codex alimentarius commission

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

CODEX COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AMERICA AND THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC

Sixth Session
Perth, Australia, 5 – 8 December 2000

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND HARMONIZATION OF FOOD LEGISLATION IN THE REGION

Coordinating Committees regularly consider issues relating to harmonization of food legislation, especially in the perspective of economic integration, food control systems, export/import matters, and relevant training activities, in order to promote exchange of information and cooperation within the Region.

CL 00/34 NASWP invited Member Countries to provide the following updated information for consideration at the 6th Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for North America and the South West Pacific (CCNASWP).

Official Agencies

Updated structure and organization of the official services responsible for food legislation and food control.

Import/Export Matters

Exchange of information on import/export matters relating to food safety and quality.

Food Legislation

Developments regarding harmonization of food safety and quality regulations, including the use of Codex standards, Codes and related texts.

Cooperation activities

Contacts with other countries on food legislation and food control matters (bilateral, subregional or regional), including training of inspection and laboratory personnel.

Considerations

CCNASWP members are invited to consider the Member Country reports at Attachment 1 and identify key issues for the region, as well as any issues that might be considered for future work by this Regional Coordinating Committee or by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Attachment 1

REPORTS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

AUSTRALIA

New Food Regulatory Framework for Australia

On 3 November 2000, Australian governments agreed to implement an improved national food regulatory system designed to streamline and clarify food regulatory processes across the whole food supply chain. The arrangements will also strengthen the ongoing partnership between industry, governments, consumers and other stakeholders in producing and supplying safe and suitable food for Australian and overseas consumers.

In recognition of the close relationship enjoyed between New Zealand and Australia in developing joint national food standards, consultations were held with New Zealand during the development of the system. This partnership will continue under the new arrangements.

A single Ministerial Council, chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Aged Care, will be responsible for developing food regulatory policy and policy guidelines for the development of domestic food standards. In doing so, it will consider the views of all portfolios with an interest in food regulation to take a broader and more strategic approach in developing national food regulatory policies. While each jurisdiction, including New Zealand, will have one vote on the Council, in addition to Health Ministers, jurisdictions will have the option of including other Ministers whose portfolios have an interest in food regulation, such as primary industry and trade, on the Ministerial Council. A mechanism for seeking stakeholder views will be established by the Ministerial Council, which may be a Food Regulation Consultative Council or some other such mechanism determined by the Council.

The Ministerial Council will be supported by a Standing Committee, that will coordinate policy advice to the Council, and a Sub-Committee that will develop guidelines to promote a nationally consistent approach to inspection and enforcement of domestic food standards. The Ministerial Council and the Standing Committee will be supported administratively by a secretariat provided by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

An independent statutory agency, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), will replace the Australia New Zealand Food Authority. Under the guidance of the Ministerial Council, FSANZ will provide expanded scientific and technical expertise for the development of all domestic food standards in Australia and New Zealand, including those currently developed through Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) processes. Standards developed by FSANZ will reflect Codex standards, as much as possible, and will also form the basis of Australia's export standards, recognising that some countries may have additional requirements.

Under the Treaty between Australia and New Zealand to develop joint food standards, New Zealand will be able to vary a standard where it considers that exceptional health, safety, third country trade, environmental or cultural factors justify a New Zealand only variation. In such cases, New Zealand may request FSANZ to prepare a separate standard appropriate for New Zealand, giving reasons and justification for the variance which must not create a barrier to trade unless exceptional health, safety or environmental concerns exist.

A new Model Food Act, to be adopted by all States and Territories, will provide the national legislative underpinning for the production and supply of safe and suitable food in Australia. It will also replace current State and Territory food hygiene regulations with nationally uniform food hygiene standards, the Food Safety Standards.

As the 1996 Treaty between Australia and New Zealand establishes the current system for the development of joint national food standards, the new food regulatory system will not come into full effect until it is agreed to by New Zealand through a new or amended treaty and until Australian legislation to implement the system comes into force.

Review of Food Standards Code
The Review of the Australian *Food Standards Code* and the New Zealand Food Regulations, which encompass compositional and labelling requirements, is the vehicle to achieve one set of food product standards in Australia and New Zealand. The review was essentially completed by the end of 1999. Work with stakeholders was undertaken during the first half of 2000 and the adoption of the joint *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* (the Joint Code) by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council will be considered in November 2000. Once adopted, it is proposed that the Joint Code will operate in parallel with current food standards for a period of 24 months.

The main thrust of the Review has been to simplify existing food regulation, remove any unnecessary prescription, and give industry greater freedom to be innovative in their business operations while maintaining the protection of public health and safety. Prescriptive commodity standards for specific foods or food components will only be retained in the Joint Code where their removal may be detrimental to public health or lead to consumer deception. At the same time, the Joint Code will strengthen the requirements that are applied generally to all foods.

Full details of the draft Code, and explanatory materials are on the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) website (www.anzfa.gov.au).

Percentage Labelling
As part of the Review, the ANZFA has developed a labelling proposal that food labels should list the percentage of emphasised or defining ingredients contained in foods. Currently, ingredients are listed by weight order on food labels. Percentage labelling would enable consumers to identify from the label, eg, exactly how much fruit is in jam or how much meat in a meat pie.

Mandatory Nutrition Labelling
ANZFA has developed a proposal for mandatory nutrition labelling for all packaged foods and for some unpackaged foods. The proposal is for the mandatory information to relate to five key nutrients: energy, total fat, protein, carbohydrate and sodium.

Health Claims
ANZFA is reviewing its general prohibition on health and related claims currently contained within the Australian *Food Standards Code*. This review was initiated in 1997 and an important component of the review has been the conduct of a pilot health claim on the relationship between folate and neural tube defects. The pilot commenced in late 1998 and is currently being evaluated.

The purpose of the pilot was to trial the management framework that had been proposed for health claims, and to address an important public health issue. The management framework covers the following elements:

- A regulatory mechanism – i.e. a standard permitting particular claims and a supporting industry code of practice;
- Scientific substantiation and qualifying/disqualifying criteria;
- Education and communication mechanisms to support claims;
- Monitoring and evaluation systems; and
- Compliance and enforcement.

The results from the pilot will be important in determining any future role of health claims in Australia and New Zealand. Further consultation on health claims was undertaken by ANZFA in mid 2000.

Regulation of Genetically Modified Foods

One of the most contentious issues confronting governments, industry, the scientific community and the public is the issue of biotechnology, with the spotlight clearly on genetically modified food.

The ANZFA's role has been to develop standards to regulate foods produced using gene technology and to assess these foods on a case-by-case basis to ensure they are safe. Its role is to assess the foods produced by the technology but not to promote the technology as a whole. ANZFA has finalised safety assessment on the food products produced from two genetically modified foods, namely Round Up® Ready soybean and 'Bt' cotton. Foods from these two commodities have been approved for use in the food supply. Safety assessments on foods produced using another 10 genetically modified commodities have been released for public consultation

It was initially proposed that mandatory labelling should apply only to genetically engineered food products that are substantially different to their conventionally produced counterparts. However, in recognition of the high level of public concern, Health Ministers decided that all genetically modified foods would to be labelled. In making this decision, Ministers recognised the complexities for industry and government of such a mandatory labelling requirement. The Ministers sought further advice on the key aspects of labelling, including costs, the nature of negative claims, testing and commodity segregation issues, and trade implications.

In July 2000, the Health ministers agreed to require labelling of food and food ingredients from genetically modified organisms where novel DNA and/or protein is present in the final food. It also requires labelling of food and food ingredients where food has altered characteristics. These requirements are expected to come into effect in late 2001 after a transition period.

Food Safety Reforms

ANZFA has finalised new food safety standards that introduce requirements for good hygienic practices for all food businesses. These standards will commence in Australia in February 2001. ANZFA is working with the governments of the States and Territories to introduce a final standard for a food safety program based on the HACCP principles as the next step to these reforms. These standards represent a new approach to regulating food safety – a shift away from excessive prescription to achievable food safety objectives that focus on prevention. It is a distinct move away from the old law enforcement style approach where people waited for food inspectors to visit their business to identify a breach of the law and prosecute. These new food safety standards will put the onus firmly on business to adopt and implement preventive safety measures. Businesses will be required to actively identify any food safety hazards in their businesses, and put in place control measures to minimise the likelihood of foodborne illnesses.

Uniformity of State and Territory Food Acts

In Australia, there is no national food act. Each State and Territory has its own food act, or equivalent, and adopts the standards developed by ANZFA as regulations under those acts. Presently, differences between State and Territory food acts are causing problems in relation to the uniform interpretation and enforcement of the Australian *Food Standards Code*.

Initiated by ANZFA, a process is well advanced to develop model food legislation to ensure consistency and to accommodate the changes in food law proposed as a result of the new uniform food safety standards and related initiatives.

Surveillance and Enforcement Strategy

ANZFA is currently developing a Surveillance and Enforcement Strategy for Australia to ensure a consistent national approach. ANZFA will provide a coordinating role to facilitate the exchange of monitoring, surveillance and enforcement information available at the State and Territories level and the setting of priorities for future surveillance work. It is hoped that New Zealand will take an active role in this strategy.

Harmonisation of Food Legislation in the Region

ANZFA has a small program of technical assistance with the support of AusAID under the APEC Support Program and of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT under its APEC Development Program. Some funding has also been from the APEC TILF Special Account (TILF = Trade and Investment Liberalisation and Facilitation) provided for the two APEC projects described below.

ANZFA's regional work aims to contribute to information exchange and to enhanced expertise and infrastructures underpinning effective food control systems. The program has a focus on the regional forums of APEC and AFTA-CER; the bilateral work with Vietnam will also provide the basis for similar undertakings elsewhere in the region.

APEC projects

1. Workshops on the Food/Drug Interface

ANZFA received funding from both AusAID and APEC to conduct two regional workshops (the first in Canberra in August 1999 and the second in Bangkok in November/December 1999) to compare and contrast member economies' regulatory policies on the food/therapeutics interface.

Funding from AusAID was provided to support the participation of seven developing or emerging member economies in this project (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Philippines, the People's Republic of China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand).

The recommendations arising from the workshops have been endorsed by APEC and focus on the issues of transparency and alignment of requirements and processes in this complex area of regulation. As a first step, members have committed to compile Regulatory Profiles on Foods, Medicines and Related Products by the end of 2000. The intention is to make these Profiles available in hard copy and, where possible, on the Internet. A longer-term program leading to a regional network of fully interactive Web-sites is also envisaged.

2. Training in Risk Analysis

ANZFA received funding from APEC, AusAID and MFAT to conduct two three-week residential training courses in the application of the principles of risk analysis in February and March 2000. Funding from AusAID and MFAT supported the participation of: Indonesia (6), Papua New Guinea (2), the Republic of the Philippines (4), the People's Republic of China (5), Vietnam (6) and Thailand (4).

The participants were senior food inspectors or policy officers who were provided with an overview of the role of Codex, WTO, ISO and the application of risk assessment and risk management in a range of situations. They also underwent some training to equip them to provide training in their home economies.

Late in 2000, there will be an evaluation of the effectiveness of the training. The intention is to develop a model of this type of training, based on the training experiences and the evaluation, for consideration as an APEC model.

Regional Directory of Food Trade Contacts
ANZFA is developing a Regional Directory of Food Trade Contacts as a CER contribution to AFTA-CER's efforts to increase access to the requirements that apply to trade in food between and within countries in the region. The directory will be based on a network of inter-connected web sites on the Internet.

Funding has been granted by AusAID for this work to progress. In the first instance, software will be developed to ensure that developing countries can participate where they have adequate capacity in information technology. The intention is for each participating country to have its own web site which will form part of the regional network.

This work will contribute to enhanced transparency and will also have domestic application in each country, as it will facilitate access to key contact points. The directory will be designed to allow for ready extension in to other related regulatory areas and to allow for ready access to the actual regulations where these are available on the Internet. This work will make a contribution to the APEC program mentioned above which will lead to a regional network of interactive Web-sites.

Vietnam project
ANZFA received funding from AusAID and MFAT to assist Vietnam to develop a draft Food Act and to develop an Action Plan for the implementation of that Act, thereby assisting Vietnam in its bid for accession to the WTO. This project was completed early in 2000. Adoption of the draft Food Act will be subject to consideration by the Standing Committee of Vietnam's National Assembly.

Australia and New Zealand intend to contribute to the program of work that will be developed in the Action Plan. Vietnam is currently working on its Action Plan and this is expected to be available in the near future.

CANADA

Official Agencies Organization
Health Canada
In July, 2000, Health Canada underwent a realignment to strengthen the department's health protection capabilities and enhance the integration of its health protection and promotion activities. This was accomplished by realigning these activities into three new branches – Health Products and Food, Environmental and Product Safety, and Population and Public Health. The responsibilities of these new Branches are as follows::

- *Health Products and Food Branch*: will be responsible for the safety and efficacy of drugs, food, natural health products, medical devices, biologics and related biotechnology; and will also foster good nutrition and informed and safe use of health products.

- *Environmental and Product Safety Branch*: will be responsible for the safety and efficacy of commercial and consumer products in the Canadian marketplace and will promote healthy living, working and recreational environments.

- *Population and Public Health Branch*: will be responsible for surveillance and health interventions to promote health and prevent and control a wide range of diseases.

Additional information on Health Canada's organization and programs is available from the Health Canada Website. (See Annex "A")

Canadian Food Inspection Agency
The most recent organizational chart of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) can be found at their website as indicated in Annex "A".

Recent changes in the CFIA organizational structure include the creation of the Enforcement and Investigation Services, the Office of Food Safety and Recalls, and the Bureau of Food Safety and Consumer Protection.

The University of Guelph and the CFIA signed an agreement to establish the Canadian Institute for Food Inspection and Regulation at the University of Guelph. The institute will guide the two organizations' collaborative projects, as well as attract and secure research and development funding from the private and public sectors.

Import/Export Matters
The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has launched an initiative to enhance and guide the integration of various import control systems. The objectives are to:
- provide a review of the current CFIA import control systems;
- recommend enhancements to CFIA import control systems; and
- develop a CFIA import control policy applicable to all CFIA programs.

Food Legislation
Initiatives Related to Food from Raw Sources
Health Canada has initiated a number of policy/regulatory activities in the area of foods from raw sources. These policy areas include anti-microbial resistance, raw milk and cheese, food irradiation, raw foods of animal origin, unpasteurized juice and cider, cyclosporeae in fresh raspberries and blackberries and sprouted seeds and beans. Health Canada is working closely with the CFIA on these initiatives.

The issue of anti-microbial resistance is becoming increasingly significant. In conjunction with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, it is the objective of the Food Directorate to develop comprehensive policies aimed at identifying and managing risks associated with agriculture and aquaculture use of antimicrobial agents. A committee has been established with representatives from Canada's agriculture and aquaculture industries, animal health pharmaceutical manufacturers, animal health organizations, health professionals, academia, consumer groups and various levels of government. The role of this committee is to provide expert advice to facilitate the development of policies related to the use of anti-microbials in food animals.

Initiatives Related to Biotechnology
Health Canada's responsibility regrading food, including foods derived from biotechnology, is to establish science-based policies and standards ensuring that all foods are safe and nutritious. Health Canada has several policy initiatives underway which include the development and maintenance of updated guidelines for the safety assessment of food sources including plants, animals (including fish) and microorganisms derived from biotechnology. Health Canada, in cooperation with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, is also involved in the development of policy related to labelling of foods derived from biotechnology.

In October, 1999, Health Canada enacted new regulatory requirements for novel foods. Under Canadian law, a "novel food" is considered:
- a substance, including a microorganism, that does not have a history of safe food use.

- a food that has been manufactured, prepared, preserved or packaged by a process that has not been previously applied to that food and causes the food to undergo a major change;
- where a major change means, in respect of a food, a change in the food that, based on the manufacturer's experience or generally accepted theory, would place the modified food outside the accepted limits of natural variations for that food with regard to:
- the composition, structure or nutritional value of the food or its generally recognized physiological effects,
- the manner in which the food is metabolized in the body, or
- the microbiological safety, the chemical safety, or the safe use of the food

Any food classified as a novel food now requires a pre-market notification to Health Canada prior to the sale, or advertisement for sale, of that food. It should be noted that the classification of "novel foods" in Canada includes foods into which new or "novel" traits have been introduced, regardless of the method of introduction. The notification process permits Health Canada to conduct a comprehensive safety and nutritional assessment of each food.

Initiatives Related to Nutrition

Health Canada has introduced several policy/regulatory initiatives related to nutrition. These initiatives include proposals concerning the addition of vitamins and minerals to foods, nutritional labelling, health and nutrition claims and standards of evidence.

After an extensive period of consultation with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, In October, 2000, Health Canada proposed changes for nutritional labelling. The proposed revisions to the regulations will require that nutrition labelling:

- be mandatory on all foods, with exemptions provided to small business, restaurants and food service, foods packaged at retail, and fresh fruit and vegetables;
- provide core information on: calories, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, fibre, sugar, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron;
- be consistent in look, easy to find, legible and readable;
- be supported by education, undertaken collaboratively with leadership from Health Canada.

It is anticipated that the regulations will become law by the end of 2001 and industry will have two years to bring their labels into compliance.

Discussion papers have been circulated and comments obtained on policy proposals in the areas of vitamin and mineral addition, nutritional content claims, health claims and standards of evidence. It is anticipated that proposed regulatory amendments will be published in the near future.

Decision-Making Framework

Health Canada helps protect the health of Canadians with programs and regulatory measures concerning: the quality, safety and effectiveness of drugs, medical devices and pesticides; the safety of consumer products and workplace substances; the safety and nutritional quality of food; exposure to toxic substances in the environment; and the quality of air and water. The assessment of health risks, and the selection and implementation of effective risk management strategies, form the basis for many of Health Canada's activities. Health Canada has developed a document which provides guidance for the identification, assessment and management of risks to health. This document, entitled, *Health Canada's Decision-Making Framework for the Identification, Assessment and Management of Risks to Health*, is consistent with the Codex risk analysis process.

Canadian Food Safety Adaptation Program
The Canadian Food Safety Adaptation Program (CFSAP) was launched for the development of national programs in the areas of food safety and quality. This program provides an opportunity for national associations or groups involved directly or indirectly in the production, marketing, distribution and preparation of food to develop risk management strategies, tools and systems to enhance food safety throughout the total food chain. These programs must be based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control point (HACCP) definitions and principles as defined by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Cooperation Activities
The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has undertaken a number of cooperation initiatives, including training of regulatory personnel. Recently, completed international capacity building activities include: training on food inspection procedures, and training in documenting, recognizing and auditing the HACCP system. Canada cooperated with Jamaica, Mexico, Morocco, Slovakia and South Africa regarding these initiatives.

NEW ZEALAND

Food legislation in New Zealand is administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF – primary production and processing of dairy, meat, and seafood) and a small section of the Ministry of Health (MoH – secondary processing of mixed food and retail chain). As a result of a 1998 review of food administration in New Zealand, it was recommended that a single food agency be established within MAF with responsibility for all food safety regulation.

In preparation for this, MAF restructured its Regulatory Authority into a Food Assurance Authority and a Biosecurity Authority as of 1 July 1999. MAF Food Assurance Authority is comprised of 7 groups: Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines, Animal Products, Compliance and Investigation, Dairy and Plant Products, Policy Coordination, Programme Development, and Business Services.

The food administration merger did not go ahead, and the Government is still considering options in this area. In the meantime, MAF and MoH are harmonising their food safety regimes as much as possible along the lines of the Government's regulatory model. The model is intended to deliver improved food safety, with greater flexibility for operators and reduced compliance costs. It entails:

- Government setting outcome-based standards, approving operators' compliance programmes, approving third party agencies, and managing the system's overall performance;
- independent third party agencies (TPAs) assessing operators' compliance; and
- operators meeting the set outcome requirements.

The model underpins the new *Animal Products Act 1999*, as described later: compliance with approved risk management programmes (RMPs), regulated control schemes (RCSs), and other outcome requirements is assessed in part by third party agencies. Because many export markets for New Zealand's animal products require government inspection as a condition of access, however, verification activity has not been devolved to TPAs as far as was initially planned.

In the dairy sector, a review of the outdated dairy industry legislation has begun, with the aim of updating it along the lines of the regulatory model: risk focused and outcome based. Prior to that legislative change, the model has been implemented as a voluntary option for operators. Approximately 65% of registered dairy premises elected to move to the model

system in mid 2000. Two TPAs have been approved and are operational, evaluating product safety programmes (PSPs) and verifying operators' compliance with them.

In the mixed food sector, the MoH administers a system based on the model as a voluntary option. This is facilitated by a 1996 amendment to the *Food Act 1981.* Operators may choose to have a hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP)-based food safety plan (FSP), similar to a dairy industry PSP or an animal products RMP. The FSP is approved by MoH, and compliance with the programme is verified by territorial/local health authorities. As at October 2000, approximately 230 FSPs were approved. 204 of these apply to 15 major retail chains, including Caltex, McDonald's Family Restaurants, and Woolworths.

The two Ministries are working together on a series of projects to harmonise food safety regimes along the lines of the regulatory model. The projects underway include a focus on these elements:

- approval of FSPs, PSPs, and RMPs so that multi-sector operators deal with a single regulator;
- approval of third party evaluators and verifiers so that TPAs can operate in multiple sectors (accreditation to ISO Standard 17020, "General criteria for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspections", has been chosen as the base requirement);
- communication and consultation; and
- a generic risk management framework.

As well, a series of trials is underway to test harmonisation in practice. This involves a large, multi-product manufacturer, a small ice cream manufacturer, and a small cheesemaker.

Generic risk management framework

Mirroring international trends, New Zealand has been moving to incorporate a risk management approach to food related legislation. During this process, the need to develop a generic risk management framework was also identified as a way to avoid inconsistent decisions being made on food safety and prevent over-regulation. Both MAF and MoH have a strong commitment to a risk based management approach to food safety. The incorporation of hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) principles into the operation of food businesses along with prerequisite hygiene practices, are recognised as key elements for ensuring food safety in New Zealand. Development of the generic risk management framework has, therefore, been a key project for both Ministries.

The framework allows the regulatory oversight of food safety to be broad enough to encompass all components of the food chain, and to ensure that optimal sanitary measures are applied where they will be most effective in reducing risks. The generic risk management framework consists of four key steps:

1 risk evaluation,
2 assessment of risk management options,
3 implementation of the risk management decision, and
4 monitoring and review.

Implementation of the framework of the administration of food safety in New Zealand will allow decisions to be made that are proportionate to the health risks involved, allow innovation and flexibility in application of sanitary measures, and allow due regard to be taken of the costs as well as the benefits of the risk management options. To achieve such goals, it is recognised that interaction between government, industry, consumer groups, foreign governments, and other stakeholders needs to occur on many levels.

Animal Products Act
The *Animal Products Act 1999* (the Act) commenced on 1 November 1999 and replaces the *Meat Act 1981* and the *Apiaries Act 1969* regime over a three-year transition period. The scope of the Act potentially applies to all animal material and products traded and used in New Zealand, e.g. meat, fish, poultry and other avian species, eggs, bee products, hides and skins. Dairy produce is expressly excluded, as it is covered by the *Dairy Industry Act 1952*. The provisions of the Act apply to primary and secondary processing operations, exports, and homekill and recreational catch.

The Act establishes a risk management system that recognises the importance of the protection of human and animal health as well as New Zealand's export trade in animal material and products. The Government is responsible for setting risk management outcomes and maintaining an overview of the overall system, rather than prescribing how businesses deliver acceptable animal products. Operators are responsible for ensuring that all animal products traded and used meet the outcomes set by Government.

The risk management system comprises the following main types of controls:

- RMPs, which must include the application of HACCP principles and supporting systems;
- RCSs, which are applied where risk management programmes are not feasible or practicable, where it is more efficient for the government to run the programme, or it is needed to meet market access requirements;
- export controls, including the registration of most exporters of animal material and product; and
- authorisations and duties of persons that undertake certain functions. This is required to ensure that the integrity of the risk management system is maintained.

Mandatory HACCP
As noted above, the *Animal Products Act 1999* requires most processors of animal products (for the consumption or other use by humans or animals) to at least identify and analyse the hazards in their processes, and continue on to implement a full HACCP plan if appropriate.

Dairy sector operators are required to do the same by the end of 2000. The relevant MAF Standard, issued in 1999 pursuant to the *Dairy Industry Regulations 1990*, specifies that the Codex document "Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System and Guidelines for its Application" is to be applied in developing HACCP plans.

Microbiological databases and quantitative risk assessments
National microbiological databases (NMDs) that demonstrate acceptable levels of hygiene control are now recognised worldwide as an essential part of contemporary food safety programmes. NMD programmes designed around the unique characteristics of New Zealand animal husbandry and processing have been successfully implemented and operated in the New Zealand beef and sheep meat industries. Similar NMD programmes for the venison and poultry industries are currently being developed with industry working parties. Implementation of all of these programmes will result in an accurate microbiological profile against which to verify the effectiveness of New Zealand's HACCP and good manufacturing practice (GMP) based food safety control programmes.

Quantitative risk assessment (QRA) models are required to generate estimates of risks to human health under a variety of conditions and enable the making of effective risk management decisions by both the producer/processor and regulator. QRA models provide a description of all pathways for contamination of food from farm to plate, and allow sanitary measures to be designed so that they are science- and risk-based, flexible, and allow due regard to be taken of costs as well as benefits. Similarly, QRA models provide regulators

with a sound basis for challenging market access requirements that are not scientifically justified by risk assessment. In this regard, several QRA programmes are currently underway in New Zealand. These include QRA models for *Salmonella* in sheep meat, and campylobactereriosis in New Zealand.

Cooperation activities

Joint Australia-New Zealand Food Standards Code

The Code, under development by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) for application in both Australia and New Zealand, has four main aims:

- protecting public health and safety,
- simplifying and harmonising food regulations,
- reducing the level of prescriptiveness in food formulation requirements, and
- strengthening food labelling requirements to counterbalance the latter.

In joining with Australia in a joint food standard setting arrangement, the commitment between New Zealand and Australia to develop closer economic relations – the CER Agreement – was given a very real application. The Code is intended to facilitate food trade between the two countries.

In developing the Code, ANZFA considered relevant Codex standards. Once it is finalised, sections of the Code relating to composition and labelling will automatically apply in both New Zealand and Australia. However, each country will maintain its own standards in the areas of food processing, food hygiene, and maximum residue limits for heavy metals and contaminants.

At the 1998 NASWP meeting, New Zealand reported that the Code was expected to be implemented by early 2000. In fact, a draft of the Code was developed and underwent consultation in Australia and New Zealand at that time. In September 2000, ANZFA presented a final version of the Code to the New Zealand and Australian federal, state, and territorial Health Ministers for consideration and adoption at their meeting on 24 November 2000. If agreed to, the Code will come into force early in 2001 and will operate in parallel with the Australian *Food Standards Code* and the New Zealand *Food Regulations 1984* for a two-year transition period.

ANZFA Food Standard A17: Irradiation of Food

On 3 August 1999, Australian and New Zealand Ministers of Health, meeting as the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council (ANZFSC), agreed to a new standard to cover the irradiation of food in both countries. The standard prohibits the irradiation of food, or food ingredients, unless specific permission is given by the health ministers, on a case-by-case basis, in response to applications to irradiate specific foods. Before an application to irradiate food can be approved, ministers must be satisfied that there is a technological or food safety related need for the irradiation of the foods in question.

The standard states that food should not be processed using irradiation as a substitute for good manufacturing practice and that an appropriate code of manufacturing practice should be used. The radiation dose must be the minimum that is reasonable with reference to the technological and public health requirements for the treatment and the packaging materials must be of an appropriate quality and condition. The standard also imposes a labelling requirement for any food that has been irradiated and any food containing irradiated ingredients. This must be stated on the label. Finally, the standard specifies permitted radiation sources and records that must be kept.

The standard sets out an expectation that the operation and control of any food irradiation premises will be in accordance with the relevant State, Territory and New Zealand law and with an appropriate code of practice related to the irradiation of food.

ANZFA Food Standard A18: Genetically Modified Foods

ANZFA Standard A18 requires all genetically modified (GM) foods to be assessed by ANZFA for safety prior to being approved for sale. It came into effect in May 1999. The Standard also requires labels for GM foods that differ from conventional foods in relation to nutrition and their potential to contain allergens or other anti-nutritional factors. In response to requests from a number of consumers and consumer groups, ANZFA was asked by ANZFSC to develop an amendment to Standard A18 to extend labelling to all GM foods or ingredients.

In July 2000, ANZFSC agreed to new labelling rules for GM foods. Labelling of food and food ingredients will be required where novel DNA and/or novel protein is present in the final food, and where the food has altered characteristics. These requirements will take effect in September 2001.

Exempt from these requirements are:

- highly refined food, where the effect of the refining process is to remove novel genetic material and/or novel protein;
- processing aids and food additives, except where novel genetic material and/or novel protein is present in the final food;
- flavours which are present in a concentration less than or equal to 0.1 per cent in the final food; and
- food prepared at point of sale (e.g. restaurants, hotels, take-aways); in such situations, consumers have the right to ask the proprietor what is in the food being purchased and whether it is from a GM source.

The new standard allows any one ingredient in a food to contain up to 1 per cent of genetically modified material where its presence in the ingredient is unintended.

Import/export matters

Equivalence of food import and export inspection and certification systems

A team of nine auditors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission (EC) visited New Zealand early in 2000 to review the regulatory process controlled by MAF. The purpose of the visit was to review the production of meat, meat products, milk, and milk products intended for sale in the European Union, and to evaluate the control of residues in live animals and their products. The audit was based mostly on the NZ-EU Veterinary Agreement of 1996, which recognises the equivalence of New Zealand systems in many areas.

While the audit was specifically aimed at supply of the European market, many of the issues identified relate to generic practices and systems, hence the findings have much broader implications. MAF has provided the EC with an action plan for improving its systems, and is reporting regularly to the Commission on progress.

In recognition of the importance of harmonising food inspection and certification systems in facilitating trade, New Zealand has been heavily involved in the work of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS). New Zealand has led the drafting of the *Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Judgement of Equivalence,* and participated in drafting of the *Proposed Draft Guidelines for the Utilisation and Promotion of Quality Assurance Systems to Meet Requirements in Relation to Food* and the *Proposed Draft Guidelines for Generic Official Certificate Formats and the Production and Issuance of Certificates*. These are now at steps 3 and 5 of the Codex process, respectively.

ANNEX A

LIST OF WEB-SITES

Health Canada: [**www.hc-sc.gc.ca**]

Canadian Food Inspection Agency:
[**www.cfia-acia.agr.ca/english/corpaffr/orgcharts/management/orgcharte.shtml**]

Codex Canada Web-site:

[**www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/english/codex/index.html**] (English language site)
[**www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/français/codex/index.html]** (French language site)

FAO Codex Web-site (Rome):

[**www.fao.org/WAICENT/FAOINFO/ECONOMIC/ESN/codex/default.htm**]