



# foodfocus

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## Aunt Betty's traditional puds are a winner

### The New Zealand Food Safety Authority congratulates Old Fashioned Foods Ltd

You could always rely on Aunt Betty. And you still can.

Old Fashioned Foods Ltd, manufacturers of Aunt Betty's Traditional Puddings, has won the New Zealand Food Safety Authority Food Assurance Award at the Massey University Food Awards. The award was for Aunt Betty's new traditional range which includes Bread and Butter Pudding, Upside Down Apple Sponge and Rice Pudding.

The Award was presented to the company at the prestigious Awards gala dinner on Monday, October 7.

The Food Assurance Award is one of five major categories and is awarded to a high quality food product that involves advanced technological solutions and food safety risk management to assure consumer safety and provide public confidence in New Zealand's food industry.

Old Fashioned Foods managing director Ross MacKenzie said the Food Assurance award was unexpected.

"We thought we may get an award for the product, which we did in the convenience category, but the food safety award was unexpected. Thinking about it we did put a lot of effort into our food safety programmes and (this is) a nice little reward for the technical staff," Mr MacKenzie said.

In presenting the award the judges said Old Fashioned Foods Ltd, which is a small-medium enterprise (SME), had taken a particularly difficult product range, identified specific risk areas and addressed them successfully.

"Whereas larger exporting companies might be expected to set high standards for food safety, here is a shining example of what a SME can achieve for our domestic market," the judges said.

"This range of traditional icon foods incorporates many modern features: the packaging is able to withstand baking up to 150C, as well as microwaves; the artwork is high quality and modern and the company operates a fully-audited HACCP-based food safety program. The air in the manufacturing section is sterilised using ozone, as is the air around the sealing machine. Process lines were rearranged to minimise cross-contamination."



NZFSA representatives (from left) Tim Knox, Sandra Daly and Bob Boyd with Old Fashioned Foods Ltd winners Lana Dowdell, My Le Dharmaratne, Ross MacKenzie and Pippa Candy.

The company also won the A J Parks Convenience Foods Award.

The Massey University Premier Award was won by Olivado New Zealand for its Olivado Avocado Oil. Tatuva Foods won the NZFSA Food Service Products Award for its Farmer's Pride Butter Oil Mist range.

Chief judge Jo Seager said the judges had a tough time deciding this year's winners. "We were delighted to be faced with the rather difficult task of choosing from such a high quality field of outstanding products," she said.

"Of particular note were the efforts made by small to medium companies in meeting food safety and labelling requirements and also fulfilling an identified market demand, in some cases with technically very difficult products."

The awards are held every two years.

### Quality Quote

Food, like a loving touch or a glimpse of divine power, has that ability to comfort.

Norman Kolpas

## Three months later ...

The NZFSA was established, as you know, on July 1. Animal Products, the last NZFSA group to make the move from the MAF building to our new offices, has finally arrived.

It's been a busy and challenging few months as we have got used to operating as an integrated agency with a degree of separation from both MAF and MoH.

Change is never easy and while there have been a few instances I would rather forget (like operating for a week without furniture), generally our staff have adapted well. We have managed to keep the ship afloat and carry on the agency's business of protecting consumers from food-borne illness and enhancing New Zealand's position as a trusted supplier of food.

While NZFSA will continue to focus on primary production and exports, registration of agricultural compounds and veterinary medicines, the Government requires us to concentrate additional



Andrew McKenzie.

It is our plan over time to introduce new systems.

Those in the industry won't notice any changes just yet. In fact it will probably be at least three years before any changes are implemented. The first thing we have to do is consult with the industry and agree on what it is we want and how we might implement that. This will be done over the next six to 12 months.

The new measures will be risk management based using Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles. They will be as simple as we can make them to ensure costs to industry are minimised and that the measures are not seen as onerous.

Out of the 30,000 domestic food businesses, only 500 have risk based management plans. It's anticipated that in time all food producers will operate under risk-based management programmes that are appropriate to their businesses.

Of course we will involve the industry in the development and introduction of new systems. We want to move forward in a way that is inclusive of everyone and we look forward to working with you all.

Andrew McKenzie  
Executive Director

## Conviction in Dog's Delight case

The man charged with supplying contaminated meat that caused the death of Jambi, a rare Sumatran tiger at Wellington Zoo in November last year has been convicted on 17 charges under the Meat Act.

Mark Russell Johnson, owner of pet food company Dog's Delight pleaded guilty to 17 charges under the Meat Act in the Christchurch District Court on 10 October.

Mr Johnson was fined \$2000 on a charge of selling meat to Wellington Zoo, and ordered to pay solicitor's fees of \$500 and court costs of \$130. On a charge of failing to comply with the terms of his licence under section 47(1)(a) of the Meat Act, he was fined \$1000 plus court costs of \$130. On a charge of processing prohibited flesh he was fined \$750 plus \$130 court costs. He was convicted and discharged on the remaining charges. Johnson has also paid \$40,000 to Wellington Zoo.

The NZFSA is pleased with the conviction.

"This country relies on the integrity of the systems we have in place to protect our reputation as a trusted supplier of food both

nationally and internationally. We cannot afford to let this kind of negligence ruin that reputation. Naturally we are pleased to get a conviction in this case," NZFSA Compliance and Investigation Director Geoff Allen said.

"The death of a rare Sumatran tiger because of a lack of care by a pet food maker is disturbing. We need to ensure this never happens again," Mr Allen said.

Mr Allen said Mr Johnson's pet food factory licence was cancelled earlier this year. Work was also being done by NZFSA on tightening controls for pet food manufacturers.

"At the time this case came to light, we were carrying out a general audit on the wider pet food industry. We have been working with the New Zealand Pet Food Manufacturers Association and other industry groups on Codes of Practice which will form the basis for the appropriate management of risks."

"We have also tightened the licensing conditions under which pet food manufacturers operate to reduce the likelihood of this kind of thing happening again," Mr Allen said.

# Public safety enhanced by proposed hunting controls

Public safety will be enhanced and processor confidence restored by increased controls on the procurement, supply and processing of game.

The NZFSA released a discussion document on "Proposed Enhancements to the Procurement, Supply and Processing of Game" on September 27. The document is open for public submissions until October 31.

"It's important for the safety of New Zealanders and countries that receive our game exports that all wild meat procured in New Zealand is free of residues that could harm consumers. That's the bottom line," Dr Susan Morris, NZFSA's acting Programme Manager, Residues said.

The paper was initiated after a review of the National Chemical Residue Programme and alleged illegal hunting.

The enhancements in the discussion document include increased testing of commercial hunters. Hunters would be required to pass a test related to hunting pesticide-free game to become a certified supplier and would then be re-tested every two years. That way commercial hunters would always be up to date with changes to the rules and regulations. They would also have to prove that they are a bona fide certified supplier. Certified suppliers may only provide wild game to processors that are licensed under the Meat

Act or registered under the Animal Products Act.

Commercial hunters would also have to provide processors with an operations manual and a statement that all requirements for hunting pesticide-free game had been met. Failure to comply with any of these regulations would mean removal or suspension from the National Game Register of Certified Suppliers. The proposed new requirements would come into effect from 1 January 2003.

Dr Morris said random testing of game for chemical residues would also be increased.

While the discussion document focuses specifically on commercial hunting, food safety issues are also a concern for recreational hunters.

"We are not ignoring recreational hunters. We have recently put together an information sheet for recreational hunters advising of the need to obtain detailed information about the area they are hunting in. That has been widely distributed and is available free on our website. We urge recreational hunters to read it before heading out to hunt," Dr Morris said.

The submissions on the discussion paper will be analysed and a summary produced before any changes are made to legislation. A copy of the discussion paper is available on the NZFSA website [www.nzfsa.govt.nz/policy-law/consultation/04-02/](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/policy-law/consultation/04-02/)

## FDA inspection a success

New Zealand's dairy industry has been given the thumbs up by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after a routine inspection in September.

Two FDA inspectors visited six sites over two weeks. Dairy and Plant Products Group director Tim Knox said the results of the inspections were generally favourable.

"While there are a couple of issues for us to follow up, the FDA inspectors seemed very comfortable with what they saw here. They commented on the relatively advanced nature of the New Zealand dairy programme, particularly how we've gone about introducing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control (HACCP) practices into the regulatory programme."

The inspectors acknowledged New Zealand operates to different

pasteurisation requirements but said recognition of equivalence with US regulations could be dealt with through further discussion.

They identified some procedural and design issues at three of the sites they visited. Most were relatively minor issues and have been, or are being, dealt with. None posed any immediate food safety risk.

Mr Knox said the inspectors were pleased to see a high level of commitment from the industry to the implementation of the regulatory programme and the consistency of the programme over the sites they visited.

"The inspectors were especially impressed with the level of responsibility each site took for food safety issues and the pride the people involved take in their work."

## Overseas market access requirements for dairy products

The Dairy Industry Export Committee (DIEC) is a new working group being set up by the NZFSA's Dairy team. Reporting to the Dairy Products Safety Advisory Council (DPSAC), the main roles of the DIEC will be to provide input into the strategic direction, and prioritise the activities of the Dairy Technical Market Access Programme. This work programme involves working through market access issues and requirements including overseas competent authorities' certification and entry requirements.

In the past, this area of work was part-funded by the NZ Dairy Board but, with the Dairy Board's disappearance, the DIEC is being set up to provide a forum for all sectors of the dairy industry to have a say in this area of the dairy group's work programme.

If you are interested in having input into the DIEC, or to find out more information see our website at: [www.nzfsa.govt.nz/dairy/](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/dairy/)

# NZFSA commended on antimicrobial substances work

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority has been commended by the Ministry of Health's Antibiotic Resistance Advisory Group (MOH ARAG).

The commendation came after a presentation to the Advisory Group by NZFSA's Chris Boland, programme manager (technical policy), Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines.

MOH ARAG chair Rod Ellis-Pegler said in a letter to NZFSA executive director Andrew McKenzie that the group was impressed by MAF's (now NZFSA) plans on the changing regulatory environment regarding the use of antimicrobial substances (antibiotics) in agriculture and horticulture.

"I am writing on behalf of the Advisory Group to pass on to you, your advisors and all those involved in this process, our support for it and indeed our commendations on the approach being taken. There are some ideas there that might well be taken on for human medicine decisions."

"We are of course aware of the difficulties of developing these sorts of strategies in a timely and fair manner for all concerned, and acknowledge the time and effort which you are putting into it. In the end, our hopes are that your activities and ours will result in better and safer outcomes for infected humans, animals and maybe even plants."

ACVM Group director Debbie Morris says New Zealand is well ahead of the rest of the world on this issue.

"Our controls on antibiotics in New Zealand are comprehensive. We work with the scientific evidence that is currently available and we are constantly reviewing the use of antibiotics. In a country so dependent upon our reputation as a producer of safe food, protecting both our animal welfare and human health must be a priority. We are confident that the actions we take in regard to antibiotic resistance have us well positioned to continue to safeguard this reputation."

## New food code set to land

There is little more than two months left until the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code finally becomes a reality.

We have had a two-year transition period, so it should come as no surprise to food businesses and manufacturers that all packaged foods produced after 20 December 2002 must bear new comprehensive labels.

We know however that there will be some products on shelves that were produced before 20 December. Those products can remain on supermarket shelves until they are all gone – that's another 12 months for most products and 24 months for long life products.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) has been working alongside Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to develop the new standards, mainly focused on food composition and labelling. And while almost all of the regulations in the New Zealand Food Regulations 1984 will be revoked a very small number will be retained, either as regulations or as New Zealand food standards outside the Code.

There is no understating the major effect the introduction of the Code will have on the industry. We recognise the work involved by the food industry in preparing for compliance with the Code. It's not everyday you discard food regulations that have been in place for nearly 20 years. But these are changing times we live in.

Consumers are increasingly aware of, and concerned about, what is in the food they are eating. This new labelling regime will ensure consumers have adequate information to make informed decisions about the food they purchase. The new labels must contain nutrition information panels as well as the percentages of the main ingredients and list major allergens.

The NZFSA is developing a Code Compliance Programme to ensure compliance with the new food labelling requirements. In the initial stages we will concentrate on educating businesses about the

labelling requirements rather than taking a strong enforcement approach. However enforcement will follow once the new system has been bedded in.

For more information visit the NZFSA website at [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz). A list of the public health units and labelling consultants is also on the website along with a link to FSANZ's website. Alternatively contact the Food Standards Code Industry Advice Line, on 0800 441 571 or email [advice@foodstandards.gov.au](mailto:advice@foodstandards.gov.au).

## Same day, different bodies

FSANZ was ANZFA and NZFSA was MAF Food and the MOH Food group. Confused? It's not surprising really. FSANZ changed its name on the same day we did – July 1. And while we have similar acronyms, NZFSA and FSANZ have very different roles.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) sets food safety standards for New Zealand while Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), with input from NZFSA, develops mainly composition and labelling standards for the joint Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code that comes into force on December 20.

In December 1995, the Australian and New Zealand governments signed an agreement establishing a system for the development of joint food standards.

The agreement led to the formation of FSANZ (formerly ANZFA) and the development of the joint Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. The New Zealand Food Safety Authority has been working closely with FSANZ on standards in the Code that apply in both countries.

However the agreement specifically excludes food hygiene issues from the activities FSANZ undertakes for New Zealand and the food safety standards in the joint Food Standards Code do not, therefore, apply in New Zealand. All food safety standards for New Zealand and our export products are set by the NZFSA.

## Shellfish biotoxin programme moves house

On 14 October the Ministry of Health handed over the non-commercial marine biotoxin programme to NZFSA and if there's one thing former NZFSA director Jim Sim knows about, it's shellfish.

Jim resigned from his position as Director of Processed Food and Retail Sale last month to become Principal Advisor (Shellfish) in the Animal Products Group. It's a position that will allow him to enhance and develop his technical and scientific interests as well as fulfill his desire for a better balance between work and family.

It's a challenge, he says, he is looking forward to.

"I think the first thing we have to do is a stock take. From my point of view I have had essentially nothing to do with the programme over the past four years. I will be taking a close look at what's happening where and why. I think probably the broader food safety work I have done in the interim will give me the opportunity to take a more strategic view of what we should be achieving."

Jim was involved in the establishment of the Marine Biotoxin Surveillance Unit (MBSU) at the beginning of 1994. The MBSU was based in MAF as a joint venture between MAF and the Ministry of Health. He was seconded to MAF until the unit was disbanded in 1996 when the programme separated into commercial and non-commercial parts. He continued to manage the non-commercial (recreational) part of the biotoxin programme from the Ministry of Health until the end of 1998.



Jim Sim.

"The purpose of the programme in non-commercial areas is to advise people when it's not safe to take shellfish," Jim says.

Bringing the non-commercial programme and the commercial programme back into one organisation will mean that the whole programme can be managed in a much more co-ordinated fashion.

"It will make it much easier because there is a limited pool of regulatory expertise and it's going to be great having it all in one room," Jim says.

"New Zealand has been really lucky in that it hasn't had any outbreaks that have been directly attributable to causing deaths. But some very high toxin levels have been found so it's extremely important that we keep an ongoing programme looking at shellfish to try to ensure that people don't get harmed."

"Any outbreaks of illness in non-commercial areas can also risk damage to our export markets."

NZFSA will be keeping the public up to date on safe areas through its website. The site also gives general information on toxic shellfish poisoning, the symptoms and the risks. For more information go to [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz)

## GM surveillance net expanded

An 18 month GM Compliance Project has been expanded to test more foods.

The project, which arose out of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification recommendations and is part of routine implementation of the GM food labelling standard, has so far tested around 50 products. Of those products only one has indicated the presence of a GM ingredient.

"A tofu vegetarian sausage tested positive for very low levels of an approved GM ingredient. The test results for that just came through this week," NZFSA Compliance and Investigation Director Geoff Allen said.

"The level was well below the action threshold of 1 percent returning a test result of less than 0.1 percent. However this product claims to be "GMO free" and we have referred the case to the Commerce Commission for investigation under the Fair Trading Act," Mr Allen said.

The NZFSA's responsibility for genetically modified foods is in

ensuring they comply with food labelling requirements. Products are initially tested for GM content by ESR in Christchurch. Further independent tests, if necessary, are carried out in Australia to confirm both the quantitative levels of GM content and the identity of that ingredient.

"The project so far has focused on testing soy milk products, corn chips, tortillas, taco shells, tofu and other vegetarian meat products based on soy. Those products have all been correctly labelled. Bread, processed meats, bread and baking mixes, soy flour and infant formula have now been added to the list because of a reallocation of resources," Mr Allen said.

The compliance project involves testing products as well as auditing importers and manufacturers that may have GM ingredients in their products. Some 300 food premises will be audited to ensure they have systems in place to comply with the GM food standard within the one year project timeframe.

The project is due to be completed by June 2003 at which time the need for further monitoring and surveillance will be reviewed.



## Cool down, chill out this summer

Summer is just around the corner and you know what that means ... lots of barbeques, parties, eating and drinking. Summer is a high risk time for food-borne illness and good food handling and safety practices begin at home.

The Foodsafe Partnership, to which the New Zealand Food Safety Authority belongs, is this year hosting Foodsafe Week from 2 to 9 December. During the week, and in fact throughout summer, we'll be providing information and reminders to consumers on how they can keep their family safe from food-borne illness.

The campaign is being launched in style with a picnic at Parliament on December 2.

Planning for the week's events is well underway. The Minister for Food Safety Annette King has agreed to launch Foodsafe Week at the picnic. Chef Des Britten has agreed to get behind the barbeque and cook a few sausages for invited guests. Phil Vaughan, the chef from children's television programme What Now, will also be cooking up a storm and entertaining children from the local Thorndon School.

We have posters, pamphlets, balloons, stickers, fridge magnets and miniature frisbees to give away. There'll be television and radio

advertising and, we hope, a lot of media coverage.

The Foodsafe Partnership was set up in 1998 with a small group comprising representatives from the food industry, consumer groups, public health groups, MAF and the Ministry of Health to promote consistent and appropriate food safety messages to New Zealand consumers. It was formed as a result of the high incidence of food-borne illness in New Zealand and recognition that no matter how much care is taken to produce safe food, food handling by consumers at home plays a key role in preventing food borne illness.

The Partnership has focused on one main message – clean, cook, cover, chill. This year we are concentrating on the chill message. So look out for our campaign. And to get you started for summer, here's a few food safety tips.



Foodsafe Freddie.

The campaign is run every year and we are always looking for new partners. If you or your company or organisation would like to be involved please contact Sarah Bromley at NZFSA. [sarah.bromley@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:sarah.bromley@nzfsa.govt.nz)

clean • cook • cover • chill

Your fridge should be operating at a temperature between 0-4°C.

Place meats and perishable, ready-to-eat foods in the fridge as soon as you get them home.

Check use-by dates of all chilled foods. Throw away any that are out of date.

Leftover foods should be refrigerated as soon as possible and thrown out after three days.

Marinate foods in the fridge not on the bench.

Keep all perishable foods chilled until you are ready to serve them.

Keep raw and cooked foods apart in the fridge to prevent contamination. Keep food covered.

If you are walking or tramping and can't take a chilly bin, freeze perishable items like meat and use them like an ice pack to keep other foods cool for

longer. A frozen loaf of bread can also act as an ice pack.

If you are having a party keep the fridge free for food by cooling the beer or wine in a bath of ice.

When going on a picnic make sure all food is well chilled before packing it up. Never put warm food in the same pack as cold food. Pack cold bottles of drink in with the food as the large mass of the cold will help keep the food cool.

When eating outdoors keep food in the shade as much as possible.

Don't eat foods that should be chilled if they have been at room temperature for 2 hours or more.

Freeze party or Christmas leftovers that you will eat in a day. When you want to eat them thaw in the fridge or microwave, not on the bench.

# Food News

## Olive-pomace oil advisory

In July the NZFSA advised the public not to consume any olive-pomace oils purchased before December 2001 because the products were likely to contain high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

PAHs do not present an acute risk to human health but long term exposure to them has been associated with increased levels of cancer.

Tests commissioned by the NZFSA on four brands of imported olive-pomace oil were found to contain up to 100 times the maximum limit allowed by the United Kingdom's Food Standards Agency. That agency introduced a recommended limit of 2 parts per billion last year after tests on 13 olive-pomace oils found they contained high levels of PAHs.

The olive oils tested in New Zealand were imported from Italy and Spain. The brands tested were Vero olive-pomace oil and Verdeoro olive-pomace oil from Italy and Mi Tierra olive-pomace oil and Coopлива olive-pomace oil from Spain. New Zealand does not have the capacity to test for PAHs in olive-pomace oils so the tests were carried out in the UK.

The warning related only to olive-pomace oil. Other grades of olive oil are processed differently and are not affected by PAHs. Olive-pomace oil is not produced in New Zealand.

## Kava supplements

In August the NZFSA advised New Zealanders using dietary supplements containing kava to consider whether they should continue taking them.

This advice followed the Australian medicine safety regulator, the

Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) initiating a voluntary recall of all complementary medicines containing the herb kava on 15 August 2002. It followed the recent death in Australia of a woman who used a medicine containing kava along with several other complementary medicines. She presented with liver failure and the product is suspected of being the most likely cause of her illness.

Traditionally prepared forms of kava used as a social and ceremonial drink by Pacific Islanders and some Aboriginal communities have so far not been linked with the serious form of liver damage described in the overseas reports which involve concentrated kava extract.

"Medical advice I have received is that people who have had jaundice or suffered liver troubles and have been taking kava-containing dietary supplements should go and see their medical practitioner and discuss this possible association" said Dr McKenzie.

In New Zealand these products come under the Dietary Supplement Regulations 1984 which are administered by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority.

The Ministry of Health's Medicines Adverse Reaction Committee is considering the matter. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is reviewing the food standard regulating the use and labelling of kava in food.

The review will examine information on the toxicity of kava, including the safety of extracts used in food products. FSANZ is seeking submissions. The closing date is 20 November 2002. More information can be found on the FSANZ website – [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au).

# NZFSA hosts international committee

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority hosted officials from eight countries in Wellington last month here to attend the Codex Committee Meat and Poultry Hygiene drafting group meeting.

The group redrafted the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Meat in preparation for the ninth Session of the Codex Committee on Meat and Poultry Hygiene to be held in Wellington next February.

NZFSA executive director Dr Andrew McKenzie chaired the meeting attended by officials from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands and the United States.

"It was a marvellous opportunity to utilise the knowledge and skills of a number of member countries and to get their perspective on the various issues," said Dr McKenzie, NZFSA executive director.

It's hoped that the reworked draft of the Code of Hygienic Practice for Fresh Meat can be considered and advanced by committee members at the meeting in February.

The full committee meeting in February is expected to be attended by 175 delegates from 30 countries. The Codex Committee on Meat and Poultry Hygiene reports to the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The document is due to be published this month.

## Post America's Cup conference

After all the hype of the America's Cup where better to hold a conference than in Auckland. The New Zealand Food Safety Authority's first conference is being held at the Stamford Plaza Hotel in central Auckland on 25 and 26 March 2003.

The theme of the conference is Building and Maintaining Confidence in New Zealand Food. It's going to be an exciting and interesting conference. We are lining up a range of interesting keynote speakers. More details, a programme and registration form will be available from NZFSA later in the year. We'll keep you posted.

# Meet Our People:

## Glen Neal, Senior Advisor (Risk Management), Animal Products Group

At just six years old Glen Neal was making kiwifruit trays in Te Puke. Little did he know at the time that this job would pave the way for a career in the food industry. But it wasn't kiwifruit that turned him on to food safety, it was cheese.

These days Glen can be found at the New Zealand Food Safety Authority in Wellington advising on risk management and it would be fair to say earns more than the \$7.32 he got paid for two weeks work making kiwifruit trays.

Glen began his career at the Manukau district office of the Auckland Area Health Board in 1991 as a Health Protection Officer. Like other HPOs he covered the realm of environmental health from disinterments to cargo inspections. But there were two cases which sparked his interest in food safety. "I got a call one day from the police. They were tracking what they believed to be a stolen cigarette operation but they discovered about 800 kilograms of cheese stacked up against the side of the house, in 20kg blocks, many of which were packaged but some of which the cats and dogs had been into."

The cheese had been destined for pies and filled rolls at Auckland bakeries. But worse than that it was five years old.

The second incident was dealing with the food poisoning of a plane load of passengers on their way back from a tropical holiday. A practical exercise in epidemiology ensued as Glen sought justice for those that had their holidays ruined.

In 1994 he moved to Epsom and the newly regionalised Public Health Service as their Food-borne Illness Co-ordinator.

"Two years full time at the sharp end of food safety has certainly



*Glen Neal at Massey University Food Awards.*

impressed on me that improvement is required," he says.

Following that he became a food safety consultant for a South Island supermarket chain before heading to the Ministry of Health's food safety team.

He landed at MAF Food in 2001 whereupon he set to work helping establish the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and advising on the "birds and bees" (chickens, eggs, ostriches, emus and bee products) for the Animal Products Group.

Glen is now helping with changes to the domestic food sector. The first stage is consultation.

"We will get alongside some of the key players, particularly regulators – health protection staff at district health boards or environment health staff at local authorities. We have a local authority working group set up in conjunction with Local Government New Zealand and a similar group has been formed drawing on the Public Health Leaders Forum. Policy will get worked up in terms of law changes and the frame works will be established to support the new regulatory environment."

Glen has two versions of how the setting up of the new Authority went. The first version is "It ran very smoothly, like a well oiled machine, a superb team effort.

Unfortunately the second had to be edited out. Either way, he says "it was interesting to be in the thick of the establishment action".

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## Happy birthday and goodbye to dairy legislation

It's older than television, radio and the motor car. In fact, it's been around longer than any of us and probably deserves a telegram from the Queen.

This month the Dairy Industry Act celebrates its 110th birthday – more than time, some would say, for the old girl to hang up her cups. As from June next year that's just what she'll be doing when the dairy industry becomes part of the Animal Products Act and the Dairy Industry Act 1952 is rescinded.

It's had a long and fruitful life, the Dairy Industry Act. Over its 110 years the Act has had various amendments and updates but parts of the current legislation, believe it or not, date back to 1892.

When the original Act came into force in 1892 there were 170 dairy factories in New Zealand producing 5284 tonnes of butter and 4323 tonnes of cheese, most exported back to England.

The Act no longer reflects our trading environment.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority's Policy, Legal, and Dairy teams are currently working to transfer the Dairy Industry Act into the Animal Products Act with legislation that better reflects modern industry practices and a risk-based approach to hazard control.

More information about the future direction of dairy industry legislation can be found on the NZFSA's website at: [www.nzfsa.govt.nz/dairy/subject/animal-products-act](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/dairy/subject/animal-products-act)



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Food Focus is issued by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority. It provides an overview of issues impacting on the regulatory environment for the food industries. People requiring specific information are invited to contact the Authority. New Zealand Food Safety Authority, 86 Jervois Quay, PO Box 2835 Wellington. Phone 04-463-2500, Fax 04-463-2501. Food Safety Concerns 0800 NZFSA1 (0800 693 721). Website: [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz). Food Focus welcomes feedback and suggestions for future editions. Please contact: Sharon Williams, Senior Communications Advisor, Email [sharon.williams@nzfsa.govt.nz](mailto:sharon.williams@nzfsa.govt.nz).