

Development of primary production and processing standard for seed sprouts - a new national initiative

H. Jin, P. Blennan, D. Craig and M. Fisher

Food Standards Australia New Zealand, Canberra, ACT

Introduction

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is considering whether to develop a primary production and processing standard for seed sprouts to address food safety concerns on raw and ready-to-eat seed sprouts. FSANZ will, under this standard development activity, identify factors contributing to the contamination of seed sprouts by pathogenic microorganisms, and identify effective and practical control measures that can be implemented along the sprout primary production and processing chain to improve the safety of seed sprouts available to Australian consumers.

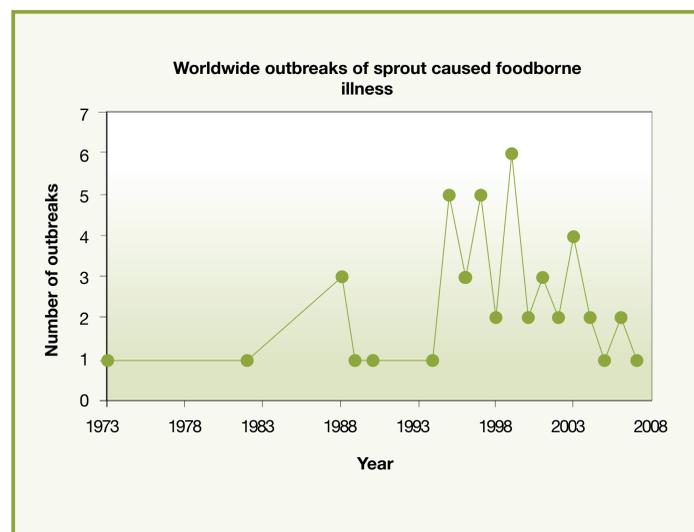
Facts about sprout safety:

- In Australia, between 2005 and 2006, more than 130 cases of foodborne illness caused by *Salmonella* Oranienburg were traced to consumption of contaminated alfalfa sprouts.
- Trace-back investigations indicated seeds used for sprout production were contaminated by *Salmonella*.
- Approximately 70% of sprout-associated outbreaks worldwide were linked to consumption of contaminated alfalfa sprouts.
- Australia-produced alfalfa seeds were implicated in a number of alfalfa caused international outbreaks.
- Pathogenic microorganisms frequently involved in outbreaks include *Salmonella* and *E. coli* O157:H7.

Salmonella ~ 80% of reported outbreaks

E. coli O157:H7 ~ 17% of reported outbreaks

- A single outbreak occurred in Japan in 1996 due to consumption of radish sprouts contaminated by *E. coli* O157:H7, sickened >16,000 people, resulted in two deaths.



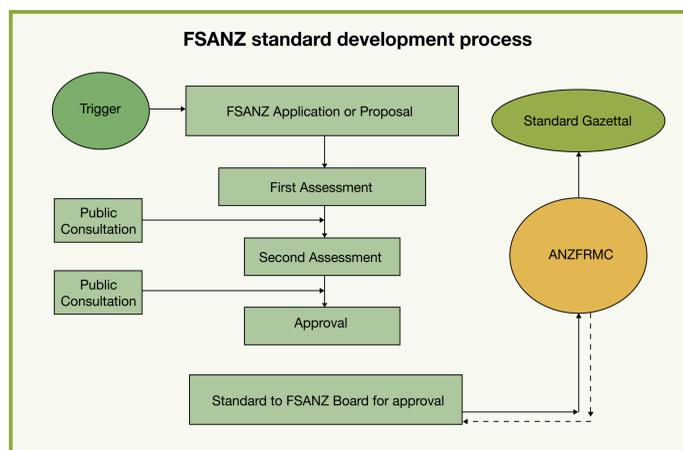
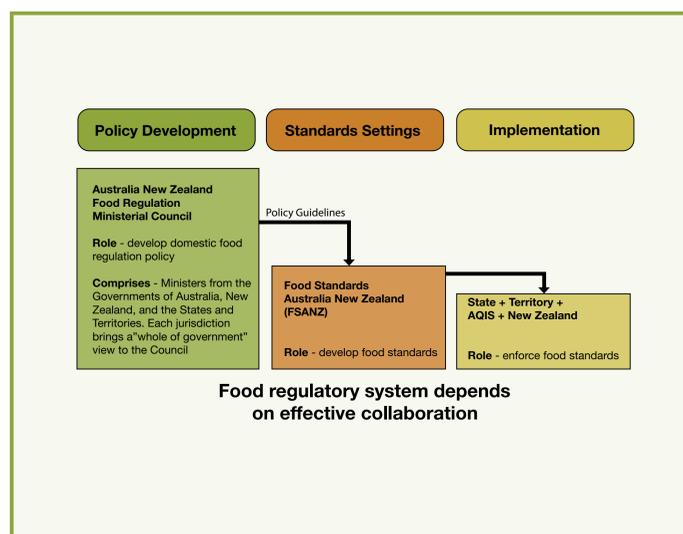
Drivers for a national approach

- Protection of public health and safety in food consumption
- Advice from State and Territory governments
- Request from sprout industry
- Alignment with approaches taken by our trading partners

Primary Production and Processing Standard

- In November 2000, the Council of Australian Governments gave FSANZ the responsibility to develop all domestic food standards including those during the primary production and processing of foods.
- Primary production and processing (PPP) standards are food safety obligations placed on primary food producers and primary food processors to ensure food safety.
- In conjunction with the other standards in the Food Standards Code, PPP standards provide through-chain measures to manage food safety during primary production and processing stages to ensure food safety is managed from 'paddock to plate'.

Australian food regulation system



Summary:

- Seed sprouts eaten raw and contaminated by pathogenic microorganisms present a significant food safety risk to consumers.
- The nature of the sprout industry which is made up small producers and that controlling pathogens in seeds is likely to be problematic, present significant challenges to this standard development activity
- Our objective is to develop an effective and national approach in managing seed sprout safety
- Get involved – see information on the FSANZ website.

