

OVERSEAS TRAVEL REPORT

For travel to Chicago, United States of America

11th to 20th November 2017



Dr Stephen Pahl

SARDI Food Safety and Innovation

Executive Summary

Dr Stephen Pahl of SARDI Food Safety and Innovation travelled to Chicago, United States of America, from 11th-20th November 2017. The purpose of the trip was to provide technical input and support to the Australian delegation during the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, and obtain experience on how Codex sessions operate. Other members of the Australian delegation were Ms Amanda Hill (Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Delegation Leader) and Ms Patricia Blenman (Food Standards Australia New Zealand).

The following topics of importance to the Australian regulators, primary production and food processing industries were discussed:

- Control of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC). A representative from the FAO/WHO provided an update on recent work completed following a request from CCFH48. A discussion paper will be prepared by the United States of America, Uruguay and Chile for consideration at the 50th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene. The Committee agreed that the discussion paper should address all categories of food associated with human STEC illnesses as identified as a major risk by the report of the FAO/WHO Expert Meeting.
- Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969). Agreement was reached during a physical working group on a way forward and an electronic working group will continue to revise the guidelines. A physical working group will also be held immediately prior to the 50th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene.
- Guidance for the control of histamine in fish. The guidance was modified to improve flexibility, clarity and consistency. Committee agreed to forward the guidance for adoption at the 41st Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission and noted that the guidance would be published only once consequential alignments to the relevant sections of the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products were finalised. An electronic working group will identify an appropriate place for the guidance in the Code of Practice, consider the alignment within the Code of Practice and further work on the revision of sampling plans.
- Development of a Code of Practice to provide guidance to food business operators and governments to manage allergens in food production, including controls to prevent cross contact. This new work proposal was submitted by Australia and the United States of America. The purpose and scope of work was clarified and the Committee agreed for Australia and the United States of America to prepare a revised project document for approval at the 41st Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- Guidance for the management of (micro)biological foodborne crises/outbreaks. This new work proposal was submitted by the European Union. The purpose and scope of the new work was clarified and the Committee agreed for the European Union to prepare a revised product document for approval at the 41st Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The travel was co-supported by SafeFish and has helped to ensure that risk management strategies for histamine control in fish are commensurate with the level of risk in the Australian context. Furthermore, the travel has helped improve SARDI's capability in relation to technical food safety, market access issues related to food safety, and to support South Australian industries that will benefit from this knowledge and expertise. Several new contacts with international delegates were also established.

Introduction/Background

South Australia's Strategic Plan has a target of growing the contribution made by the food industry to \$20 billion by the year 2020. This travel will contribute to achieving the South Australian government's target as it allows for information exchange between PIRSA/SARDI, Australian regulators and international Codex delegations and to ensure that the risk management practices are commensurate with the risk in South Australia and Australian context.

Codex standards and guidelines drive food safety legislation domestically and internationally, and form the basis of market access requirements. The SafeFish Partnership provided travel funding for Dr Pahl to accompany the Australian delegation to 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH49) as a technical expert. Other members of the Australian delegation were Ms Amanda Hill (Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Delegation Leader) and Ms Patricia Blenman (Food Standards Australia New Zealand). Several draft guidelines/Codes of Practice of importance to Australian regulators, primary production and food processing industries were tabled for discussion. These documents included the revision of the Recommended Code of Practice of the General Principles of Food Hygiene and the control of histamine in fish.

The development of these documents have the potential to significantly impact the South Australian and Australian seafood industries if appropriate guidance is not included. Dr Pahl has been participating in the development of these documents through electronic working groups, and substantial progress on these items was expected to be made during the meeting.

Participation at the Codex meeting as part of the Australian delegation also contributes to improving the scientific R&D capability and expertise of SARDI through investment in the professional development of its workforce. In addition, the travel improves SARDI's capability in relation to technical food safety and market access issues related to food safety. The knowledge and expertise gained can also be used to support and help benefit the relevant South Australian primary production and food processing industries.

Opportunities and Value Assessment

Benefit to SARDI, PIRSA and SA from the travel

Aim:

This overseas travel has contributed to improving the scientific R&D capability and expertise of SARDI through investment in the professional development of its workforce. Developing and retaining an innovative research community is a key platform in the State Strategic Plan.

The knowledge gained through this travel has assisted in enhancing the productivity and sustainability of the State and directly addresses objectives of the South Australia Strategic Plan, especially the Premium Food and Wine from our Clean Environment. The travel also contributes to the five blocks of the PIRSA corporate plan, namely;

- building capacity, through staff development and developing trade and market access skills within SARDI
- securing production, through protection of trade and market access by ensuring international regulations are commensurate with risk in the Australian context
- expanding markets, through avoidance of unnecessary barriers

- growing regions (most seafood production occurs in regional areas)
- performing well (the SARDI led SafeFish program is a national leader in food safety of seafood).

Outcome:

This travel has provided valuable insight for Dr Pahl into the Codex process and the level of justification required when making comments or objections on matters of discussion. The travel has strengthened Dr Pahl's network with Australian regulators and allowed Dr Pahl to begin building networks with international delegates.

Travel Objectives

The objective was for Dr Pahl to provide technical input and support to the Australian delegation to the 49th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH49). The agenda contained several topics of importance to Australian regulators, primary production and food processing industries. These included:

Control of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC)

- A representative from the FAO reported on the deliberations and outputs of the second FAO/WHO Expert Meeting on STEC. Source attribution studies indicates that beef, vegetables/fruit, dairy (primary from unpasteurized products), and small ruminant's meat are the most important sources of foodborne STEC illnesses and STEC has the potential to become a risk management priority in some countries.
- It was emphasised that not all STEC illnesses are foodborne; foodborne may account for approximately 50% of all STEC illnesses.
- The Committee noted the information presented and agreed that a discussion paper on future work on STEC would be prepared by the United States of America, Uruguay, and Chile for consideration at the 50th Session of CCFH. The discussion paper aims to address all categories of foods associated with human STEC illnesses that were identified as a major risk.

Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969)

- Discussions on the proposed draft revision to the Code of Practice on the General Principles of Food Hygiene focussed on the fundamental principles rather than detailed discussion on the text.
- The revision remains ongoing and the Committee agreed to accelerate progress with an aim to deliver a final draft to the 50th Session of CCFH. An electronic working group chaired by the United Kingdom and co-chaired by France, Ghana, India, Mexico and United States of America will reconvene to continue to revision of the document. A physical working group will also be held immediately prior to CCFH50.
- The working groups to clarify the relationship of the three types of control measures (i.e. GHP, 'enhanced GHP', and HACCP), and clarify how food business operators come to understand the hazards associated with their business and determine the types of control measures needed to control hazards.

Guidance for the control of histamine in fish

- The proposed draft guidance for histamine control for future inclusion in the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (CAC/RCP 52-2003) was reviewed in session. The document was amended for flexibility, clarity and consistency with other sections and definitions within the Code. The Committee noted the importance of implementing histamine control measures for ensuring safety of the product rather than histamine testing.
- Significant discussions were held on typical histamine levels in freshly harvested scombrotoxin forming fish, achievable histamine levels by applying HACCP and if Salmonidae should be included or excluded from the list of at-risk species. No consensus could be reached regarding Salmonidae, and as a compromise the Committee agreed to list the six families (i.e. Scombridae, Clupeidae, Engraulidae, Coryphaenidae, Pomatomidae, Scomberesocidae) that are already referenced in Code. It was also noted that the list could be expanded in future.
- The Committee agreed to forward the guidance for adoption by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and noted that the guidance would only be published once any alignment amendments to the Code were finalised. An electronic working group chaired by Japan and co-chaired by the United States of America will reconvene to identify an appropriate place for the guidance in the Code, consider what alignment amendments are needed and to review the relevant sampling, examination and analysis sections.

In addition at CCFH49, the forward work plan for CCFH was discussed. The process by which CCFH will undertake its work was finalised and will be posted on the Codex website. The Committee supported two new work activities, namely:

Development of a Code of Practice on food allergen management for food business operators

- The purpose of this Code of Practice will be to provide guidance to food business operators and governments to manage allergens in food production, including controls to prevent cross contact. Food allergen management also involves allergen labelling which is addressed by the General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods.

Guidance for the management of (micro)biological foodborne crises/outbreaks

- The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to competent authorities on the management of foodborne outbreaks/crises, including the communication between national programmes with INFOSAN. The scope is limited to biological hazards.
- The guidance intends to address preparedness, detection, response and recovery with the intent of limiting the extent of such events.

Trip Details, Activities and Key Observations

Date	Nature of activity	Comment
12/11/2017	Preparation meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CCFH Chair and Coordinating Committee for North America and South West Pacific (CCNASWP) Delegations - QUADs (Australia, United States of America, New Zealand and Canada) Delegations - QUADs (Australia, United States of America, New Zealand and Canada) and EU Delegations 	CCFH Chair outlined his expectations for the meeting and for delegations to introduce themselves. Scope of existing and new work was discussed at a high level.
13/11/2017	CCFH meeting (day 1)	<p>Mr Ted McKinney – Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agriculture Affairs (USDA) provided the opening address and talked about the importance developing science-based standards at Codex for protecting consumer health/food safety and fair trade.</p> <p>Dr Robert Brackett – Vice President and Director, Institute for Food Safety and Health, Illinois Institute of Technology was a key note speaker and spoke about the common challenges of funding a food safety system, relationships, government philosophy, regulatory enforcement and alignment, culture and language.</p> <p>Committee noted the clarification provided by the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs to replace “aromatic herbs” with “culinary herbs” in the code of Hygienic Practice for Low-Moisture Foods</p> <p>Committee noted the recent FAO/WHO activities on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shiga toxin producing <i>Escherichia coli</i> (STEC) - Water quality - Histamine in Salmonidae <p>Committee noted the recent activities from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and that the Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety will be disbanded and incorporated into the FAO/WHO/OIE Tripartite collaboration.</p> <p>Side-event on the management of (micro)biological foodborne outbreaks/crises. Lead by the European Union with presentations by representatives from the European Commission, Denmark’s Ministry of</p>

		<p>Environment and Food and Mars Inc.</p> <p>Physical working group held on the Draft Revision of the General Principles of Food Hygiene and Its HACCP Annex.</p>
14/11/2017	CCFH meeting (day 2)	<p>In session working group on the proposed draft guidance for histamine control in the Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products.</p> <p>Side-event on allergens. Lead by Australia and the United States of America with presentations by representatives from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, US FDA and Cargill.</p>
15/11/2017	CCFH meeting (day 3)	<p>Physical working group held on the CCFH's forward work plan and new work. The criterion for ranking the forward work plan was modified. Support for the new work obtained.</p> <p>Plenary agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish an EWG and a PWG to continue to revise the General Principles of Food Hygiene. Reports from EWG and PWG to be available for CCFH50. - Forward the histamine guidance for adoption and establish an EWG to consider the outstanding actions. Report from EWG to be available for CCFH50. - Submit a revised project document (prepared by Australia and the United States of America) on allergen management for approval as new work and once approved establish an EWG to begin work. Report from EWG to be available for CCFH50. - Submit a revised project document (prepared by the European Union) on management of (micro)biological foodborne outbreaks/crises for approval as new work and once approved establish an EWG to begin work. Report from EWG to be available for CCFH50. - Consider a discussion paper (prepared by the United States of America, Uruguay, and Chile) on future work on STEC at CCFH50.
16/11/2017	CCFH meeting (day 4)	Report writing day
17/11/2017	CCFH meeting (day 5)	<p>Finalisation and adoption of the report</p> <p>Full report available from http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FMeetings%252FCX-712-49%252FWD%252Ffh49_07e.pdf</p>

Action Details

- Stephen Pahl to provide update and information from the Codex meeting to SafeFish and other staff within SARDI Food Safety and Innovation.

Contacts

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Travel Costs

EXPENSE ITEM	Agency Funds	Personal Funds	Commonwealth Government Funds	Industry Funds	Other Funds	TOTAL
Airfares	\$	\$	\$	\$ 1,676.87	\$	\$ 1,676.87
Accommodation & living expenses	\$	\$	\$	\$ 3,476.84	\$	\$ 3,476.84
Salary (including on costs)	\$ 1,899.00	\$	\$	\$ 1,266.00	\$	\$ 3,165.00
Conference fees	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$ 0.00
Other expenses (including additional credit card expenditure)	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$ 0.00
Name of Funding Bodies (for non agency funding)				Fisheries Research and Development Corporation		
TOTAL ACTUAL COSTS	\$ 1,899.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 6,419.71	\$ 0.00	\$ 8,318.71
LESS ORIGINAL ESTIMATED COSTS	(\$1,899.00)	(\$0.00)	(\$0.00)	(\$6,616.00)	(\$0.00)	(\$8,515.00)
+ OR - VARIATION	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	-\$196.29	\$0.00	-\$196.29
COMMENT ON VARIATION	Minimal variation, airfares slightly cheaper than budget					

To be signed by traveller

Approved by Manager

(4/12/17)