



safe* ✓ *meat

ANNUAL REPORT
2005-06



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Stakeholder

The SAFEMEAT partnership has had another active year in dealing with a range of strategic policy issues associated with the safety and hygiene of red meat. Consistent with past years, SAFEMEAT has relied heavily on its partnership bodies and service delivery organisations to implement SAFEMEAT initiatives.

Maintaining a watching brief on overseas developments with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), contributing to Australia's submission to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for BSE-free status and preparing for the European Commission (EC) audit of Australia's BSE controls occupied a considerable amount of time during the year. The OIE's decision to grant Australia BSE-free status was just reward for this work.

Residue management continued to be a major focus of activity with the National Residue Survey (NRS) managing SAFEMEAT-approved programs. This year, SAFEMEAT implemented actions arising from the review of the National Organochlorine Residue Management (NORM) program and the National Antimicrobial Minimisation Program (NARM) undertaken in 2003-04. These measures are being rolled out progressively from 1 January 2006. SAFEMEAT also continues to actively engage the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and state/territory authorities on various residue issues relating to the use of pesticides or veterinary medicines on livestock animals or in their feeds.

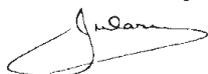
The rollout of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) in the cattle industry received good support from the Australian, state and territory governments as well as industry. NLIS for sheep and goats was launched on 1 January 2006 with rollout now well underway for those sectors.

There continues to be strong uptake among producers of the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) Level 1 Food Safety Program. SAFEMEAT continues to support the uptake of this program by producers and the use of the National Vendor Declaration (NVD)/Waybill by all livestock producers.

In a major institutional move during the year, Australian Dairy Farmers joined the SAFEMEAT partnership as a formal member. Many of the meat safety and hygiene issues that SAFEMEAT has dealt with over the years have had implications for the dairy sector, so their formal participation in the partnership is a welcome development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all SAFEMEAT partners and their respective organisations for their contributions in 2005-06. Special thanks go to the Executive Group for its work in managing the work program. I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing work of key service delivery organisations, particularly Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd, Animal Health Australia and the National Residue Survey. Thanks also to the Secretariat for its efforts during the year.

Yours sincerely



Jack Ware
Chairman
October 2006

Role of SAFEMEAT

The primary role of SAFEMEAT, as specified in the Meat Industry Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), is to oversee and promote sound management systems to deliver safe and hygienic product to the market place. SAFEMEAT promotes rationalisation of regulation and standards within the industry, drives the implementation of sound management systems and monitors industry performance in respect to meat safety and hygiene.

SAFEMEAT Structure

The SAFEMEAT partnership members for 2005-06 were:

- Mr Jack Ware – Chair
- Mr Gary Hardwick – Australian Meat Industry Council
- Mr Allan Teys - Australian Meat Industry Council
- Mr Bill Bray – Cattle Council of Australia
- Mr Sandy Maconochie – Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Mr Ian Feldtmann – Sheepmeat Council of Australia
- Mr Ian McIvor - Australian Livestock Exporters' Council Ltd
- Ms Joanna Hewitt – Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Dr Gardner Murray – Australian Chief Veterinary Officer
- Mr Jim Varghese – Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (representing State/Territory Agriculture Departments)
- Dr Barbara Wilson – Safe Food Queensland (representing State/Territory Meat Industry Authorities)

During the year, the Executive Group, comprising the following members, supported SAFEMEAT:

- Bill Hetherington – (Chair)
- John Dorian – Australian Meat Industry Council
- David Inall – Cattle Council of Australia
- Rob Sewell – Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Ian McIvor – Australian Livestock Exporters' Council Ltd
- Bernie O'Sullivan – Sheepmeat Council of Australia
- Bob Biddle – Deputy Australian Chief Veterinary Officer
- Steve McCutcheon – Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Kevin Dunn – Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (representing State/Territory Agriculture Departments)
- Brian Casey – PrimeSafe Victoria (representing State/Territory Meat Industry Authorities)
- Allan Bloxsom – Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd

SAFEMEAT Secretariat

The SAFEMEAT Secretariat is located in the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Edmund Barton Building, Canberra. Mr Ed Klim, Manager, Food Safety Systems and Support, is the Secretary of SAFEMEAT.

Issues Management

During the period 2005-06, there were no major zoonotic disease incidents. However, maintaining the confidence of our overseas markets in Australia's food safety measures, especially as they relate to BSE, remains a key priority for SAFEMEAT. During 2005-06, SAFEMEAT participated in the following BSE-related activities:

- continuing a program requiring additional R & D surveillance testing for 4D ('downer') cattle and sheep. This program has now been finalised.
- participation in TSEFAP (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Freedom Assurance Program) including the National Advisory Committee, the National Technical Committee and the Feed Ban Working Group.
- input into Australia's submission for BSE-free status to OIE.
- preparation for the audit of Australia's BSE controls by the European Commission (EC) in late 2006.
- an ongoing role in the observation of international and domestic developments in relation to BSE.

SAFEMEAT will closely monitor developments in regard to the re-entry of US beef into the Japanese market to determine any impacts to Australian producers.

There were no major residue incidents during 2005-06. Drought conditions have continued in Australia during the course of the year. The SAFEMEAT Stockfeeds Working Group continues its program to provide producers with advice on the correct use of chemicals in livestock feeds. This program aims to encourage producers to be aware of the potential trade risks that can arise from the use of alternative feeds during the drought.

SAFEMEAT continues to work very closely with the APVMA and producer industries on their capacity (or otherwise) to manage trade risks that may arise from the incorrect use of chemicals on livestock. The management of streptomycin-treated cattle rejected from live export was resolved this year. Work continues between the APVMA and SAFEMEAT on the establishment of Export Slaughter Intervals (ESIs).

SAFEMEAT also progressed matters related to residue management of grain protectants such as deltamethrin with the grains sector.

Jurisdictions and industry continue to work on improving the NLIS in the cattle industry. Significant work has also occurred towards a nationally consistent approach to the rollout of NLIS (Sheep and Goats). An NLIS Monitoring Group was established to check progress with implementation and compliance for both the cattle and sheep and goat systems. This group will report to both SAFEMEAT and the Animal Health Committee.

The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program (Level 1 – Food Safety) increased its membership during the 2005-06 year. As of 25 May 2006, there were 169,256 properties registered, of which 166,173 are active within the database. Of the total number of properties registered, 93,992 (56%) were still provisional and 72,145 fully accredited.

The LPA program requires producers to verify the statements made on the NVD/Waybill when presenting livestock for sale.

Three-Year Business Plan

The strategic directions of SAFEMEAT for the year are set out in the Three-Year (2005–2008) Business Plan. The Business Plan outlines the strategic approach to managing red meat safety and hygiene within Australia and seeks to achieve this through a number of targeted projects under the following eight key programs of industry priority:

1. Standards and Regulations
2. Emergency Management
3. Animal Diseases
4. Residues
5. Pathogens
6. Systems Development and Management
7. Communications and Education
8. Emerging Issues

Each key program has defined projects, timing, funding and responsibilities:

1. Standards and Regulations

The aim of this program is to ensure the implementation of nationally consistent standards and regulations relating to meat safety and hygiene.

2. Emergency Management

This program seeks to ensure that effective emergency management strategies are in place and activated at appropriate times.

3. Animal Diseases (as they relate to food safety)

This program is designed to ensure the red meat sector deals effectively with food safety issues arising from disease outbreaks in cattle and sheep.

4. Residues

This program aims to develop and implement sound management systems to deliver safe and hygienic food with adequate and nationally consistent government standards and regulations relating to residues.

5. Pathogens

The objective of this program is to implement sound management systems to deliver safe and hygienic food that meets consumer and regulatory requirements.

6. Systems Development and Management

The development and management of key management systems to underpin red meat safety and hygiene programs is the purpose of this program.

7. Communication and Education

This program aims to facilitate communication, education and awareness of meat safety and hygiene issues.

8. Emerging Issues

This program is designed to ensure that the industry is positioned to meet changing market and consumer demands as they arise. Issues such as advancements in biotechnology policy are closely monitored both domestically and internationally to ensure a well-informed industry.

Progress against the Business Plan

During the year, SAFEMEAT made good progress against all the key programs outlined in the Business Plan.

1. Standards and Regulations

SAFEMEAT continued to drive the implementation of state/territory based legislative arrangements to support NVDs, Commodity Vendor Declarations (CVDs) the NLIS and BSE-related issues. SAFEMEAT has also been involved in developing a standard for recycled fats and oils and has worked to promote the Meat Safety Quality Assurance (MSQA) and Meat Safety Enhancement Program (MSEP). SAFEMEAT has commenced discussions with Food Standards Australia New Zealand on the new Primary Production Standard for meat following the transfer of meat standards to the Food Regulation Standing Committee.

Additionally, SAFEMEAT has provided red meat industry input into Codex and other international regulatory or policy setting bodies as required.

2. Emergency Management

SAFEMEAT maintains linkages between emergency management arrangements, including AUSVETPLAN.

SAFEMEAT has also actively encouraged state/territory agencies to develop emergency response plans that complement SAFEMEAT emergency management arrangements. SAFEMEAT continues to closely monitor developments in international emergency response training.

The annual review of the SAFEMEAT Incident Response Manual was completed in 2005. The manual will be next reviewed in early 2007.

3. Animal Diseases (as they relate to food safety)

SAFEMEAT, through its representative bodies and various BSE-related committees, continues to actively promote Australia's food safety measures in order to maintain market confidence in the safety of Australian livestock produce.

Major effort was put into preparing for the EC audit of Australia's BSE controls by the EC. This involved all sectors of the industry and government.

SAFEMEAT has commenced planning for another BSE workshop in early 2007.

SAFEMEAT, similar to previous years, continues to maintain a watching brief on international developments on zoonotic animal diseases.

4. Residues

The SAFEMEAT Targeted Testing Working Group continues to work on the review of the NORM program, consistent with recommendations of the Brightling reviews. The revised NORM program was progressively implemented during the year, with the revised NARM program coming on board late in the financial year.

SAFEMEAT continued its endosulfan monitoring program over the 2005-06 season. This program has been run annually since 1996 to monitor the use of endosulfan in the cropping industry.

The SAFEMEAT working group, advancing a 'whole of supply chain' approach to residue risk management, has continued to work on various feed-related residue issues throughout 2005-06. It is anticipated this work will continue beyond 2006.

Significant work was undertaken with APVMA in resolving problems with streptomycin-treated cattle rejected for live export and returned to Australia. These cattle posed a significant risk of residue contamination. SAFEMEAT and APVMA successfully resolved the issue.

SAFEMEAT has continued to provide input to relevant Codex Committees such as the Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants, the Codex Committee on Pesticides Residues and the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods.

5. Pathogens

SAFEMEAT has commenced research into potential market access problems with *E. coli* O157:H7. This is likely to continue for some time. A working group has been established to monitor developments with pathogens which may affect the industry.

6. Systems Development and Management

SAFEMEAT continues to promote the rollout of the NLIS in the cattle, sheep and goat industries. The NLIS continues to be the basis for the national risk-based framework for livestock identification and tracing.

The implementation of NLIS (Cattle) in all jurisdictions is proceeding well. Most states and territories have now removed the need to use tail tags as the system is working satisfactorily.

The national strategy for the implementation of NLIS (Sheep and Goats) commenced on 1 January 2006.

In order to ensure that both NLIS (Cattle) and NLIS (Sheep and Goats) are functioning satisfactorily, a monitoring group was established to report to SAFEMEAT and the Animal Health Committee. The group designed templates to ensure that reporting is standardised across Australia.

7. Communication and Education

The SAFEMEAT Communication Group continued to hold fortnightly teleconferences for the exchange of information and discussion on topical red meat safety and hygiene issues.

SAFEMEAT sees communication with stakeholders and the development of strong and effective links as tasks of major importance. Communication channels are being built and strengthened between the community, industry and government organisations.

8. Emerging Issues

SAFEMEAT maintained a watching brief on developments with biotechnology and their implications for red meat safety and hygiene. In June 2006, SAFEMEAT endorsed an updated policy on biotechnology. This policy had been prepared in consultation with Australian Agrifood Awareness.

New issues such as the use of recycled water in abattoirs and new animal welfare regulations in Europe (as they pertain to food safety) are also being watched closely. SAFEMEAT also continues to closely monitor developments in policy on antimicrobial resistance and bioterrorism.

SAFEMEAT Meetings

SAFEMEAT met face-to-face as a partnership four times during 2005-06:

- 13 September 2005
- 6 December 2005
- 6 March 2006
- 6 June 2006

Members, industry and government experts and the Executive Group met considerably more frequently by teleconference or at special meetings to address particular issues.

SAFEMEAT Executive Group

The SAFEMEAT Executive Group met regularly to drive the Business Plan work program.

Funding

Funding to attend meetings and undertake projects is provided by individual SAFEMEAT members.

Funding for the SAFEMEAT Secretariat is provided through Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd. The cost of running the Secretariat was \$200,000 for the 12 months.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a. To work with the objective of establishing world best practice in ensuring the safety of red meat products.
- b. To ensure each red meat industry sector implements sound management systems to ensure safe and hygienic product is delivered to the market place.
- c. To ensure adequate and nationally consistent government standards and regulations relating to meat safety and hygiene.
- d. To ensure that effective crisis management strategies are put in place by the appropriate red meat industry sectors and, to this end, ensure that there is a fully integrated and effective communications network.

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