Food Safety Week

The Food Safety Information Council conducts a National Food Safety Week each year using a different theme each year, to raise awareness of important food safety issues. Food Safety Week was held from 10 – 16 November last year, with the theme *Food Adventures – New foods/ New techniques*. This theme represents a new trend by Australians to include a wider variety of foods in their diets and to experiment with new cooking techniques. Rather than the traditional over-cooked meat and three vegetables, people are choosing to eat more food that is raw or lightly/partly cooked. Food that is raw or under-cooked can pose a greater risk because it isn’t heated enough to kill the bacteria should the food have become contaminated at some stage.

The National Food Safety Week for 2008 aimed to raise awareness of food safety when preparing food in the home. Each year there are over five million cases of food poisoning in Australia with an estimated one fifth of these cases linked to practices within the home. A key message of last year’s event were the basic food safety tips, CLEAN, COOK, CHILL, SEPARATE. See the article ‘Holiday food safety tips’ on page 5 of this newsletter.

A number of promotional activities occurred throughout food safety week, including television and radio community service announcements, one by celebrated food author Margaret Fulton. Approximately 150 packages of brochures, posters, DVDs, fridge thermometers etc, were also sent out to schools, local councils, outside hours school care, childcare and aged care facilities, workplaces etc. Articles were also provided to a range of publications such as *Readers Digest* and *The Mercury*.

Further information on Food Safety Week as well as the other various activities conducted by the Food Safety Information Council, including fact sheets and access to the various media announcements, can be found at www.foodsafety.asn.au.
Registers of mobile food vendors and approved auditors

The *Food Act 2006* (the Act), requires Queensland Health to keep publicly available registers of licensed mobile food businesses and approved auditors. The purpose of the mobile food vendors' register is to enable the public and local government to check the licence details of mobile food businesses. The purpose of the register of approved auditors is to enable food businesses and local governments to locate approved auditors to undertake audits of accredited food safety programs or to check auditors’ approval details.

Both registers are now available for viewing. The approved auditors register is located at www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/ehu/auditors.asp. The register of mobile food vendors is located at www.health.qld.gov.au/ph/ehu/mobile_vendors.asp. An IT problem has resulted in the mobile food vendors register not currently being having the ability to be updated by local governments. Queensland Health is working to resolve this problem as soon as possible. In the interim, local governments can email the Food Safety Policy and Regulation Unit at foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au for a copy of an electronic spreadsheet to complete, so Queensland Health can enter the data directly.

Prosecution register update

Queensland Health publishes a summary of convictions against the *Food Act 2006*, except where a conviction has not been recorded, a court has made a non-publication order, or the case is within the appeal period or subject to appeal. The prosecutions published can include convictions undertaken by both Queensland Health and local governments. Information on each case will only remain on the website for a period of two years. The prosecutions register is available via the Queensland Health website (www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

Prosecutions are not undertaken indiscriminantly, they are a tool to prevent or reduce a serious risk to public health. Consequently most prosecutions are for serious offences or repeat offenders. The prosecutions registers aims to increase public access to information and to act as a deterrent for non-compliance with the Act by food business operators.

Local governments can also have convictions published on the website by contacting Food Safety Policy and Regulation Unit, Queensland Health on (07) 3234 0938 or email foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au. A form will be provided to gather the necessary information so that Queensland Health can upload it to the website.

National food handling survey

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) released the 2007 National Food Handling Survey Final Report, which presents the results of a major survey of safe food handling knowledge and actual safe food handling practices within food businesses in Australia. This was a follow-up to the 2001 National Food Handling Benchmark Survey.

The purpose of this 2007 survey was to evaluate if both knowledge and practices relating to safe food handling had improved since the introduction of Chapter 3 – Food Safety Standards of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, into State and Territory food legislation.

The 2007 National Food Handling Survey Report, conducted by FSANZ in association with State and Territory food regulatory authorities and local government environmental health officers, found a high standard of safe food handling knowledge and practices by food businesses, although the survey report also highlighted opportunities to improve food safety.

Fortification of bread making flour with folic acid

In September 2007, a Standard was gazetted as part of a strategy to reduce the incidence of neural tube defects in babies. Standard 2.1.1 – Cereals and Cereal Products of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*, requires that all wheat flour for making bread, with the exception of flour represented as organic, be fortified with folic acid from 13 September 2009.

The level of fortification required in bread making flour is two to three milligrams of folic acid per kilogram of flour. Bread will contain an average of 120 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams (approximately three slices). Folic acid must be declared in the statement of ingredients on the foods for retail sale as it is classified as a compound ingredient (unless the flour makes up less than 5% of the final food). For more information on mandatory folic acid fortification within Australia, visit the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/factsheets/.

2007 Children Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey and Australian Total Diet Survey

The results of the 2007 Australian National Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey were released on 5 October 2008. Further information, including the full report, can be found at www.health.gov.au/nutritionmonitoring. The results of the 22nd Australian Total Diet Study (ATDS) were have also been released. The ATDS is conducted every two years and its purpose is to estimate the dietary exposure of the Australian population to a range of chemicals. To view the report, visit www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/publications/22ndaustraliantotaldietstudy/index.cfm

Front-of-pack labelling

In their meeting on 24 October 2008 the Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) received a report from the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) on front-of-pack labelling of food. The Ministerial Council had asked for an investigation on whether a front-of-pack labelling scheme would be an effective health strategy to guide consumer choice towards healthier food options. Ministerial Council agreed that FRSC provide a draft ministerial policy guideline to Ministers at their next meeting in May 2009. Front-of-pack labelling provides easily accessible nutritional information to consumers on the front of packaged foods to help them identify healthier foods more easily. The two main types of front-of-pack labelling schemes currently in use overseas are the Traffic Light system and the Percentage Daily Intake.

Phytosterols in Fruit Juice & Fruit Juice Drinks

Written submissions were invited to provide feedback on the Initial Assessment Report for Application A604 – Phytosterols in Fruit in Fruit Juice  Fruit Juice Drinks. The report can be found at: www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment/applications/applicationa604phyto4142.cfm. The deadline for submissions has now passed and the draft assessment report should be available at this website shortly.
Melamine update

The melamine contamination of food products manufactured in China dominated the news late last year. Reports of melamine contamination emerged in September 2008, when Chinese children began falling ill after consuming infant formula manufactured within the country.

Melamine is a chemical most commonly used in the plastic industry. Manufacturers in China began adding the chemical to milk products to make them appear higher in protein than they really were. When used, it allowed inferior products to pass government quality tests. However, when ingested in large quantities, melamine can cause the formation of kidney stones as the body tries to eliminate it. Four infants died from kidney failure and over 54,000 people fell ill in China due to the consumption of contaminated milk.

Since this time, bans or recalls on milk products manufactured in China have occurred in 16 countries. While the infant formulas which affected thousands of children in China are not imported into Australia, seven products were withdrawn from sale here due to melamine contamination. These products are:

- White Rabbit Creamy Candy (withdrawn by Australian importer)
- Cadbury Éclairs (withdrawn by the manufacturer)
- Lotte Koala Biscuits (withdrawn by Australian importer)
- Kirrin Milk Tea (withdrawn by importer and consumer level recall)
- Orion Tiramisu Italian Cake (withdrawn by Australian importer)
- Dali Yuan Brand First Milk – Vanilla flavour (withdrawn by Australian importer)
- Boxer Lovers Body Pen Set (withdrawn by Australian importer).

Queensland Health participated in the national coordinated surveillance program of products containing ingredients from China that may have been adulterated with melamine. This surveillance program began in October last year and so far, authorities have tested over 270 products from China containing dairy as a minor component. At this time, none of the foods tested have tested positive for melamine. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has confirmed that Australia had not imported milk products from China containing dairy as a major ingredient (more than 10%).

There has also been suggestions that fruit and vegetables grown in China and fresh eggs and beef from China may contain melamine. Due to import restrictions, Australia does not import fresh eggs or beef from China. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) has conducted tests on the vegetables Australia imports from China and have found no evidence of melamine adulteration.

Queensland Health remains engaged with FSANZ and other relevant regulatory bodies to ensure that any further melamine contamination issues are effectively dealt with as they emerge. An overview of melamine contamination as it affects Australia can be found on the FSANZ website at www.foodstandards.gov.au/newsroom/factsheets/factsheets2008/.
The approaching public and school holidays can be an opportunity for friends and family to get together and celebrate the holiday season. However, with over 5.4 million cases of food poisoning each year, one third of which are linked to practices within the home, it is also a time when we must be especially conscious of correct food handling. When preparing that special holiday meal, and all other times, there are some simple steps that should be taken:

**Hand washing**
- Wash hands thoroughly whenever they may be a source of contamination (eg. after handling raw meat or after going to the toilet)
- Wash hands with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds and dry thoroughly with paper towel.

**Food storage**
- Ensure your fridge is not overstocked as this prevents the cold air circulating. If necessary, non-perishable drinks should be stored in an esky with ice to allow more space for foods in the refrigerator (especially meats, creamy desserts and salads)
- Keep all food covered with a lid or plastic wrap and ensure raw and cooked/ready to eat foods are stored separately (raw food should be store on the lowest shelf so that juices cannot contaminate other foods)
- Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold food cold (below 5°C).

**Defrosting**
- Food should be defrosted in the fridge or microwave. If food is defrosted in the microwave it should be cooked and/or eaten immediately
- Allow several days to defrost a turkey or chicken in the fridge (approximately 24hrs per 2-2.5kg)
- Ensure that the meat is cooked thoroughly so that the juices run clear (the core temperature should reach 75°C – use a meat thermometer to check).

**Preparation**
- Ensure food preparation surfaces are kept clean
- Do not use the same equipment used to prepare raw meats, for cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep food chilled until it is needed and return it to the refrigerator as soon as possible. Food left out over four hours should be thrown away
- Processed meats such as sausages and meat patties as well as chicken, should be cooked fully. Steaks, chops and other solid pieces of meat may be eaten rare
- If large quantities of food are cooked in advance, divide into smaller portions so that they cool quicker
- Ham can keep for a couple of weeks if handled correctly. Only slice off as much as you need, as ham keeps longer un-sliced. Remove plastic wrap and cover with a clean cloth to prevent drying out (follow any directions on the packaging).

**Leftovers**
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers as soon as possible
- Cooked dishes should be consumed within 24 hours and reheated until they are steaming hot.
- Other leftovers such as salads or prawns should be discarded after two days
- If in doubt, throw it out!

Remember the key food safety tips - **CLEAN, COOK, CHILL and SEPARATE**
## Food reforms at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The requirement</th>
<th>Where we are at</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food Standards Code</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food Act 2006</strong></td>
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<td>- <strong>Food Act 2006</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food Regulation 2006</strong></td>
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<td>Commenced on 1 July 2006</td>
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<td><strong>Primary Produce</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food Production (Safety) Act 2000</strong></td>
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New articles and publications

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<tr>
<th>Food Safety Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Queensland Health food safety fact sheets</td>
<td>All Queensland Health fact sheets have recently been updated to reflect changes to the Queensland food legislation including the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. These fact sheets cover a variety of topics relating to legislative requirements, to assist food industry and consumers in interpreting and applying the food legislation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Health Officer guide – Food safety supervisors</td>
<td>A food safety supervisor guideline for local government to assist in the administration of the Food Act 2006.</td>
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<td>Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Assessment of 2005 Labels for Key Mandatory Labelling Elements for Consistency against Labelling Provisions (Phase 2 Report).</td>
<td>A FSANZ report on how manufacturers present key information on their food labels. The report assesses how food manufacturers manage key labelling requirements such as date marking, directions for use and storage and nutrition information requirements, as set out in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) and how they present nutrition, health and related claims on packaged food labels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service Skills Australia - Australian Food Safety Program DVD.</td>
<td>A new DVD is available for sale on the Service Skills Australia website. The DVD explains the requirements of a Food Safety Program under standards 3.2.1.</td>
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Information for Environmental Health Officers & Industry

Food safety supervisor competency codes

The National Quality Council (Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) has recently made changes to food safety qualification unit codes. These changes are as a result of a review of the national Tourism and Hospitality training package which is now titled SIT07. Two (2) of these changes relate to competencies for food safety supervisors. These changes are as follows:

SITXOHS002A – Follow workplace hygiene procedures, replaces THHGHS01B
SITXFSA001A – Implement food safety procedures, replaces THHBCC11B

As with the previous competency codes, these new codes are nationally recognised. Local governments have been notified of the change and the Food Safety Supervisor Credit Transfer Matrix, available from www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety, has been updated with this new information.
## Upcoming events...

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allergen Bureau Conference</td>
<td>Advancing Food Safety Pty. Ltd.</td>
<td>31 March 2009</td>
<td>Sebel Parramatta, 350 Church St, Parramatta NSW</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ph. (02) 9898 0564</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:conference@haccptown.com">conference@haccptown.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>16th Australian HACCP Conference</td>
<td>Advancing Food Safety Pty. Ltd.</td>
<td>24-28 August 2009</td>
<td>Sebel Parramatta, 350 Church St, Parramatta NSW</td>
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<td>Ph. (02) 9898 0344</td>
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<td>2009 Genetically Modified Crops Coexistence Conference</td>
<td>Rebecca Campbell WALDRONSMITH Management</td>
<td>10-12 November 2009</td>
<td>Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Cnr Spence and Flinders Sts, Melbourne, Vic</td>
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<td>Ph. (03) 9645 6311</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Email <a href="mailto:rebecca@wsm.com.au">rebecca@wsm.com.au</a></td>
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- I no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please **remove** my contact details, as shown below.

**Name:** ________________________________

**Address:** ____________________________________________

**Suburb:** ____________________ **Postcode:** __________

**Company:** __________________________ **Phone No.:** __________

**Email Address:** ________________________

To contact the **Food Safety Policy & Regulation Unit**

Phone: (07) 3234 0938; Fax: (07) 3234 1480;

Mail: GPO Box 48, Brisbane Qld 4001 or email foodsafety@health.qld.gov.au.

Please visit the Queensland Health food safety website at: www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety.