The Australian Food Incident Management System

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Australian Political System

- Federal system
- Comprises National Government
- 6 States
- 2 Territories
- many local Authorities
ALL HAZARDS - ALL AGENCIES

Coordinated

Whole of Community

Industry

Local Government

State/Territory Government

National/Australian Government

Regional/International

Partnerships

Integrated

Prevention

Preparedness

Response

Recovery

Used

Known Systems
Plans related to food incidents

- National Health Security Agreement and related documents
- OzFoodNet Draft Guideline for multijurisdictional outbreaks of foodborne illness
- National Food Safety Incident Response Protocol (for managing tracing, testing and removal of unsafe food)

**STATE FOOD PLANS:**
Examples:
- NSW Food Industry Emergency Sub Plan
- PIRSA Food Safety – Incident Response Plan

**INDUSTRY PLANS:**
Examples:
- National Dairy emergency plan
- National Seafood emergency plan
- National Meat emergency plan
National food incidents - the last 3 years

- **2008**: cyanogenic glycosides, vegetable crackers
- **2008**: metal contamination, meat and frozen products
- **2008**: Contaminated dairy products from China (Melamine)
- **2008**: Contaminated pork from Ireland
- **2009**: Hep A linked to consumption of semi-dried tomatoes
- **2010**: Iodine (Bonsoy and seaweed) linked to thyroid dysfunction
- **2010**: *Listeria* in melons
- **2010**: Sibutramine in weight loss products
- **2011**: Peanut in soy flour
- **2011**: Latin Seed
- **2011**: *Japan Nuclear Incident*
Lesson learned – what works well

- Preparedness is the Key
  - Documentation of roles and processes
  - Use of templates
- International cooperation and advice
- Goodwill and assistance from industry
- Coordination and cooperation amongst many government agencies
- The use of debriefs and reviews after each incident
Lesson learned – the challenges

• Each incident reveals different opportunities to improve our systems
• Incidents usually involve imported food or ingredients – international processes still evolving
• Emerging issues difficult to spot, assess and prepare for
Lesson learned – the challenges

• New issues difficult to respond to quickly – eg viruses, parasites, radiation.
• Industry preparedness varies – especially for ingredient tracing
• Linkages between government and industry systems not as well established as we would like
• Laboratory capacity
Lessons learned – the challenges

• A need to improve the efficiency of our systems, processes and documentation
• Dealing with and communicating scientific uncertainty
• Potential for loss of consumer confidence
Three take-home messages

- Good preparation is essential
- Globalisation of food supply chains means international linkages are critical
- Risk and crisis communication will influence public perception
What will be Australia’s next areas of focus

- Establishing international relationships and processes
- Refining and documenting links between the different government incident management systems
- Working with domestic industry to improve the linkages between their emergency systems and government systems
Thank You
Alert
- Incident notified to central notification point
- Information circulated to all food incident contact officers

Action
- FSANZ convenes teleconferences to consider level of action required
- Action phase process followed

Stand down
- Nationally coordinated action no longer required – return to business as usual
- Debrief and review of Protocol
Australian Food Regulatory Framework

Food Regulation Ministerial Council

- Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC)
- Implementation Sub-Committee (ISC)

- National and State Health & Agriculture agencies
- Local government

- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)
Australian Foodborne Illness Regulatory Framework

- National and State Health agencies
- Australian Health Ministers’ Conference (AHMC)
- Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council (AHMAC)
- Australian Health Protection Committee
- Communicable Diseases Network
- OzFoodNet