

# THE NEW ZEALAND SEAFOOD STANDARDS COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 - 2010

## THE SEAFOOD STANDARDS COUNCIL BUSINESS

**The Seafood Standards Council's business is to be the consultative forum between the seafood industry and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and to facilitate the industry to assure safe seafood\***

The Seafood Standards Council will be an Advisory Council to Government (NZFSA) and act as the NZ 'Officially recognised technical authority' to:

- Act as the consultative body for NZFSA and the seafood industry, including assisting with issue identification and resolution.
- Provide policy advice to Government and other relevant industry organisations on seafood safety and standards.
- Assist and contribute to the development of cost effective sustainable seafood safety standards, risk management strategies, other technical standards, and protocols that are necessary for delivering safe seafood to consumers.
- Assist and contribute to (where relevant) the negotiation of market access requirements.
- Advise NZFSA on compliance regimes required under the Animal Products Act and the Food Act.

\* Safety is defined in relation to 'fitness for intended purpose' as per the Animal Products Act and the Food Act.

The Seafood Standards Council is a committee of the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council (SeaFIC). It has adopted the following operating principles and policies:

1. Beyond specified delegated authorities, the role is advisory to SeaFIC and the New Zealand Seafood Industry.
2. New Zealand standards for seafood safety will be comparable to international standards and guidelines.

3. One New Zealand standard will be set for the domestic and export sector. Export requirements will be considered additional to the New Zealand standard and are for market access only.
4. The New Zealand standard should be clear and the criteria for compliance transparent.
5. Commitment, competence, diligence and ethics must be demonstrated by the seafood sector to ensure safe food and in addition, the export sector to ensure access to official assurances.
6. Industry ownership of the Seafood Standards Council system will be encouraged and maintained in partnership with NZFSA.
7. Comprehensive, cost effective and auditable outcome based standards will be used to ensure the safety of all seafood products.
8. Costs of audit will be recovered directly from companies by the contractor.

## **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

During the period of 2006 – 2010, the Seafood Standards Council expects assuring seafood safety to be influenced by the following:

### **Consumer Changes**

- Consumers will be increasingly aware of, and demand food safety and security (particularly internationally).
- Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the foods they eat, in terms of their potential health benefits as well as their potential for incurring allergic response.
- Consumers are increasing trends to eat pre-packaged, convenience and novel food
- Consumers demand more information about the products they purchasing

### **New Zealand – Regulatory Environment**

- The domestic and export requirements for seafood have been separated and there will be one standard for all seafood in New Zealand. This will require support and guidance to those who are operating as 'domestic only' businesses to ensure that they meet the standard.
- The Domestic Food Review and the Imported Food Review will be completed. While this should mean little change in terms of day to day operational practice (for current export operators, some change to domestic market focused operations may

be expected), it is an expression of NZFSA policy and strategic direction and will have an impact on all food in New Zealand.

- Further harmonisation of the New Zealand/Australian domestic food standards will be achieved.

### **International – Regulatory Environment and Market Access**

- More European countries will come under the EU umbrella. Opportunities will continue to increase for products to be exported to China directly. The Australian market is growing and Middle East countries are likely to become more important markets for New Zealand seafood.
- With further clarity and definition of the base New Zealand standard – all additional requirements for market access can be seen as barriers to trade.
- New Zealand will continue to participate in and where possible influence the setting of international standards through codex and other international connections.
- Traceability will be increasingly important – particularly as sustainable fishing, chain of custody and consumer information demands increase.

### **Industry**

- Industry wants issues to be managed strategically both in terms of identification and resolution and requires effective communication to ensure they have a full understanding of the requirements.
- Standards will be set for the whole of the food chain and will require guidance and support to ensure that standards are clearly understood and maintained.
- Further processing opportunities will increase for New Zealand seafood to be processed in other countries, such as China.
- Innovative and value-added products demands will increase and industry will need to keep up with changes in technology.
- Industry will require competent staff in all areas of their business, particularly with changes in technology, development of products and compliance.
- A coordinated response is required to facilitate disease control obligations should an emergency exotic disease emerge.

### **Quality and Compliance Management**

- Quality and compliance have to be managed in a way that is affordable and sustainable for the seafood industry.

- Financial and human resources for systems and their development will remain scarce.
- Gaps in skills and knowledge exist in a number of areas in the seafood industry but particularly in technical, quality and compliance management areas.

## **THE SEAFOOD STANDARDS COUNCIL RESPONSE**

### **Communication**

Effective communication is seen as critical to enable industry to operate within the risk management regime.

- A contact database for all stakeholders will be developed and maintained. This includes the all seafood businesses operating in the risk management based regulatory regime.
- Better use of the communication tools available including:
  - o SeaFIC website –the SSC section of the website shall be more interactive and user friendly, operating a ‘registered members only’ site for information, advise etc
  - o Email - regular updates to stakeholders
  - o Seafood New Zealand magazine
- Industry will be informed of new and revised requirements in ‘plain English’ This will include providing electronic copies of reports generated for the SSC meetings to the industry.
- Advice will be provided to seafood companies to demonstrate the ways Risk Management Programmes can be used to maximise the benefits.
- Advice will be provided to ensure industry is kept up to date with technical changes associated with risk management and seafood safety.
- The SSC will be proactive in engaging with and providing communication to other government and non-government agencies to ensure standards that impact on seafood safety are developed, such as working with local councils on water quality management plans.
- The SSC will work with other agencies (where possible) to avoid duplicating and/or conflicting standards, such as customs, biosecurity.

## **The New Zealand Standard**

- Codes of practice will be developed as necessary that will support seafood companies to ensure the New Zealand standard is met. These will be recognised by NZFSA, where relevant.
- Additional guidance and support will be provided to the domestic sector to ensure that the New Zealand standard is maintained.
- Assist industry to resolve issues associated with regulatory issues by liaising with NZFSA New Zealand Standards Group and NZFSA Verification Agency.
- Work with NZFSA NZ Standards group to further harmonise New Zealand/Australia standards.
- Assist NZFSA and the inshore vessel fleet to develop appropriate standards.
- Assist NZFSA to develop standards that are appropriate to enable new and emerging products, technology and innovation and more sophisticated processing techniques to develop.
- Encourage industry to utilise of the flexibility inherent in the risk management approach in product and process innovation.

## **The International Environment and Market Access**

- Assist the industry to identify the market access issues and barriers to trade and work with NZFSA Export Standards Group to find satisfactory resolutions.
- Further explore the regulatory issues associated with processing New Zealand product in other countries (such as China) with industry and NZFSA Export Standards Group.
- Continue to work with NZFSA to influence Codex and other international standards. Specifically to work with NZFSA to identify appropriate standards for heavy metals and environment contaminants.

## **NZFSA - General**

- Work with the seafood industry to identify issues that increase costs or where there are opportunities for cost savings, in terms of resolution with NZFSA.

## **Environmental Contaminants**

- Develop strategies for managing heavy metals and other environmental contaminants in terms of communication and meeting market access requirements.

- Work with industry to mitigate potential issues that may impact on seafood safety.

### **Capability and Capacity, and Training**

- Work with the Seafood ITO to identify skills and knowledge gaps, and the competencies required to ensure seafood businesses succeed in the regulatory environment based on management of risk.
- Work with the Seafood ITO to develop appropriate training and qualification packages and support the development of smart ways of implementing training in a cost-effective manner.
- Work with industry technical quality and compliance staff to ensure they are well informed and have the appropriate competencies.

#### **Note:**

Further work is required to canvass the industry of the issues, identify resolution (if possible) prioritise for action and develop a work programme.