Ground breaking food marketing course will boost seafood industry

AUSTRALIAN WILD ABALONE™ WOWS THE HONG KONG MARKET
NEW SAFEFISH CHAIR

Highly respected supply and value chain professional, Dr Anne Astin has been appointed as the independent chair of SafeFish.

Dr Astin is the former CEO of Dairy Food Safety Victoria, a previous Director of Dairy Australia and Chair of the Ministerial Forum for Food Regulation’s Implementation Subcommittee. She is currently a Director of Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd and William Angliss Institute of TAFE, President of the Australian Institute of Food Science and Technology and a member of the Federal Government’s Health Star Rating Advisory Committee.

With her deep understanding of primary industry supply and value chains and her experience in navigating complex government systems at international, national and local levels, she will bring important strategic governance expertise to SafeFish.

Dr Astin has been acknowledged for her contribution to food, dairy and women as the recipient of a Public Service Medal and the Australian Dairy Industry Council’s Outstanding Service Award. In 2010, she was inducted into the Victorian Women’s Honour Roll.

INDUSTRY APPOINTMENTS

SafeFish has also recently formalized the involvement of three industry representatives to strengthen the collaboration with the production, marketing and retail sector.

They are:

- Mark Boulter – Sydney Fish Market
- Spiro Markantonakis – Dover Fisheries
- Norman Grant – Seafood Importers Association

If you are interested in further information or attending the forum please contact the STAG at helen.barnard@seafoodcrc.com.

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Did you know the Seafood CRC will close as scheduled in June next year? There will be no last minute reprieves or eleventh hour rescue missions. In 2015-2016 an era of industry, research organisation and government collaboration will be over.

The CRC started this magazine three years ago as a source of information for seafood processors, wholesalers, marketers and retailers. Over that time SeaFOOD Magazine has helped build a network among scientists and industry people who produce and improve and market seafood products. Recently a retailer network has been added and while still small, has been enthusiastically received (new members are welcome).

There is every likelihood that this knowledge network will start to whither after June 2015 when the CRC closes. But it could be preserved if the people involved wanted to take control.

SeaFOOD Magazine was launched because there was no national association of seafood processors or retailers and no Australian publication that provided technical information to the seafood post-harvest sector. It would be a shame for that gap to open up again.

But it is no use having a magazine without an organisation to drive it and ensure each issue contains useful content. Perhaps it is time for Australia’s seafood technicians and sales people to turn this loose network into an association. There are many opportunities that an association could deliver for its members: promotion of seafood in the media, lobbying governments, building consumer trust, improving staff training, attracting employees, and supporting R&D are just a few examples.

It is time that a professionally represented seafood industry took its place alongside meat, grain and horticulture especially as Australia’s Commonwealth and State governments are embracing food manufacturing as a growth industry in the Asian century.

An industry association would be well placed to exploit this interest to obtain a wide range of financial and non-financial benefits for its members, and ultimately the community.

It would not be so hard to do. This magazine is read by more than 1,000 people. A membership fee of $500 per year would give the industry a half million dollar body to represent it and that is without government contributions or commercial sponsorship.

After seven years the Seafood CRC is keen to leave a legacy. Perhaps a national seafood producers and marketers association will be that lasting memorial to our hard work and commitment. Volunteers?

Len Stephens
Managing Director
len.stephens@seafoodcrc.com

The CRC started this magazine three years ago as a source of information for seafood processors, wholesalers, marketers and retailers. Over that time SeaFOOD Magazine has helped build a network among scientists and industry people who produce and improve and market seafood products.
Australia’s first ever food marketing course offered through a business school has been launched at the University of the Sunshine Coast – and seafood producers and retailers will be the big beneficiaries.

The unique course has been funded by the Seafood CRC, with an expectation that seafood marketers will take advantage of the post-graduate opportunity to give their businesses a competitive edge.

A semester long elective subject in the University of the Sunshine Coast MBA, Master of Management and Master of International Business, the Food Marketing course is being taught by talented Associate Professor Meredith Lawley.

“I have always been astounded that there was not one food marketing course in a business degree anywhere in Australia,” Meredith said.

“There are a couple of agri-food marketing courses as part of agri-business degrees but they come more from a producer’s perspective rather than a consumer focus”.

“This is despite the fact that one in six people work in the food sector in Australia, that 17% of our average daily income is spent on food and Australia’s food production feeds around 60 million people.”

Meredith said a scoping study of overseas competitors showed that the UK has whole degree courses devoted to food marketing and in the US one university alone has more than 500 students studying food marketing. Even New Zealand, our closest competitor, has an established food marketing program.

“I thought that if Australia can have sports marketing and wine marketing courses we should be able to develop a food marketing course,” she said.

“So I approached the Seafood CRC last year to fund the development of the course and they agreed”.

“For the Australian seafood industry to remain competitive and grow, seafood industry marketers not only need to know how to market seafood but will benefit from a broader understanding of how to market food more generally and an understanding of where seafood ‘sits’ in food marketing.

“By addressing food more broadly and covering a wide range of food sectors (including meat, dairy, horticulture) seafood marketers will be able to identify strategies and tactics used by other food industries globally and in Australia that may be applied to seafood marketing.”

The course is divided into 12 modules that cover the global and Australian food industry and the challenges and opportunities for food marketing; supply chain development and management; behavioural change and integrated marketing communication strategies to interrupt consumer behaviour as well as point of sale strategies.

“The course looks at the opportunities and challenges facing food marketers in the current competitive global environment,” Meredith said. “We find that the key ways food producers can be more competitive is to develop better supply chains and/or develop new ways of changing existing consumer behaviours.”

Meredith said that while the course is about generic food marketing, most modules will focus on the specific
challenges of the seafood industry, reflecting the funding support by the Seafood CRC.

“We will be looking at applied case studies such as the Love Australian Prawns campaign and we will also be hosting visiting lecturers from the industry – for example, Andre Gorrisen from Noosa Seafoods spoke to the class in early September and we will be inviting others”.

“When fish ranks number 8 in the top 10 meals consumed in Australia (behind beef, chicken and lamb) it is clear that there is lots of work to do”.

“Seafood is the sixth most valuable food industry in Australia (worth $2 billion a year) but there are still low levels of seafood consumption and exports are growing slowly due to the relatively high Australian dollar.

“We are an industry made up of small fragmented businesses and despite successes in lobster, prawn and abalone marketing, there is still not a lot of national coordination of marketing effort.

“We hope to produce a new crop of graduates who are motivated to work in the seafood industry and make a lasting difference.”

Meredith said food marketing in general was poised at a crossroads and the course was a timely addition to Australian business studies.

“The structure of the industry is changing with declining employment in food production and a low level of value adding,” she said.

“There is intensifying competition in the food retail sector with Aldi and Costco challenging the Woolworths and Coles duopoly.

“We are also expecting to see further change in consumer purchasing patterns based on influences such as sustainability, organics and health and nutrition.

“Globally, the Australian food industry also needs to position itself in the face of rising incomes in the developing world, changing consumer tastes and intense competition.”

Meredith said the far-sighted investment by the Seafood CRC would hopefully yield direct results for seafood producers.

“Entrepreneurial seafood businesses would do well to get involved in the course early, through guests lecturing opportunities and site visits,” she said. “This is an excellent way to build rapport with these new marketers who will be trained to grow the future of food marketing in Australia.”
Australian Wild Abalone™ wows the Hong Kong market


These were three of the delicious dishes showcased by one of Asia's celebrity Master Chefs, Dr Chan Tak Po that took Hong Kong's chefs and food buyers by storm at September's Australian Wild Abalone™ Master Class – A Culinary Journey to the East.

This was one of a planned series of Master classes presented by the Australian Wild Abalone™ Program, an initiative of the Seafood CRC, the Abalone Council Australia, Australian Wild Abalone™ exporters and the FRDC.

Dr Po, a certificate holder of the Abalone National Committee of Experts issued by the China Hotel Industry Association, was asked to demonstrate recipes using both frozen and vacuum packed Australian Wild Greenlip Abalone, to demonstrate the versatility and quality of the luxury seafood.

"The Master Classes were a great success," Seafood CRC China Project Officer and organiser Helen Barnard said.

"We had around 55 VIP guests attend including food and beverage purchasers and managers from four and five star hotels and leading restaurants in Hong Kong and China.

"We were able to leverage on the Seafood Expo Asia event and invite a number of influential food and beverage media to attend.

"To add to that, the crowd were drawn into the Master-Class presentation theatre as we showed our Discover Australian Wild Abalone video, telling the story of the divers, the pristine waters and every step of the Australian wild abalone journey until it leaves Australian shores."

The Australian Seafood CRC's Jayne Gallagher delivered a powerful presentation about the Australian Wild Abalone program, the products and product forms.

"Jayne focused on our food safety record and our sustainability and environmentally friendly attributes, including recognition by Hong Kong WWF as a Green Choice," Helen said.

"The guests were very interested in the provenance of Australian Wild Abalone™ – that it comes from the cool, unpolluted waters of Australia's southern oceans and that the hand-harvesting method locks in the pure ocean taste as well as ensuring absolutely no by-catch or ecological damage to the ocean floor.

"Jayne also shared with these important opinion makers the research undertaken on the nutritional values of the product – Omega 3, Vitamin E, Iodine and Magnesium."

The September workshop followed a technical workshop in July, also held in Hong Kong that featured canned Australian Wild blacklip abalone and frozen Australian Wild greenlip abalone.

The technical seminars are aimed specifically at trade, in July it was held at the TownGas Cooking School in Causeway Bay and attracted nearly 60 leading chefs and food purchasing managers who were also treated to some innovative dishes created by Master Chef Dr Chan Tak Po. The July seminar also explained how to properly thaw the frozen product to achieve the best quality dishes.

"We were fortunate to have Dean Lisson of the Abalone Council Australia Ltd, and Australian Wild Abalone™ diver and exporter, Tobin Woolford to present their personal story to the audience," Helen said.

"Overall it was a fantastic response from the activities in Hong Kong and the events combined were followed up by extensive media coverage with advertising value of approx. HKD$1,559,275 (AUD$230,000)!" she said.
Jayne Gallagher, Dean Lisson and the Australian Wild Abalone™ exporters are working on developing a marketing strategy and investment proposal for 2015-2017. “We have had very positive support for the program from our industry and we will shortly be going on a roadshow to reach as many Australian Wild Abalone™ stakeholders as possible.” Dean Lisson, Executive Chair – Abalone Council Australia Ltd.

The Australian Wild Abalone™ Program has exciting times ahead as they gain traction in the market and attempt to ensure better returns to industry.
Spreading more love for prawns

The second year of the ‘Love Australian Prawns’ marketing campaign launches this month and will seek to build on the reach and influence achieved in year-one through a range of new and innovative promotions.

Year two will focus on creating more opportunities throughout the year to celebrate with Australian Prawns. This will include connecting the message with milestone days such as a launch day on the first day of summer, Valentine’s Day, Mother’s and Father’s Day and football finals.

These activities will continue to focus on the in-store point of sale materials and promotions that were so successful in year-one and will be complemented by social media campaigns and other events throughout the year.

Love Australian Prawns Campaign Coordinator Miles Toomey said the second year of the campaign was about building on the solid foundations built over the last 12 months.

“The campaign’s mission is to increase demand for local product so that long term, fishers and farmers enjoy better returns for their product,” he said.

“Another exciting feature of year-two of the campaign will be a bigger, better website that will feature a greater number of recipes (from 5 to 21), more detailed information and a unique mobile friendly ‘prawn finder’.

“The campaign will focus on heavy promotions during summer when prawns are top of mind for consumers, particularly for celebratory events, and will be supported with a range of non-traditional seasonal marketing activities such as a winter recipe booklet.”

Executive Officer of the Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries Graeme Stewart said year-one of the campaign demonstrated the benefits that could be achieved by the industry joining together.

“As a collaborative campaign with the Australian Prawn Farmers Association, we have the combined strength to reach more people and every new producer that comes on board means more dollars to spread the message about the wonderful product that we offer.” he said.
The Australian prawn industry contributed more than $350,000 to fund the implementation of ‘Love Australian Prawns’ in 2013-2014. The first year was an overwhelming success with the campaign seen in more than 800 supermarkets and 370 independent retailers.

Miles said that as it was the first time such a large scale national marketing campaign was undertaken for all locally wild-caught and farmed prawns, it was important to get the basics right.

“Year-one was all about working out what was going to have the greatest impact for effort and building relationships with independent seafood retailers as well as supermarkets,” he said.

“That meant concentrating on point of sale and in-store merchandising materials first and spreading those through the network of 825 supermarkets and 370 independent retailers we were able to build.

“We now have a strong and engaged network that we are regularly communicating with and providing promotional ideas to.”

An evaluation of the success of the first year of the campaign was conducted recently, gathering the views of the industry and retailers through telephone surveys. Consumers were also surveyed online.

Executive Officer of the Australian Prawn Farmers Association Helen Jenkins said overall, the feedback about the campaign has been extremely positive.

“Among consumers, there was better awareness, attitudes and behavior towards Australian prawns and for retailers there was increased awareness and sales,” she said.

A total of 21% of the 1000 consumers surveyed recalled the “Love Australian Prawns’ campaign when prompted with 89% of industry representatives surveyed having awareness of the campaign and 79.9% having seen some or all of the promotional material.

Most encouraging was that of the 21% of the 1000 consumers who recalled the ‘Love Australian Prawns’ campaign, almost 50% of them purchased as a result and 38% of all people surveyed said they would be more likely to purchase as a result of seeing the material. More than 30% of all consumers surveyed recorded a positive change in attitude.

For consumers, the most recalled marketing materials were (in order) the recipe/information leaflets, display/window stickers, wrapping stickers and A frame signage. Retailers liked the recipe/information leaflets the most, followed by the A frame signs, wrapping stickers and display/window stickers.

The “Love Australian Prawn” strategy was implemented after a year of Seafood CRC consumer research, industry consultation, marketing strategy and branding development.

A range of fishers and farmers throughout Australia’s prawn industry have contributed to the campaign to date and as the successful campaign enters its second year and the strategy develops, other participants are being encouraged to get involved and extend the reach of the campaign.
During October, twenty-five Australian seafood retailers from across the entire country, came together in a two day education spectacular in Hobart.

Emily Mantilla, the Seafood CRC’s Program Manager who created the network and hosts each event, said she was overwhelmed with the response.

“Tickets to the free event were sold out within a few weeks, and I had a waiting list as long as my arm,” Emily said.

“This highlights the need for a friendly, interactive, education platform for seafood retailers to assist them with their everyday business challenges as well as a vehicle to provide professional support – not only from the CRC but from each other.”

The October network began with a full day tour of mussel, scallop, oyster and salmon farms.

“At the last network, held in Sydney, retailers were clear they wanted to get out and visit industry to learn more about the production side and to arm them with stories and knowledge to share with and engage with their customers,” Emily said.

“The network also hosted two highly-regarded guest speakers – Russell Zimmerman from the Australian Retailer’s Association who ran a thought-provoking session on the importance of collecting sales data and benchmarking your business and Megan Rusk from FULLER communications agency, who ran a workshop on social media and online marketing for small business. “In this workshop, retailers had the chance to get hands-on tweeting and posting, learning why an online presence is critical for business today.

“Retailers also discovered the latest in oyster visual merchandising, learned what’s planned for the next instalment of the Love Australian Prawns campaign, accessed new prawn quality assurance materials for both staff and consumer education and were updated about what other high quality resources are out there to tap into.

“One of our network members also shared their story on staff training and what they have done to combat staff recruitment issues by thinking outside the box and how it benefited their business.”

Emily also facilitated a retailer round table discussion where members could talk about their current challenges and create a dialogue with other retailer network members to seek help and gather solutions.

“This was an important session as retailers discovered they may be facing similar issues and can learn from each other,” Emily said.

“But it is also an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate their successes.

“Running a business is not easy and it’s nice for business owners to recognise that they are actually being innovative and creative and are doing a great job.”
In this workshop, retailers had the chance to get hands-on tweeting and posting, learning why an online presence is critical for business today.

1. Mel Achilles and Brenda Smith from Smithy's Seafood meet prawn fisherman Vel Satalic. 2. Dimitri Hari from Trans-Tasman Seafoods and Stephanie Williams of Sydney Fish Market. 3. Sam Hutchison from Catch Seafoods. 4. Mel Achilles and Brenda Smith from Smithy's Seafoods - some of the founding members of the retailer’s network.

MORE INFORMATION
The Seafood CRC will host other network gatherings in 2015. To make sure you are on the database to receive invites and other retailer opportunities, please contact Emily Mantilla on emily.mantilla@seafoodcrc.com.

Photography: Enzo Amato.
SafeFish manages industry risks

SafeFish is currently working with expert groups on two key industry regulatory issues: histamines in seafood and marine biotoxins.

**HISTAMINE DEBATE**
There is currently an international debate in Codex about the best way to manage the risk of histamine in seafood. The goal is to reduce the number of illnesses that result from the consumption of seafood containing high histamine levels.

It is possible that this debate may result in the current regulatory levels for histamine being reduced. As a result of this, SafeFish is convening a panel of regulators, scientists and industry experts to provide input into the current Codex review of risk management strategies for histamine.

SafeFish is particularly interested to determine what the safe level for histamine in seafood is, and the potential impacts that any changes proposed by Codex may have on the Australian and New Zealand seafood industries – in particular sampling plans for testing product, methods for analyses and potential increases in trade detections.

**MARINE BIOTOXIN PARTNERSHIP**
The Australian Marine Biotoxin Partnership, a collaboration between industry, researchers and regulators, was formed in 2010 with FRDC funding, to build capability and capacity in marine biotoxin research and analysis in Australia.

Its original priorities were to obtain commercial laboratory services for marine biotoxins in Australia, and to increase communication and collaboration amongst stakeholders.

With funding from the Seafood CRC the Partnership was successful in proving the viability of a commercial marine biotoxin testing laboratory, which has been servicing the seafood industry for two years.

SafeFish is working to re-invigorate this partnership in conjunction with the upcoming Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Advisory Committee meeting to address emerging priorities for the seafood industry including:

- ensuring the proficiency of algal identification and enumeration services in Australia meet adequate standards
- encouraging further research into and validation of rapid screening techniques for toxins in seafood to reduce business risk,
- promoting research into current and emerging toxins in seafood such as ciguatoxin and cyanotoxins to allow the seafood industry to respond to these threats and manage the associated risks appropriately.
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An iPhone/Android phone and tablet App will soon be available, for fish wholesalers and retailers to easily use the Australian Quality Index (QI) to assess fresh seafood. A QI is a fast, simple method for the rating of fish freshness and is based on a visual assessment and ranking of specific fish quality attributes that change over storage time in ice.

A recent Seafood CRC project has updated the existing Australian Quality Index Manual with QIs for 18 commercially-important Australian species. However, an exciting second focus of this CRC project has been the development of the mobile phone/tablet QI App in conjunction with the Sydney Fish Market’s IT department.

According to team leader Sue Poole, the new App incorporates separate images for each attribute change for each fish species.

“This will make the decision process extremely straightforward and rapid,” she said.

“The test prototype will undergo a functionality review at the end of September and following feedback adjustments we expect a trial period will begin with industry supply chains before Christmas – initially trials will be undertaken with De Costi Seafoods, MG Kailis and the Sydney Fish Market before being available to download for free from iTunes and other app stores.”

To be notified of when you can download the App, to receive a hard copy of the QI manual or to learn more about the QI project contact Sue.Poole@daff.qld.gov or Markb@sydneyfishmarket.com.au
What makes the great Australian prawn, great?

That's the question Janet Howieson from Curtin University has been asking over the last year while conducting the nation's first whole of chain prawn quality assurance research project.

Supported by the Seafood CRC, the FRDC and the Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries, the study seeks to support the “Love Australian Prawns” market development strategy by helping to ensure the supply of a consistent, high quality wild harvest product. The program has been developed to encompass the whole supply chain, including fishers, processors, cold store operators, wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

The first stage of the study was to develop quality assurance parameters and methods of assessment and have them agreed by industry through the chain. Janet’s team conducted a review of 50 websites, 10 generic and individual company quality guidelines, 10 government specifications as well as 10 peer reviewed journal articles.

“The key prawn quality parameters fall into four categories: defects such as black spot and soft shells, shelf life and appearance, grading and food safety”, said Janet.

“We have identified ways that we can help the industry throughout the chain address these issues to help ensure consistent quality. For example we are using the photographs from another Seafood CRC project, the Quality Index project (see article also in this issue) to produce posters and fact sheets for retailers and wholesalers”, she added.

“But quality doesn’t stop at the prawn itself. We have also established carton and packaging parameters, storage and delivery parameters (tested using temperature probes) and facility parameters”.

Janet said best industry practice information is being used for the development of an on-line training program which can be completed remotely on computer, iPad or mobile phone.

“The Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) trialled the training program in conjunction with an on-line training provider Rapid Induct, during NPF’s pre-season briefings in late July and the feedback was generally positive with several areas identified for improvement”.

“Since then we have been planning a more detailed training program with more modules, different components for different operational duties, a quality index video and photography and detailed assessment questions.

“We are working to complete this program for trialing by NPF in December 2014.”

Janet said processors have sufficient company specific documentation and protocols to meet food safety requirements in place but that a fact sheet and checklist will be developed to help companies review those against best practice.

Cold store operators and transport operators will also have a fact sheet that will be developed to work in with the existing Refrigerated Warehouse and Transport Operators (RWTO) guidelines.

“Best practice information has been used to develop a poster for seafood retailers. These were launched and distributed at the prawn supply chain research and networking events in Perth and Brisbane. Copies will also be available at the Seafood CRC retailers network meeting in Hobart on October 13 and 14 and then distributed nationally through the Love Australian Prawn campaign.

“Depending on interest we are also considering developing a short online prawn retail training program but are waiting for advice from supermarkets and specialist seafood retailers.”

Janet said consumer information and point of sale brochures explaining best practice for storage, thawing and preparation at home were also being distributed at the Prawn supply chain events and at the retailer’s network meeting in Hobart. These would be added to the Seafood CRC and the Love Australian Prawns websites.

“Once the information has been distributed we are very keen to receive feedback from industry so that we can continue to improve the QA best practice information and training programs and expand the offer to other prawn stakeholder groups,” Janet said.

More Information

For more information or comments about the Prawn QA project and how you can get access to the material contact Janet Howieson: J.Howieson@curtin.edu.au
A free trade agreement (FTA) between Australia and China is expected to increase the value of the Australian Abalone and Rock Lobster direct trade from $30 million to more than $600 million a year.

But every seafood producer in Australia will benefit from increased market competitiveness, improved certainty and transparency, a growth in seafood demand through strategic brand building, better market share and higher prices.

The Seafood Trade Advisory Group (STAG) was established by Abalone and Rock Lobster exporters, in conjunction with the Australian Seafood CRC and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, to advocate for the liberalisation and development of direct trade between Australia and China and address other trade and market related issues between the two countries. Since then it has acted as a conduit between industry and government on Trade and Market access issues in relation to all major markets into which Australian wild caught Abalone and Lobster are exported or to which are potential export markets. The group consists of industry exporters and professionals with specialised expertise and an understanding of international trade policy instruments currently applied to the premium seafood trade.

The Australian Abalone and Rock Lobster industries are Australia’s most valuable edible fisheries exports, contributing in excess of $1.25 billion in gross domestic product and support an estimated 8500 jobs in regional and coastal communities.

Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre, General Manager Trade and Market Development Jayne Gallagher said the initial benefit of an FTA would be the growth of the direct trade to China.

Live Rock Lobster exports alone would potentially increase from $9.4 million a year to $528 million but every seafood sector would be able to leverage the opportunities of a more open and lower cost trading environment.

Jayne said Australia also had the potential to improve its brand recognition and compete more effectively with competitors such as Chile, Canada and the USA.

“We know that New Zealand has used its direct trade to build brands and stronger relationships with downstream customers, whilst articulating a value proposition based on product quality, traceability and safety,” she said. “We can do that too.”

“Direct access to the market will enable Australian companies to build long term supply relationships with downstream food and beverage customers and grow market share in new markets including China’s burgeoning second and third tier cities.

“The Abalone industry is already prepared to take advantage of a zero tariff through its Australian Wild Abalone™ program and we expect other sectors will follow their lead.” (See page 14)

Foreign Minister Julie Bishop announced in early September that China and Australia were “on track” to sign the FTA before Christmas.

The Seafood Trade Advisory Group will be hosting a Seafood Exporters Forum in Canberra on 25th and 26th November 2014. It will be an exciting and constructive couple of days, including discussion around the progress of the China Trade and Market Access Agenda and exploring other markets. All Australian Seafood Exporters are invited to attend.
Seafood Exporters Forum
Canberra, 25 & 26 November 2014

All Australian seafood exporters are invited to attend a Seafood Exporters Forum in Canberra on 25 and 26 November.

The forum will be hosted by the Seafood Trade Advisory Group (STAG), and supported by the Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

STAG consists of Abalone and Rock lobster exporters who have been working with the Australian Government, advocating for the liberalisation and development of direct trade between Australia and China and addressing other trade and market related issues between the two countries.

The progress of the China free trade and market access agenda will be an integral part of discussion at the Forum.

CONSTRUCTIVE AND INTERACTIVE

The Forum promises to be an exciting and constructive couple of days with a focus on export and market access priorities.

The organisers promise it will not be death by Power Point, but an interactive chance to exchange ideas with industry, government and research.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Richard Colbeck will open the forum and the Minister for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb, has also been invited to attend the networking dinner.

IMPORTERS OVERVIEW

Key importers from Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and China have been invited to provide a market overview on the opportunities for Australian seafood in Asia and potential for the expansion of the STAG to include other sectors and markets will be discussed.

GET INVOLVED

Tickets will be limited to first come first served! For more information about the Seafood Exporters Forum, and how to attend please contact the Seafood Trade Advisory Group, helen.barnard@seafoodcrc.com. Invitations to industry and stakeholders will be issued soon so if you want to make sure you are on our list please contact us!
It’s official. According to the recently released results of SARDI’s Prawn Market Access Defenders project, Australian prawns are among the safest and healthiest in the world.

Funded by the Australian Seafood CRC and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, the project aimed to help the industry access new markets, maintain (or defend) current markets by substantiating the accuracy of Australia’s safety and nutrition composition claims.

As part of the research SARDI surveyed all major Australian wild-caught prawn fisheries for potential food safety issues.

“SARDI’s work proved that not only are Australian prawns not a food safety risk but even better, because of the levels of selenium that they contain, they can be labelled a ‘good source’ of dietary selenium,” said SARDI Seafood safety program leader Alison Turnbull.

“This is exciting news for Australian prawn businesses because consumers the world over are increasingly concerned about their health and about the safety of the food they consume.

“Now we have robust scientific evidence to support our claim that people should Love Australian Prawns even more,” said Graeme Stewart, Executive Officer of the Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries.

From an international trade perspective Ms Turnbull said the cadmium risk assessment for Australian prawns demonstrated that cadmium intake through prawn consumption was minor and did not pose any risk to their health.

VIBRIO BREAKTHROUGH

The vibrio research was also a breakthrough for exporters and marketers.

“Vibrios are a natural bacterium found in water. Some Vibrios cause illness in humans, but most don’t, and in Australia it is extraordinarily rare for anyone to be adversely affected by Vibrios through eating Australian caught seafood,” Ms Turnbull said.

“Internationally, however, Vibrios in seafood have been attributed to human illness, and some overseas markets, such as the European Union, have strict regulations regarding Vibrios discovered in seafood shipments.”

Through this research SARDI has established a national library of genetic Vibrio material, based on state-of-the-art molecular technology which tested Vibrios found in Australian waters to distinguish between harmful and non harmful bacteria.

“If the need does arise for Vibrios to be tested, our genetic library will enable us to determine quickly and efficiently if they are a health issue, reducing the time that shipments might be held up. It also helps to maintain market access,” Ms Turnbull said.

Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries Executive Officer, Graeme Stewart, said the depth of the SARDI research had given the Australian prawn industry credibility on a world stage.

“Internationally food safety standards are established through Codex,” he said. “The Prawn Market Access Defenders report demonstrated that the current EU regulations for cadmium in prawns are an ineffective tool for managing risk of cadmium through prawn consumption.

“Importantly, we are now able to use the report in any negotiations we might have related to trade and market access to prove that our prawns are safe – that’s a big outcome” he said.
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It’s official. According to the recently released results of SARDI’s Prawn Market Access Defenders project, Australian prawns are among the safest and healthiest in the world.
The Australian Seafood CRC was established and supported under the Australian Cooperative Research Centre Programme. The Seafood CRC receives funding from the Australian Government’s CRC Programme, the Fisheries R&D Corporation and other CRC Participants.

Last month I talked about the huge amount of seafood that is wasted globally. One of the big reasons for that waste is concern about food safety. A food safety incident is bad for business and if it attracts media attention (which usually happens), these incidents can affect other businesses and even the whole industry.

Australia has a well-deserved reputation for quality and safety with a recent OECD report ranking us second in the world (only beaten by Denmark) ahead of the USA, UK and Canada. But this doesn’t happen by chance!

In 2010 the Seafood CRC established SafeFish as a partnership between industry, government and research with access to national and international technical and scientific expertise. Since then SafeFish has been at the forefront of maintaining and expanding our market access by:

- completing food safety assessments on prawns, oysters, finfish, abalone and rock lobster that comprehensively demonstrate the safety of our seafood
- providing technical advice to government trade negotiators to reopen markets
- developing and supporting diagnostic techniques and capabilities that minimise the time taken for seafood to be tested as well as improving accuracy, to avoid unnecessary business shut downs.
- taking the lead in international standard setting processes such as Codex which ensure that an Australian position is noticed and considered

For most seafood businesses in Australia the work of SafeFish is invisible. We tend to only look for food safety expertise when we have a problem.

It has taken four years to build the capability we now have in SafeFish and many industry sectors have benefited including Oysters, Mussels, Abalone, Rock Lobster, Salmon, Tuna, Yellowtail Kingfish to name a few.

The public has also benefited – better knowledge of seafood safety issues leads to better practices which leads to safer seafood. Our Federal and State government departments benefit too – accurate, reliable and credible advice available at the end of the phone!

A cost benefit analysis undertaken by the CRC in 2013 conservatively estimated that there has been an 11:1 return on our investment in SafeFish. That is a good investment by any measure!

However, funding for SafeFish is running out. When the Seafood CRC closes its doors in June 2015 there is no guaranteed on-going funding for SafeFish. Some of the sectors which have benefited have committed funds but many haven’t and SafeFish needs a new business model – one that secures a future for SafeFish and a future for this industry.

CAUTIOUS CONSUMERS

- Only 44% of consumers believe eating fish is safe – 56% (a majority don’t)
- 32% of consumers are concerned about mercury levels in fish
- 26% of consumers are concerned about possible contaminants in fish.