Dairy Food Standards – Development, verification & surveillance summary

Development of Dairy Food Policy

The Australian New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council consisting of Health and Agriculture Ministers from the states and territories and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand sets policies for food production in Australia. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) uses these policies as a framework to develop food standards.

The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) provides certification for exported dairy products and helps facilitate market access arrangements. AQIS is also responsible for the surveillance of animals, feeds and foods imported into Australia.

International standards and codes of practice derived from the Codex Alimentarius Commission, World Animal Health Organisation (OIE), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and World Customs Organisation (WCO) provide guidelines for Australian food regulation.

Development of Food Standards

Food standards covering all foods produced domestically or imported for sale in Australia and New Zealand are developed by FSANZ in conjunction with stakeholders such as consumers, government agencies and industry groups. The Standards are published in the Australian and New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSC). The FSC includes the Primary Production and Processing Standard for Dairy Products.

AQIS regulates the export of dairy products to meet importing country requirements through the Export Orders. Wherever possible the Export Orders are harmonised with the FSC.

The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is responsible for a national system that evaluates and registers agricultural and veterinary chemicals and specifies the conditions of use.

The Animal Health Committee (AHC) develops national approaches for the control of animal diseases the implementation supported by Animal Health Australia (AHA). The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) provides lifetime traceability for animals.

State Environmental Protection Authorities (EPAs) establish and administer regulations and codes of practice for the protection of the environment including recycling of materials and water.

Enforcement and verification

Food standards are enforced in the Australian dairy industry predominately by State Dairy Food Authorities (SDFA) in conjunction with State Health Departments (SDoHs) and local government.

AQIS has arrangements in place with SDFAs for the enforcement of standards for exported product. AQIS may inspect or check test imported foods for compliance with Australian standards.

All dairy businesses (farm and factory) must be licensed. Individual Food Safety Programs (FSP) for farms and factories are validated by SDFAs before licences are granted and compliance monitored through regular audits. An annual verification program is conducted by SDFAs and AQIS.

State Departments of Primary Industries/Agriculture (SDPIs) enforce regulations for use of chemicals on farms, animal welfare, control of animal disease and biosecurity including traceability.

The relevant State Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board registers veterinarians for clinical practice.

State Environmental Protection Agencies (EPAs) monitor the environment including water and air supplies for conformance with regulatory requirements.

Surveillance

A range of industry and regulatory agencies monitor the safety and quality of milk and dairy products through the supply chain. These include dairy companies, regulatory groups such as the Australian New Zealand Dairy Authorities Committee (ANZDAC), federal and state regulatory agencies, SDFAs, SDPIs and EPAs.

The Australian Milk Residue Analysis (AMRA) Survey is an important measure in monitoring the safety of milk.

State Departments of Health (SDHs) monitor the safety of food at retail level.

Auditing

Auditors approved by regulatory agencies including AQIS conduct regular audits of food safety programs through the dairy food supply chain. The audit frequency may be based upon past performance. Approval of auditors follows the FSANZ National Food Safety Audit Policy program requirements.

AQIS and SDFAs have implemented a national verification program to provide market assurance and to monitor compliance with FSC Standard 4.2.4.

All companies have programs for the regular auditing of their quality management systems and the QA programs of suppliers including farmers. Many companies including those with ISO certification use third party auditors for this role.

Dairy company QA programs are frequently audited by major customers from Australia and overseas. These audits may include the farm sector as well as manufacturing, storage and distribution. Regulators from several importing countries conduct compliance audits across the Australian dairy supply chain.