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New Law for Regulating Organic Products



On 27 February, the Minister of Agriculture, Hon Damien O'Connor, [introduced the Organic Products Bill](#) in Parliament. The Bill aims to increase consumer confidence when purchasing organic products, give businesses more certainty in making organic claims, and support international trade in organic products.

As part of the Bill the Ministry for Primary Industries will also be developing organic products regulations and a National Organic Standard. The Standard will outline the production and processing rules organic businesses must follow. Consumers, growers, producers, importers, exporters, auditors and industry representatives will all be invited to have their say on the proposed new law over the coming months. Keep an eye out in the next edition of *Food News* for more details, and to find a workshop near you.

Food Recalls: Pesto Products



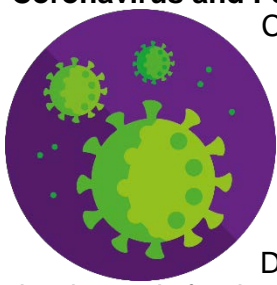
Verifiers – can you please remind food manufacturers and importers that managing allergens is a critical part of their Food Act 2014 responsibilities, in particular how they manage cross-contamination.

There have been a number of recalls of pesto products in New Zealand and Australia due to the presence of an undeclared allergen (peanuts). This follows recalls in Europe and the United Kingdom of pesto products that were manufactured in Italy, using internationally-sourced ingredients. Current information suggests that the cashew nuts imported into Italy were contaminated with peanuts.

To date, there are no known reports of allergic reactions associated with the recalled pesto products in New Zealand. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is working closely with Australian food regulators and internationally through the International Food Safety Authorities Network to monitor developments and identify the root cause.

Recalls of affected products in New Zealand can be found on the [Recalled Food Products](#) web page. Customers who have had an allergic reaction can report this to MPI Food Compliance on 0800 00 83 33, or by [email](#).

Coronavirus and Food Safety



Co-regulators, you may be addressing questions from concerned businesses asking about managing food safety in line with 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19).

You have an important role – to help businesses by asking questions about how an outbreak will be managed in their facilities, and emphasising the importance of food safety practices and hygiene protocols for staff.

Due to trade disruptions there could be implications for the storage of food products in the domestic food environment as a result of COVID-19. Be sure to ask about how businesses will be working to find alternative solutions to their needs should this impact them. This could be a good time to start a conversation about an organisation's continuity plans.

To help, here's some key messaging to emphasise basic food safety practices.

What can food business owners/managers do?

It is unlikely that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food, and there isn't evidence to date of this happening. Usual good hygienic manufacturing practices and thorough cooking for cooked products will minimise the risk of transmission of any foodborne illness.

Manufacturers and employers still have an important role to play in preventing foodborne illness.

They should:

- make sure staff are aware of the symptoms of COVID-19, what they can do to protect themselves and where they can go for more information
- make sure you're aware of staff who have been overseas to affected regions or in contact with people who have, and seek appropriate medical advice
- ensure that food handlers are trained appropriately in food hygiene practices suitable to their premises
- ensure effective supervision of food handlers to reinforce hygienic practices
- ensure that appropriate facilities are provided for hand washing or sanitation (e.g. alcohol gels/wipes) to enable food handlers to practice good hygiene
- ensure that food handlers and external contractors are aware that they must report any signs/symptoms of respiratory illness before or during work
- be vigilant and ensure that food handlers and other staff are not ill, and are fit to work
- ensure that staff with symptoms stay home until medical advice is obtained
- fully support staff through access to medical advice and during convalescence.

For more information and updates, visit our new web page [coronavirus and food safety](#). For health information, visit [health.govt.nz](#)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

'Bring Your Own' Container



We've had our fair share of enquiries about reusable cups with coffee carts and cafes, so thought it timely to share some advice in case you're fielding similar questions.

Businesses are always innovating, always evolving and trying to meet new consumer demands. Under the Food Act 2014, food businesses are given greater flexibility to manage food safety risks and to respond better to consumer demands. This means that food businesses choose what works best for them, providing the food is kept safe and suitable.

The 'bring your own' container model involves a shared responsibility between businesses and consumers/customers. Allowing customers to provide and use their own cups or containers, and how they manage this safely, is up to individual businesses. Businesses must manage the risk of cross-contamination up to the point of sale. After the point of sale, food safety is the customer's responsibility.

This means the customer is responsible for keeping food safe during transport, storage, preparation and consumption of the food.

Safety risks from this practice can be managed in a variety of ways, and the business can choose what works best for them to achieve food safety. For example, the legislation does not require a cleaning process for customer's own containers – but a business can decide to do this to manage their food safety risks. If they incorporate this requirement into their Food Control Plan (FCP), it will be enforced under the Food Act. If it's not in their FCP, but is something they introduce as a store policy, it is not enforceable under the Food Act.

New Animal Products Regulations 2020



Evaluators and verifiers – for those who are visiting businesses registered under a Risk Management Programme (RMP), can you please alert them to this new Animal Products Act 1999 (APA) requirement as follows.

From 19 March 2020, operators are required to additionally include their [Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point](#) (HACCP) plan when registering an outline of their RMP with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). This is required under the new Animal Products (Risk Management Programme Registration – Required Part) Regulations 2020, which comes into effect on 19 March. Further details will be provided in the [RMP Manual](#) shortly.

This regulatory change is one of the proposals enabled by the Food Safety Law Reform Act of 2018 to improve food safety, by making it easier and faster to access important hazard information. As a result, the Animal Products (Requirements for RMP Outlines) Notice 2008 will be revoked and the [Animal Products \(Risk Management Programme Specifications\) Notice 2008](#) will be amended.

Other regulatory change proposals, such as in traceability and recall, will be introduced in late 2020. These changes are part of MPI's ongoing Regulation Redesign project to improve the food safety legislative structure, as well as simplify and consolidate regulations and notices under the APA and Wine Acts.

For more information about this regulatory change, you can [subscribe to updates](#).

EVENTS

Towards Mastery of Verification Workshops



Given the huge response to the Towards Mastery of Verification workshops hosted by New Zealand Food Safety in late 2019, we are providing a limited number of deliveries of this one-day programme during March 2020.

This provides a further opportunity for those Territorial Authorities and third party verifiers who could not attend the 2019 workshops, and also gives our horticultural and Ministry of Health class-recognised persons a more convenient time of year to take advantage of this invaluable workshop.

To view the dates and locations, and to register, please log into the Food Verifiers Academy and select the [Towards Mastery of Verification Practice Workshop link](#) in the News section of the home page. If you are not already registered with the Academy, [click here to register](#).

If you have questions, please email VerifierAcademy@mpi.govt.nz

Catch Up at NZIEH Conference

If you're going to the New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health (NZIEH) Annual Professional Development Conference (Wellington, 11-13 March 2020), come and catch up with the New Zealand Food Safety team.



The 2020 Conference marks 100 years for NZIEH. Themed 'Celebrating 100 Years of Sustainability and Innovation in Environmental Health', the 2020 Conference will cover a wide range of topics including water quality, environmental health law, disaster response management, climate change, hazardous substances, healthy housing, noise assessment, and food safety.

There will be a number of New Zealand Food Safety and MPI presentations including:

- Importing food – Importing risk?
- Compliance and enforcement update
- Trust in the food safety system for different segments of society
- Food Act 2014 Recognition Systems
- Partnering with Māori and Iwi to collaboratively identify where mātauranga Māori and traditional food safety practices deliver the same outcome as compliance with regulatory requirements
- Developing New Zealand's Organic Standard
- Innovations in verification – an update on implementing Remote Verification and introducing our work on 'other ways to verify'
- Understanding food shelf-life
- Outcome from Food Act's Section 137 Review and Regulatory Services Audit.

For more details, visit the [NZIEH Conference web page](#). To register for the Conference, [click here](#).