

Opportunities to Improve Meat Standards Australia Minutes of 24 March 2009 Workshop

Summary

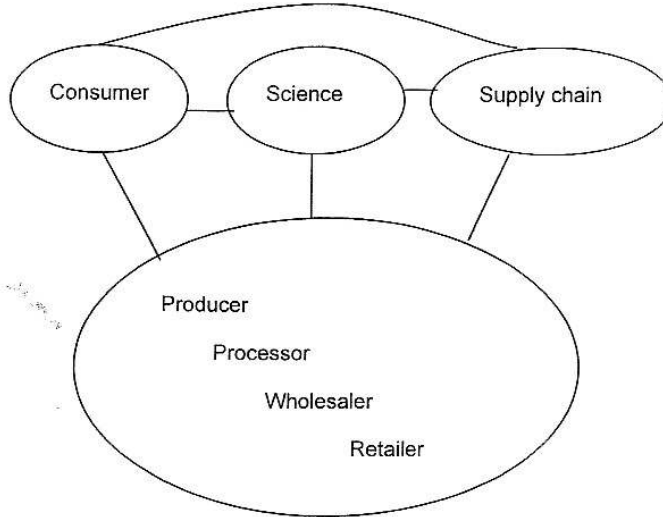
- ▶ Participants agreed that MSA is integral to the future competitiveness, profitability and sustainability of the Australian red meat industry.
- ▶ Participants are committed to MSA, including the three peak bodies, Cattle Council, ALFA and AMIC.
- ▶ Five themes where MSA can be improved were identified at the workshop.
 - **Theme 1; Compliance and Process Issues Associated with Implementing MSA**
 - Issue – The whole value chain, from producer to retailer, needs to implement MSA for it to perform and meet its potential.
 - Implication – If it does not perform, confidence in MSA will decline leading to decreased participation and ultimately lower red meat consumption.
 - Action – Need to focus on building the capability and accreditation of value chain participants; increasing participation and quality control.
 - **Theme 2: Leadership and Management of MSA**
 - Issue – The whole value chain need input into MSA's strategic direction and management.
 - Implication – Lack of engagement reduces the commitment to MSA, understanding/feasibility of improvements, and ultimately the integrity of MSA.
 - Action – Establish value chain steering committee to complement science committee.
 - **Theme 3: MSA as a Product**
 - Issue – MSA is a buying tool to guarantee consumer-eating outcomes of a red-meat cut, that complements retailer' brands. There is confusion in the value chain on the MSA brand and other criteria and language is being used. The whole value chain can supply by MSA rating.
 - Implication – Confusion and dilution of MSA brand, ultimately affecting participation and integrity.
 - Action -
 - **Theme 4: Improving MSA Education and Training**
 - Issue – Not all businesses in the value chain have completed MSA training, which should be linked to MSA licensing. There may be a lack of training providers. The purpose and benefit of consumer and retailer education is unclear (see MSA as a product theme).
 - Implication – Decreased integrity of MSA and consumer dissatisfaction.
 - Action – Revitalise training along supply chain (user pays) and link to accreditation. Review and re-focus MSA consumer education.
 - **Theme 5: MSA Science**
 - Issue – The science behind MSA is not widely understood and there are areas where the science can be improved (i.e. aging, pH/temperature and flavour).
 - Implication – Lack of understanding and prioritised R&D affects the integrity of MSA.
 - Action – Further R&D on priority areas (aging, pH/temperature and flavour). Value chain education on MSA science.

Theme 1; Compliance and Process Issues Associated with Implementing MSA

Compliance Key Points

What is the issue?

- ▶ MSA relies on the integrity of all parts of the system



- ▶ This is underpinned by the concept of “chain of custody” where each part of the supply chain needs to fulfil its MSA roles and responsibilities if eating outcomes are to be guaranteed to consumer.
 - Goal: change culture of Supply chain participants so product remains consistent.
- ▶ Processors are a critical control point because there are a limited number of businesses and they attract significant Food Safety regulation. MSA requires quality control and assurance in other parts to maximise potential.

Who is concerned and Why?

- ▶ Industry because of a concern about rejection of beef.
- ▶ Concerned lack of control may lead to:
 - Substitution/not true to label
 - Not meeting min. ageing requirements.
 - Insufficient auditing and sanctions and insufficient motivation (eg DNA sampling)
 - Informal accreditation/training.

What is impact and cause for concern?

- ▶ Lower consumer confidence → increase demand for competing proteins and low beef consumption.
- ▶ Underestimating potential of MSA to improve the image of the whole beef industry.
- ▶ Truth in labelling is a growing concern.
- ▶ Modern communication means bad news travels fast.