

Media release

29 October 2014



Regulating the dairy industry to safeguard public health

At the 14th annual general meeting of Dairy Food Safety Victoria (DFSV), Jennifer McDonald, presenting her first report as CEO, emphasised that DFSV's "primary focus of activity in 2013–14 has been on fulfilling our core responsibility of regulating the Victorian dairy industry to safeguard public health." She was able to report that there was "no foodborne illness outbreak attributed to Victorian produced dairy product and very minimal need to resort to enforcement action to ensure dairy food businesses are compliant with regulatory requirements."

Chairman Grant Davies spoke of a more positive industry outlook in 2013–14 on the back of improved operational conditions and the emergence of opportunities for expansion in the dairy sector. Mr Davies reported an increase in the number of manufacturing licenses and said that "to be sure we can maintain the effectiveness of the system we have increased our resources through recruitment of additional food safety managers to meet the regulatory needs of our expanding industry."

CEO Jennifer McDonald noted that within this context of industry expansion "DFSV has an important role to play in ensuring ongoing dairy food safety, a critical aspect of market access."

DFSV implements a robust regulatory framework which underpins market access and the growth of the dairy industry; operating on the basis of risk assessment and management, and the application of minimum effective regulation to achieve safe food outcomes. Ms McDonald said that while "satisfied that we are implementing an effective food safety system, we continue to implement improvements to our licensing and compliance systems and to ensure our regulatory function is undertaken as efficiently as possible."

DFSV supports the development of industry competence to ensure a safe food supply and an important aspect is in improving industry knowledge and understanding of preventative measures that ensure safe food outcomes. DFSV Food Safety Managers continue to report high levels of compliance across the industry and where appropriate DFSV information and technical advice activities support that compliance, particularly in situations where new processes and technologies are emerging.

In 2013-14 DFSV also continued to facilitate forums for information sharing and discussion on food safety and market access issues, including a seminar to raise awareness of the challenges of managing *Listeria monocytogenes* in the dairy manufacturing environment and to provide some practical guidance in Listeria risk management following an incident in 2012/13.

Looking to the future, the CEO stressed the importance of "maintaining a watch on emerging trends and expanding our knowledge base, particularly our understanding of emerging risks and alternative risk management strategies." DFSV will also continue to "review and implement improvements to ensure that we operate efficiently and have the appropriate knowledge, skills and business systems to support the organisation into the future."

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