



MEDIA RELEASE

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A red meat integrity system for the future

A sustainable future has been mapped out for Australia's red meat industry's integrity system in the SAFEMEAT Initiatives Review Steering Group's Final Report.

Released to industry today, the Report details a pathway to achieving the SAFEMEAT Initiatives Review vision of a fully auditable and responsive whole-of-chain risk management system – one that maintains market access, food safety, product integrity (including traceability and animal welfare), and biosecurity.

SAFEMEAT Chairman Ross Keane said that the current system is world's best practice, and the need to ensure the integrity system continues to support domestic and overseas market access for safe, high quality Australian red meat into the future was universally understood.

The Steering Group was charged with taking the Initiatives Review recommendations forward, focussing directly on improving and streamlining industry programs – the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program – while working across the supply-chain for improved system integration.

"It's a significant and complex challenge, involving extensive stakeholder consultation," Mr Keane said.

"The Final Report requires a reform package that addresses gaps in the integrity system, as well as recommending a governance framework and funding model that will ensure the efficient and effective operation of current industry programs into the future."

John Wyld, Chair of the Steering Group, said that current programs and tools were developed mostly in isolation, at different times and in response to different drivers.

"Integration will build an even stronger system that is more efficient to continue to produce a safe product, meet customer expectations, maintain our market access, and provide a foundation for industry growth," Mr Wyld said.

"It will ensure that we continue to have a system that effectively upholds the reputation of Australian red meat."

He said the Report details a governance framework that is streamlined through a single policy group which continues to prioritise industry engagement and partnership with government. It also details a single operations company for existing programs (NLIS, NVDs and LPA), initially a wholly-owned subsidiary of MLA.

"The Report prioritises development of an equitable funding model as a task for the entire supply chain to tackle urgently," Mr Wyld said.

He said National Standards for food safety, traceability, animal welfare and biosecurity are essential to underpin the system, as are nationally consistent monitoring and compliance initiatives.

“We have some excellent integrity tools and programs in place. Now is the right time to strengthen and streamline them, to build in technological innovation, and ensure everyone in the supply chain fully understands and values the system.

“Integration, alignment and rationalisation will require significant and on-going across chain engagement and motivation. It’s now up to industry to take this forward.”

Following delivery of the report, every member of SAFEMEAT will take the Report to their respective Peak Councils and sectors for discussion and consultation. A decision on endorsement and adoption of the Report will be made at the November SAFEMEAT Partners meeting.

The Report is available at www.safemeat.com.au

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Background:

SAFEMEAT is a partnership between the red meat and livestock industry and the state and federal governments of Australia. The partnership ensures that Australian red meat and livestock products achieve the highest standards of safety and hygiene from the farm to the consumer.