

Introduction

There are four national food safety standards. The Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) developed these standards in consultation with State and Territory health authorities, the food industry, and other interested organisations and individuals.

The four food safety standards are:

- 3.1.1 *Interpretation and Application*;
- 3.2.1 *Food Safety Programs*;
- 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*; and
- 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment*.

In July 2000, the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council¹ agreed to the adoption of Standards 3.1.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. These food safety standards form part of the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*. They apply only in Australia.

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council had previously deferred consideration of the fourth standard, Standard 3.2.1 *Food Safety Programs*, and requested further study of the efficacy and costs of these programs for a range of food businesses. Pending the results of this work, the Council agreed in November 2000 that Standard 3.2.1 should be adopted as a voluntary standard. It did so as some States planned to proceed with the introduction of food safety programs without waiting for the results of the study requested earlier by the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council.

As a voluntary standard, Standard 3.2.1 *Food Safety Programs* will apply in only those States or Territories that choose to implement this standard.

Standards 3.1.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 become enforceable from February 2001, depending on the regulatory situation in each State and Territory. The notification provision and the requirement that food handlers and supervisors have food safety skills and knowledge commensurate with their duties within the food business, both in Standard 3.2.2, come into effect from February 2002 to give businesses time to comply with these requirements.

The food safety standards will replace existing State and Territory and local government food hygiene regulations that were nationally inconsistent and that tended to be prescriptive and sometimes significantly out of date. They presented businesses with unnecessary costs and difficulties. In addition, they included requirements that could not be justified in terms of public health and safety.

The new standards reflect international best practice. Taken together, they are based on a preventative approach to the incidence of food-borne illness in Australia and are designed to help ensure that food businesses in Australia produce food that is safe to eat.

1 Ministers of Health from the States, Territories and Commonwealth of Australia and from New Zealand meet as the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council to approve food standards for Australia and New Zealand.