local or State environment health officers where they relate to breaches of the Code. We also often receive questions on diet and other health-related issues which we pass on to the relevant agencies. The Council's e-mail facility has proved to be a very useful service in providing a point of contact for the public and media on food issues.

New publications reflecting the theme for the 2003 campaign were prepared and added to a range of fact sheets, articles games etc already on the Council's website.

The website was redesigned and is now very user friendly. All existing website material was reviewed this year to bring it up-to-date with the latest knowledge.

Coming up in 2004

Food Safety Week 2004 will highlight the danger of food poisoning for vulnerable people: the very young, the elderly and those who are immune suppressed due to illness or medical treatments.

The Council is also planning to expand its membership categories to allow a reduced cost membership for local government agencies and individual members.

You can get more information about the Food Safety Information Council on our website www.foodsafety.asn.au

If you are interested in joining us as a member of the Council, or want to participate in any way in Food Safety Week 2004, contact me on (02) 62544896 or e-mail to info@foodsafety.asn.au or brigitte.cox@foodscience.afisc.csiro.au

Tania Bradley, Project Officer, Food Safety Information Council

An update on Country of Origin Labelling

In December 2003, the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) endorsed the Policy Guideline for the country of origin labelling of food. The Policy Guideline mandates country of origin labelling on the grounds of enabling consumers to make informed choices.

At present, country of origin labelling requirements are set out in a transitional standard, Standard 1.1A.3 that was carried over from the old Australian *Food Standards Code*. This transitional standard, which will remain in place until country of origin issues are resolved, does not apply to New Zealand, other than certain requirements as they relate to wine and wine products. In New Zealand,

there is a provision under fair trading legislation for voluntary country of origin labelling.

The transitional standard requires the label on or attached to all packaged food to contain a statement that identifies the country or countries in which the food was made or produced. This requirement may be satisfied by including on the label a statement identifying the country in which the food was packed for retail sale, and if any of the ingredients do not originate in this country, a statement to the effect that the food is made from local or imported ingredients, as applicable.

In addition, certain unpackaged foods, namely uncooked fish, vegetables, nuts and fresh fruit that originate from anywhere other than

Australia and New Zealand, are also required to be labelled with their country of origin, or a statement indicating that they are imported.

FSANZ has raised a new proposal, Proposal P292 in order to develop a Standard for country of origin labelling consistent with the Policy Guideline. The Initial Assessment Report for P292 was available on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au for public consultation. Submissions closed on 7 July 2004.

It is anticipated that the second round of public consultation will be held from early November 2004 and the FSANZ Board will consider a final assessment report in March 2005.

The inaugural Food Safety Conference 2004

Future Directions: 11 –12 October 2004

The Food Safety Conference 2004 examines food policy and regulatory arrangements aimed at providing a broad-based approach to ensure that public health outcomes are achieved, while catering for consumer expectations and encouraging industry innovation.

It will also look at recent international trends and experiences in managing food safety in order to learn more about maintaining an optimal balance in Australia between market driven incentives and government intervention. This will help to develop a vibrant food industry that is responsive to consumers' demands, while delivering food that is among the safest in the world.

Specific issues include:

- an increased emphasis on consumer requirements
- globalisation of food supplies placing pressures on distribution chains
- increasing competition on costs
- emerging food safety issues in a new and challenging environment
- appropriate and effective regulatory arrangements at various government levels.

The Conference draws on both domestic and international experience, highlighting the

emerging issues, the challenges and the directions for the future. The speakers bring together expertise from within and outside the region. They will set the scene for lively panel discussions that should provide insights for industry, consumers and governments alike.

The conference will be held at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre on 11 & 12 October.

The [flyer](#) sets out the main themes of the conference, and presents the speakers and the program.

For further information visit the conference website at www.foodsafetyconference.com.au where you will be able to [register online](#).

Coordinated Food Survey Plan endorsed by ISC

On 10 June 2004 the Food Regulation Standing Committee's Implementation Sub Committee (ISC) agreed to a proposal by FSANZ to establish and operate a Coordinated Food Survey Plan. This agreement was the culmination of FSANZ's endeavours over the last year to strengthen the collaboration between jurisdictions in the planning and undertaking food survey activities that may have bi-national or national significance.

ISC recognised that there were significant advantages in implementing agreed national survey priorities across Australia and New Zealand in a coordinated manner. These potential advantages include:

- some sharing of costs and more effective use of limited resources across jurisdictions;
- more statistically robust studies and methodology;
- a higher level of scrutiny and peer review;
- collaboration of laboratory activities across jurisdictions;
- less duplication of surveys and related activities;
- promotion of greater information sharing;
- better and more cohesive risk management and communication; and
- the examination of alternative sources of funding.

Subject to some refinement by an ISC working group, ISC endorsed the first *Interim Coordinated Food Survey Plan* which runs from July 2004 to June 2007. This includes a number of cross-jurisdictional surveys proposals or surveys that are of national or binational significance. The ISC working group will oversee the implementation of the Plan, with the Food Surveillance Network addressing the technical issues that will arise.

FSANZ's CEO Graham Peachey said that this is an important collaborative agreement, which will help to ensure that surveillance resources across Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand are used in the most efficient way in addressing key priority areas.

Seafood and poultry meat standards move to public consultation

Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards are an important element of the whole-of-chain approach taken by governments to food safety in Australia and the means by which the safety of the food supply is undergoing continual improvement.

PPP Standards apply to Australia only. New Zealand presently has its own system for setting these standards.

The Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council decided to adopt this approach in 2002 to ensure that consumers continue to have the highest confidence in the safety of the food they eat. PPP standards will be mandatory national regulations, enforced by all States and Territories.

Australia has one of the safest food supplies in the world. However, foodborne illness is a growing public health problem – a problem

that current food safety management systems do not totally address.

The new approach to food safety, with its through-chain attitude, will include consideration of the introduction of management interventions at the primary end of the food-production process to reduce possible hazards later in the chain.

Primary Production and Processing Standards will ensure that food businesses in the primary industries are clear about their obligations to produce safe food and the need to regard food safety as an essential part of their business practice.

Seafood PPP standard

Seafood was selected as the first PPP standard to be developed. Work commenced in October 2002 and a Standard Development

Committee (SDC) established to assist FSANZ has met six times. The SDC comprises representatives of the seafood industry, government enforcement agencies and the Australian Consumers' Association.

A Draft Assessment Report has now been prepared containing a scientific evaluation of potential threats to human health in the seafood industry, three management options to address these threats and a draft standard for inclusion in the Food Standards Code.

Individuals and organisations with an interest in the seafood PPP standard have until 6 August 2004 to send comment to FSANZ. The Draft Assessment Report can be found on the FSANZ website under What's New/Documents for public comment.

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Australia and New Zealand Food Regulatory System

In 1997 the Prime Minister commissioned a review of the Food Regulation system in Australia. On 3 November 2000, after considering the recommendations made by the review, the Council of Australian Governments signed the inter-governmental Food Regulation Agreement 2000.

These reforms have resulted in a whole-of-food chain and nationally focused food regulatory system for Australia that enhances public health and safety. The new system is based upon a strengthening of the partnership between government, consumers and industry, increased Ministerial direction on policy, and a close relationship between Australia and New Zealand in the development of joint food standards.

The Treaty between Australia and New Zealand (the "Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of New Zealand establishing a System for the Development of Joint Food Standards") creates a joint food standards system in the two countries. The Treaty allows for free trade (that is, any food that may be legally sold in one country may be sold in the other). It also commits both the Australian and New Zealand Governments to seek harmonisation of food standards.

A major reform to the food regulatory system has been the integration of regulation for the whole of the food supply chain, sometimes referred to as the "paddock to plate" approach. This means that policy decisions and standards are integrated across the agricultural, food processing, distribution and retailing sectors. In this way, safety is ensured not only by regulating food packaging, distribution and retailing, but equal attention is paid to what is happening to our food at the farming end. Australia now has a world best practice system that recognises that to ensure safe food, responsibility must be taken at all points across the food chain.

One of the most important features of the food regulatory system reforms is the separation of policy decision making from the development of standards. Under the new arrangements policy guidance is developed by the **Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council**. The Australian Government, States and Territories and the New Zealand Government are represented by their Health Ministers on this Council. Health Ministers are joined by Ministers from other relevant portfolios such as agriculture and consumer affairs, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to food safety regulation.

Policy guidance, agreed by the Ministerial Council, is then used by the statutory authority, **Food Standards Australia and New Zealand** to guide the development of

food standards for the **Australia and New Zealand Food Standards Code**.

The Food Standards Code is adopted under the Food Acts of the each of the States and Territories and New Zealand. The Food Standards Code is also enforced through these government agencies. It is a criminal offence in Australia to supply food which does not comply with the relevant food standard.

The new process enables Ministers to consider policy issues at the outset, before standards are made. It also frees up Food Standards Australia and New Zealand to focus on the technical complexities of developing workable standards, that focus on protecting public health and safety.

The reforms have created a new culture for policy debate – both within government agencies themselves and in the way that government interacts with the non-government sector. As a result, there is a new climate of partnership for policy development.

Agencies supporting Ministers on the Council have a responsibility to ensure that policy development is inclusive and transparent, and that Ministers have available the full spectrum of community views when they are considering new policy for food regulation. Effective consultation is therefore a key feature of the new food regulatory system.

The Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council invites interested members of the public to comment on draft

policy options for food regulation. Policy issues currently available for public consultation are advertised through the Food Regulation Secretariat website. Information about previously considered policy issues and finalised Policy Guidelines can also be accessed at the website address provided below.

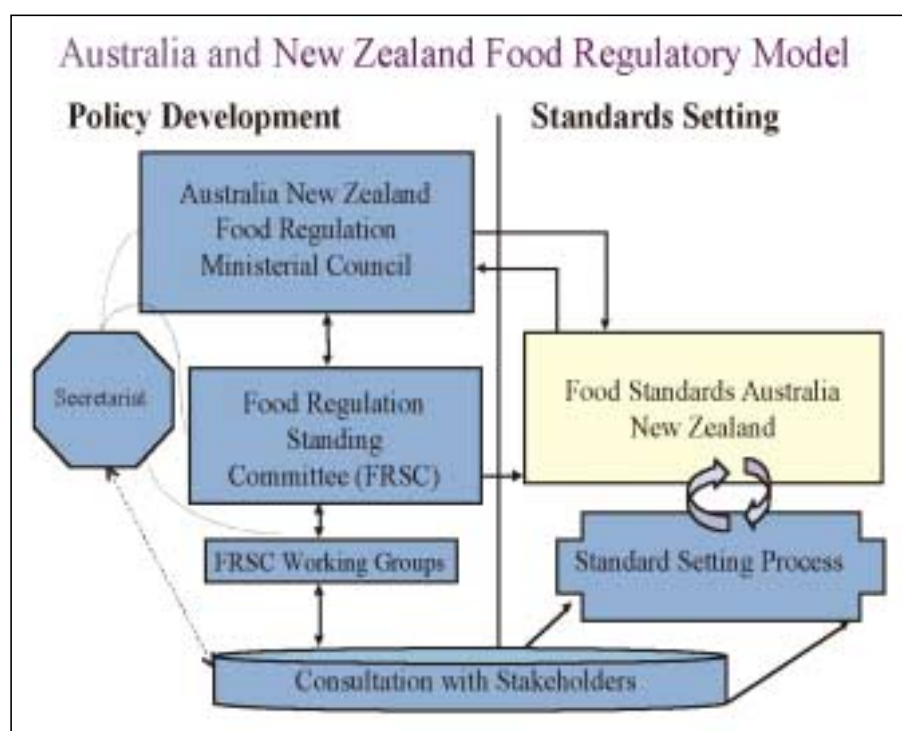
At the 4 April 2003 meeting of the Ministerial Council, Ministers endorsed an adaptable approach to consultation for the development of food policy. This approach has some flexibility and enables the level of consultation to be modified to appropriately reflect the complexity or sensitivity of a given policy topic. This process of consultation has become known as the **consultation mechanism**.

At the time of endorsing the consultation mechanism, the Ministerial Council specified that it should be reviewed in 12 months time. That review is scheduled to occur around midyear 2004, and food sector stakeholders will be invited to participate.

If you would like further information about the review of the consultation mechanism, the policy development process or any related matter, please do not hesitate to contact our industry liaison officer via the website address below.

For further information visit:
<http://www.foodsecretariat.health.gov.au/>

Or email:
FoodRegulationSecretariat@health.gov.au



The Changing of the Board

Minister for Food Safety Annette King and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing Hon Trish Worth recently announced the makeup of the new Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Board after the term of office for three members expired.

In a new appointment, Dr Laurence Eyres has replaced Professor Raymond Winger as a New Zealand Government representative.

Dr Eyres has expertise in food science. His current research and professional speciality is quality assurance and research and development of food products, particularly oils and fats. He has worked in industry for over 30 years and brings a food technology, industry and New Zealand perspective to the Board

Professor Christopher Hudson and Dr Heather Yeatman, whose terms of office expired on 30 June 2004, have been reappointed to the Board.

FSANZ would like to welcome Dr Eyres to the FSANZ Board and also like to thank Prof Winger for all his hard work, commitment and contributions to the business of the FSANZ Board.



Withdrawal of Application A524

Monsanto, the Applicant for Application A524 - Food derived from Herbicide-tolerant Wheat MON71800, has advised FSANZ on 17 June 2004 that it was withdrawing its Application.

FSANZ will notify the withdrawal of the application formally to the public in its next Notification Circular, to be released in early August. All submitters and interested parties to Application A524 will be individually advised of its withdrawal at that time.

To be released shortly...

Listeria and food

For copies of the brochure, please contact FSANZ on 02 6271 2241 or email info@foodstandards.gov.au

Health Claims Stakeholder Forums – New Zealand

Auckland Wed 1st September, Heritage Hotel

Wellington Friday 3rd September, Duxton Hotel

For more details contact info@foodstandards.gov.au or info@foodstandards.govt.nz

FSANZ Board Member receives AO

In the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List 2004, FSANZ Board member, Prof Kerin O'Dea was awarded the Order of Australia Officer (AO).

This honour was for service in medical and nutrition research, to the development of public health policy, and to the community, particularly indigenous Australians, through research into chronic disease and prevention methods.

Congratulations to Professor Kerin O'Dea, AO on her well deserved recognition.



NZFSA – 2004 Conference

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) will be holding its second annual conference on 29 & 30 September, 2004 in Wellington, New Zealand.

The conference will focus on food risks and managing them to ensure safety in New Zealand's food supply. The range of New Zealand food production, processing and sale, science and uncertainty in food safety, proposed changes for food safety in New Zealand and global food safety issues are some of the topics to be covered.

Among the many topics to be covered are:

- Science and uncertainty in food safety
- Proposed changes for food safety in New Zealand
- Changing requirements for exports of food
- Global food safety issues
- Communicating food safety risk and messages.

Places are strictly limited. Further programme details will be available on the NZFSA website, www.nzfsa.govt.nz. For a registration form, please email Haidee Matheson at NZFSA: haidee.Matheson@nzfsa.govt.nz or phone on +64 4 463 2500.

Queensland Health launches new food safety website

Queensland Health recently launched a new educational website on the safe handling of food.

The new website www.foodsafetymatters.gov.au, is considered to be the first Australian website on food safety specifically targeting secondary schools and Institutes of TAFE. Consumers and the food industry will also benefit from the simple, easy to follow messages and access to quality information on food safety in the home.

The website builds upon the award winning *Food Safety Matters* resource package developed in 2002, in partnership with the Home Economics Institute of Australia and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

A free resource package was distributed in

2003 to each Australian high school and members of the Home Economics Institute of Australia, courtesy of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

It contains:

- teachers manual
- 26 illustrated student guides
- seven colour posters and
- video titled 'A case for Con Tamination'.

Parts of the resource can be found on the new website at www.foodsafetymatters.gov.au. It can also be purchased from the Home Economics Institute of Australia by phone/fax on 1800 446 841.

JOINT COMMUNIQUE 28 May 2004

Food ministers protect public health, support industry innovation

The Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council recently met in Melbourne. The Ministerial Council, made up of Ministers from the Australian and New Zealand, State and Territory Governments is the body responsible for developing food policy for Australia and New Zealand.

The Ministerial Council discussed progress on a number of policy issues and projects related to food. These policies will have significant benefits for both consumers and the food industry.

Fortification of Food with Vitamin and Minerals

The Ministerial Council agreed to a Policy Guideline for the Fortification of Foods with vitamins and minerals. The policy covers both mandatory and voluntary fortification of food.

Ministers agreed that vitamins and minerals may be added to food where there is, for example, demonstrated evidence of a potential health benefit, and it is clear that the fortification of a food will not result in harm.

Ministers also agreed with FSANZ that mandatory fortification of food with iodine and folate, should be considered as a priority. Work on drawing up a standard will commence in the next two months.

Nutrition, Health and Related Claims

The Ministerial Council had further discussions on the appropriate approach to regulating the use of biomarker maintenance claims on foods (for example 'maintains healthy cholesterol'). Ministers thought it important to make a decision on this issue, at the meeting.

Ministers recognised that foods can have a positive impact on the public's health, and industry innovation in this area should be encouraged. The policy guideline of nutrition, health and related claims endorsed at the December 2003 meeting of the Ministerial Council will provide significant benefits to industry, in promoting healthy food choices to consumers.

Ministers also emphasised that the protection of public health and safety is a critical issue, and consumers must be protected from false and misleading claims, or claims that have the potential to distort diets.

The Ministerial Council determined that claims regarding the maintenance of a biomarker would be permitted on foods. They will be treated in the same way as enhancement claims. That is, manufacturers will be required to apply to FSANZ for approval of a biomarker maintenance claim, prior to releasing the product to market. This will ensure that claims are appropriately substantiated, and subject to public consultation, prior to their use.

Review of the Labelling of Genetically Modified Food – Report

Australia and New Zealand were among the first countries in the world to introduce GM labelling. In August 2003, Ministers requested that FSANZ conduct a review to compare our GM labelling requirements with current international practice.

The report on this review was considered today. Ministers were very pleased to note that Australia and New Zealand's requirements remain amongst the most comprehensive in the world, and that industry compliance with labelling requirements has been very good.

Ministers requested that FSANZ continue to monitor international trends on GM labelling and report to Ministers on progress.

The final report of the *Review of Labelling of Genetically Modified Food* is now publicly available on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au.

Food Policy Stakeholder Consultation Forum

A Food Policy Stakeholder Consultation Forum was held in Canberra on 30 March 2004. The outcomes of the Forum were considered by Ministers, and will be used to inform ongoing improvements to the food policy development process. Ministers were impressed with the high level of stakeholder attendance and participation in the Forum.

The Report of the Forum will be posted on the Food Regulation Secretariat website at www.foodsecretariat.health.gov.au.



Chair of Australia & New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council, The Hon Trish Worth, Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing.

FSANZ Seminar Series welcomes visit by Sue Dengate

Sue Dengate recently visited FSANZ as a guest of the FSANZ Seminar Series to speak about 'Intolerance Reactions to Food Additives'.

Ms Dengate established and coordinates the worldwide Food Intolerance Network, www.fedupwithfoodadditives.info and her interests lie in the effects of foods on children's health, behaviour and learning.

(l to r) Tracey Hambridge FSANZ Seminar Team, Sue Dengate, Howard Dengate and Jonathon Kite, FSANZ Seminar Team.



Microbiological Risk Modelling Workshop

FSANZ Microbiology Discipline Group hosted a 2-day workshop on microbiological risk modelling in Canberra. The workshop introduced FSANZ staff to the broad concepts of risk modelling and how this modelling can be utilised in quantitative microbiological risk assessments that support the standard development process.

The workshop, led by FSANZ Fellow Professor Roger Morris, a specialist in the fields of epidemiology and risk modelling from Massey University (NZ), was assisted by several Australian experts. These experts included Dr Paul Vanderlinde (Food Science Australia), Dr Susan Dobson (University of Tasmania), Dr Stefan Fabiansson (NSW Department of Health), and Drs Andrew Pointon and Ben Daughtry (SA Research and Development Institute).

Participants were given an overview of the uses of modelling in the food regulatory environment, and participated in a hands-on exercise modelling the risk due to *Salmonella* along the production and processing chain for a food commodity.

Staff commented favourably on the value of the program and the importance of follow-up activities using risk modelling software packages. Future in-house discussions will centre on the extent to which FSANZ develops its risk modelling capacity and capability.

FSANZ thanks Professor Morris and the risk-modelling experts for their contributions to the success of the workshop.



FSANZ Fellow Professor Roger Morris at the workshop in Canberra

Signing of MOU with China



The Chinese State Food and Drug Administration and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the Australian Embassy in Beijing China. This MOU was for the sharing of information relating to food safety between the Chinese State Food and Drug Administration and

FSANZ. In attendance were representatives from the Chinese State Food and Drug Administration, including the Director General Mrs Hui, Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology, the Australian Ambassador Dr Alan Thorn and Embassy staff and FSANZ CEO Graham Peachey and Merrilyn O'Sullivan.

Come and meet FSANZ...

You can visit or speak with staff from FSANZ at the following conferences or events over the next few months. There will also be a range of information available for interested parties wanting to participate or update their resources.

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION
July 25 - 28	AIFST	Brisbane, Qld
August 11 - 13	World Congress of Clinical Nutrition	Brisbane, Qld
September 1	NZ Stakeholder Forum – Health Claims	Auckland, NZ
September 3	NZ Stakeholder Forum – Health Claims	Wellington, NZ
September 6 - 9	Fine Foods Exhibition	Melbourne, Vic
September 29 - 30	NZFSA	
2004 Conference	Wellington, NZ	
October 11 - 12	Food Safety Conference 2004	Gold Coast, Qld
October 12 - 14	Foodtech / Packtech	Auckland, NZ

« Seafood and poultry meat standards move to public consultation continued

Poultry meat PPP standard

Work on the development of a PPP standard for poultry meat started in February 2004 with the establishment of an SDC with government and industry members and a representative of the Australian Consumers' Association. Industry members included producers of game birds (eg ducks and quails).

In association with the poultry meat SDC, FSANZ has prepared an Initial Assessment

Report as the basis for a first round of public comment. This report contains an overview of the poultry meat industry, a discussion of hazards associated with poultry meat and the connection with human disease in Australia, and existing measures in place to manage food safety.

In the report, FSANZ asks a number of questions of stakeholders. The Initial Assessment report was released on 26 May 2004 for a six-week consultation period. It can be found on the FSANZ website under What's New / Documents for public comment.

Fortification of food with vitamins and minerals

Janine Lewis, Principal Nutritionist

At the recent May meeting of the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (the Council), Ministers agreed to adopt a Policy Guideline on the Fortification of Food with Vitamins and Minerals.

This Policy Guideline covers both mandatory and voluntary fortification and applies to all foods in the food supply except special purpose foods, which are regulated in Part 2.9 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code). The scope of 'special purpose' is the subject of further policy work by the Food Regulation Standing Committee.

Mandatory fortification

FSANZ will soon commence its priority assessment of the four mandatory fortification issues previously discussed by the Council. The micronutrients of highest priority will be iodine and folate because of their public health importance. We propose to assess these two matters separately:

- mandatory *folate* fortification as a possible means of reducing the incidence of babies born with neural tube defects, and
- mandatory *iodine* fortification to reduce the prevalence of mild iodine deficiency apparent in Australia and New Zealand (Proposal P230).

In doing this work, we recognise the multi-faceted and multi-sectoral nature of the issues involved and the need to consult with a wide range of stakeholders since mandatory fortification is likely to increase nearly everyone's dietary intake of the target micronutrient.

It is important to stress that no selection of the target food vehicle(s) has yet been made and that it is possible for more than one option to be investigated depending on the public health issues involved, the technical feasibility, and the estimated dietary intake of the target micronutrient under various fortification scenarios.

Two other vitamins: thiamin and vitamin D are currently mandated in Australia to be added to bread-making flour and edible oil spreads

respectively, whereas in New Zealand these requirements are voluntary. Fortification of these vitamins will be also reviewed in due course and will include consideration of the potential for a bi-national approach.

Voluntary Fortification

An important first step for FSANZ in having regard to the Policy Guideline will be the development of more detailed generic criteria to assist in deciding future permissions for individual vitamin and mineral addition to food. This is important because the Policy Guideline reaffirms the current level of detail of fortification permissions given in the Code, i.e. specific limits on individual vitamins and minerals in individual types of foods.

We propose to develop these criteria by revising our *Regulatory Principles on the Addition of Vitamins and Minerals to Foods* which were most recently updated in 2002.

Because this revision will apply to future fortification decisions relating to all foods other than special purpose foods, we believe that it will be important to obtain stakeholder views on the criteria themselves.

Development of these criteria will first assist two current applications: A424 – Calcium in Foods, for which the Ministerial Council sought a first review pending adoption of Policy Guidance, and A470 – Formulated Beverages currently at Draft Assessment.

In the Policy Guideline, the Council also recognised the need for close links between decisions on fortification permissions and the criteria for vitamin and mineral claims for natural and fortified vitamin or mineral content. Decisions about vitamin and mineral claim criteria have been transferred from Proposal P293 – Nutrition, Health and Related Claims to the future work on voluntary fortification.

The Policy Guideline also refers to the need to monitor the fortification of the food supply in terms of adoption by industry and impact on nutrient intake. It is available on the Food Regulation Standing Committee's website at http://www.foodsecretariat.health.gov.au/pdf/fort_vitaandmin.pdf.



What is FSANZ?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) protects the health and safety of the people in Australia and New Zealand by maintaining a safe food supply.

We are a bi-national independent statutory authority that develops food standards for composition, labelling and contaminants, including microbiological limits, that apply to all foods produced or imported for sale in Australia and New Zealand.

In Australia, Food Standards Australia New Zealand develops food standards to cover the whole of the food supply chain – from paddock to plate – for both the food manufacturing industry and primary producers.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand works in partnership with Australia's Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the New Zealand Government. We also seek to engage industry, consumers and public health professionals in our work.

Contact details

Australia

PO Box 7186
Canberra BC 2610
Australia
Ph: +61 2 6271 2222
Fax: +61 2 6271 2278
www.foodstandards.gov.au
Email: info@foodstandards.gov.au

New Zealand

PO Box 10559, The Terrace
Wellington 6036
New Zealand
Ph: +64 4 473 9942
Fax: +64 4 473 9855
www.foodstandards.govt.nz
Email: info@foodstandards.govt.nz

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Need assistance about the joint Food Standards Code?

Call the **Food Code Hotline** for information on the new food standards for the cost of a local call on 1300 652 166 in Australia or 0 800 441 571 in New Zealand or email advice@foodstandards.gov.au.