ANNUAL
REPORT

20
21

safe✓meat

Contents

Dear Stakeholder

I am pleased to present my first SAFEMEAT Annual Report as SAFEMEAT Partners Chair. This report describes SAFEMEAT's activities and performance for the 2020–21 financial year.

Firstly, I would like to thank the SAFEMEAT members for electing me as the interim Chair of the SAFEMEAT Partnership earlier this year. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of Mr Ross Keane as Chair of the SAFEMEAT Partnership until December 2020. I am grateful for his many important contributions to SAFEMEAT over his decade-long tenure with the group and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to build on this work.

Despite the ongoing challenges over the past 12 months in how SAFEMEAT and its member organisations operate, we have successfully delivered on several priorities to support the red meat and livestock sector. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a dominating factor in 2020–21, with many states and territories being heavily impacted by lockdowns, restrictions and ongoing disruptions to the red meat and livestock supply chain. While the pandemic has prevented SAFEMEAT from holding face-to-face meetings, we have continued to meet virtually to engage constructively on SAFEMEAT matters and support members operations across their respective industries.

We continue to drive momentum for national livestock traceability reform and support the National Biosecurity Committee's (NBC) work to implement the recommendations contained in our report *Reform recommendations for Australia's livestock traceability system*. Progressing this work within the complex livestock traceability environment requires a significant level of collaboration and cooperation between industries, state and territory governments and the Australian Government. To date, SAFEMEAT has generated a large amount of goodwill across the supply chain in this regard, and now has a critical and ongoing role to play as a key consultation and engagement partner to inform the NBC's work.

Some other key pieces of work undertaken by SAFEMEAT in 2020–21 include:

- development and endorsement of two key reports evaluating sheep and goat traceability performance that contribute valuable analysis and compelling evidence to support the national traceability reform process
- revision of the SAFEMEAT Incident Response Manual to ensure SAFEMEAT maintains its capability to respond efficiently and effectively to incidents
- consideration and endorsement of the National Livestock Identification System Sheep and Goat Standards
- development of the National Livestock Identification System Compliance Dashboard for improved consistency in jurisdictional reporting
- consideration and endorsement of new National Livestock Identification System Animal Identification Technology Approval Program rules and requirements.

As always, SAFEMEAT owes its success to the ongoing commitment and contributions of its members and observers. I would like to thank you all for your considerable efforts and continued support throughout 2020–21. I would also like to recognise Mr Andrew Henderson's efforts chairing the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group over the past year and thank him for his assistance with my transition to Partners Chair.

SAFEMEAT's work can be challenging at times, and we appreciate members' willingness to contribute their expertise, insights and resources. Members' work on issues such as livestock traceability and residue management underpin Australia's world leading red meat integrity system.

The value of SAFEMEAT as a vehicle for managing food safety and product integrity issues and as a consultative platform for the red meat and livestock sector in Australia cannot be underestimated.

Together, I am confident that we can continue to progress the important work that SAFEMEAT does to support Australia's reputation as a world leading producer of high quality and safe red meat.

Yours sincerely

Mr Allan Bloxsom
Chair
SAFEMEAT Partnership

SAFEMEAT is a **consultative partnership** between industry and government that represents Australia's red meat livestock and processing industries. SAFEMEAT provides a platform for engagement and collaboration on policy that contributes to ensuring Australian meat and livestock products adhere to the highest standards of safety — from the paddock to the plate.

Our role:

SAFEMEAT provides oversight and strategic advice on the red meat and livestock integrity system in place throughout the production supply chain that protects the safety and disease-free status of Australian red meat.

The arrangements for the establishment and operation of the SAFEMEAT Partnership are found under Schedule 4 of the Red Meat MOU. SAFEMEAT's role is to:

a) work with the objective of establishing world best practice in ensuring the safety of red meat and pork products

b) ensure each meat industry sector implements sound management systems to ensure safe and hygienic product is delivered to the marketplace

c) ensure adequate and nationally consistent government standards and regulations relating to meat safety and hygiene

d) ensure that effective crisis management strategies are put in place by the appropriate meat industry sectors and, to this end, ensure that there is a fully integrated and effective communications network

e) monitor industry meat safety performance.

A collaborative platform

SAFEMEAT provides its members with a forum to develop unified policy for the Australian red meat and livestock industry's integrity systems, ensuring that there is a streamlined, integrated and collaborative approach to the delivery of safe and hygienic Australian meat and livestock products.

Promotes best practice

SAFEMEAT is dedicated to promoting Australia's best practice management systems, rationalisation of regulation and standards within the industry, and driving the implementation of sound strategies and incident management principles to ensure the integrity of Australian red meat and livestock products.

The system includes on-farm assurance and through-chain traceability programs and reflects Australia's commitment to biosecurity and food safety.

Monitors trends and issues

SAFEMEAT proactively monitors emerging meat safety and hygiene issues that may impact on Australian red meat and livestock products, and provides strategic input and advice to ensure that risks are mitigated and market-related opportunities are maximised.

SAFEMEAT secretariat

The SAFEMEAT secretariat is currently provided by, and located in, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

The secretariat provides support to the Chairs and is responsible for ensuring the timely and effective operations of SAFEMEAT through the delivery of secretariat services.

SAFEMEAT funding

Individual SAFEMEAT members covered their own costs to attend meetings and undertake projects.

The SAFEMEAT secretariat was jointly funded by the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), through its wholly owned subsidiary, the Integrity Systems Company (ISC). The cost of running the ecretariat was $280,770.25 (GST inclusive) for the 2020–21 financial year.

SAFEMEAT Partners

SAFEMEAT Partnership (Partners) provides the overarching strategic policy direction and makes the final determinations on the activities SAFEMEAT undertakes in the meat and livestock sector.

SAFEMEAT Partners met on the following dates during 2020–21:

- 2 December 2020
- 30 June 2021.

A list of SAFEMEAT Partners member organisations in 2020–21 is at *Appendix A*.

SAFEMEAT Advisory Group

SAFEMEAT Partners is supported by the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group. The Advisory Group met on the following dates during 2020–21:

- 7 October 2020
- 25 February 2021
- 13 May 2021.

The SAFEMEAT Advisory Group was established by SAFEMEAT Partners to form recommendations on the development, implementation and review of policy, standards, rules and strategic direction of the Australian red meat and livestock industry's integrity systems.

A list of SAFEMEAT Advisory Group member organisations in 2020–21 is at *Appendix B*.

SAFEMEAT sub-committees

Over the past year SAFEMEAT has continued to draw expertise and guidance from its traceability and issue-specific sub-committees.

Membership of SAFEMEAT's long-term and ongoing working groups is set out below.

The Jurisdictional Traceability Group

The Jurisdictional Traceability Group (JTG) supports the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group and provides a consultative platform for government stakeholders to give advice on government policy and regulatory matters, and for promoting nationally consistent legislation, standards and interpretation of integrity system rules.

Chair

Andrew Henderson

Membership

- Agriculture Victoria
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, WA
- Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, NT
- Integrity Systems Company
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Primary Industries and Regions, SA
- QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The Sheep Traceability Working Group

The SAFEMEAT Sheep Traceability Working Group (STWG) was established by SAFEMEAT Partners in 2017 to implement SAFEMEAT's responses to the recommendations made in the 2016 *SheepCatcher II Report*.

Chair

Andrew Henderson

Membership

- Animal Health Committee (representing jurisdictions)
- Australian Livestock and Property Agents
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Integrity Systems Company
- Sheep Producers Australia
- State National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) coordinator
- Wool Producers Australia
- Secretariat: Sheep Producers Australia.

Hormonal Growth Promotant Working Group

The Hormonal Growth Promotant (HGP) Working Group was formed to address the risk of HGP detection in exported products causing market access disruption.

Chair

Andrew Henderson

Membership

- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
- Cattle Council of Australia
- Integrity Systems Company
- QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (jurisdictional representative).

Cotton Trash Working Group

The Cotton Trash Working Group (CTWG) provides input on the cotton trash protocol from SAFEMEAT's stakeholders and manages the potential residue issues that could arise from the feeding of cotton trash to livestock.

Chair

Bob Barwell

Membership

- AUS-MEAT
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
- Cattle Council of Australia
- Cotton Australia
- Integrity Systems Company
- Namoi Cotton
- Sheep Producers Australia.

NLIS Statuses Working Group

The NLIS Statuses Working Group was formed to consider and develop non-regulatory statuses and consider archiving, inactivation, and termination of specific statuses in the NLIS system.

Chair

Andrew Henderson

Membership

- Cattle Council of Australia
- Integrity Systems Company
- QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Jurisdictional representative).

The NLIS Statuses Working Group did not meet in 2020-21.

National Feed Standards Working Group

The National Feed Standards (NFS) Working Group was formed to progress the finalisation of the *National Feed Standards for Food Producing Animals* as tasked by the National Biosecurity Committee. The stockfeed industry is leading the development of the standards and is providing secretariat services to the working group.

Chair

Duncan Rowland

Membership

- Animal Health Australia
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Australian Pork Limited
- Australian Dairy Farmers
- Australian Renderers Association
- Egg Farmers of Australia
- Feed Ingredients and Additives Association of Australia
- Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia
- Sheep Producers Australia
- ACT Government
- NSW Government
- NT Government
- QLD Government
- SA Government
- TAS Government
- VIC Government
- WA Government.

SAFEMEAT's strategic priorities encompass nine key programs:

1. Standards and regulations
2. Emergency management
3. Animal diseases
4. Residues
5. Pathogens

6. Systems development and management
7. Communications and education
8. Emerging issues
9. SAFEMEAT initiatives review.

The key activities undertaken by SAFEMEAT in 2020–21 against these programs are outlined below.

Progress on reform recommendations for Australia's livestock traceability system

SAFEMEAT's report, *Reform recommendations for Australia's livestock traceability system* (the Report), was provided to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) on 11 March 2020 for consideration.
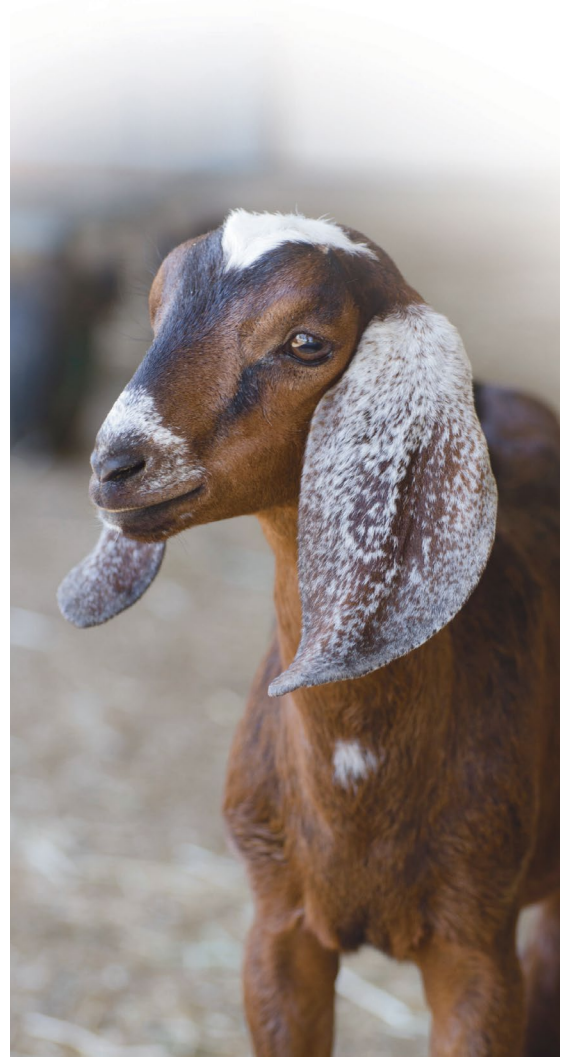
The Report is the result of a multi-year, comprehensive and highly collaborative process with SAFEMEAT's members. It made five key recommendations encompassing a wide variety of reform options to deliver enhanced biosecurity and traceability outcomes for livestock industries, jurisdictions, and the Australian Government.

Throughout 2020–21 SAFEMEAT has continued to drive momentum across industry and government to implement traceability reform.

In October 2020, the NBC established the National Livestock Traceability Enhancement Working Group (NLTEWG), a multi-jurisdictional working group to undertake further exploration of available options to implement SAFEMEAT's recommendations.

SAFEMEAT members have maintained regular engagement with the NLTEWG during 2020-21. The NLTEWG are currently scoping nationally consistent governance frameworks to enhance the decision making and accountability frameworks that underpin livestock traceability arrangements. The NLTEWG are also working to identify potential implementation models to support individual electronic identification (EID) implementation for sheep and goats. Further consultation on these matters will be undertaken by the NLTEWG with SAFEMEAT members in 2021-22.

SAFEMEAT has been a valuable platform for engagement and collaboration between industries and government to date. It will continue to be a vital avenue for industry to be consulted and have an ongoing role in ensuring the outcomes of the traceability reform process set the foundation for an effective future traceability system in the long-term.

SAFEMEAT Sheep Traceability Working Group – CIE Report

In 2019, the STWG engaged the Centre for International Economics (CIE) to update the 2010 NLIS Sheep & Goat Business Plan, fulfilling key recommendations from the *SheepCatcher II report* and the 2014 Decision Regulatory Impact Statement (DRIS): *Implementation of improvements to the National Livestock Identification System for sheep and goats.*

The final CIE Report, *Improving traceability for sheep and goats – Update of the 2010 NLIS (sheep and goats) Business Plan* (the CIE Report), provides updated costs and benefits of improving the sheep and goat traceability system, comparing EID using Radio Frequency Identifier tags compared to the visual tag/mob-based system.

The CIE Report and the STWG response was delivered to SAFEMEAT in October 2020 to:

- provide formal responses to the report's key findings and recommendations

- provide context for the report and how the recommendations should be addressed

- contribute key data and analysis on enhancing traceability to increase our emergency disease response and management capacity, food safety integrity and the maintenance and expansion of market access

- assist industry and government consideration of the reform recommendations contained in SAFEMEAT's report *Reform Recommendations for Australia's Livestock Traceability System.*

The STWG concluded that the CIE report presents compelling evidence to support the consideration of national traceability system reform will facilitate genuine improvement in traceability performance for the betterment and prosperity of Australian sheep and goat industries.

The STWG has now completed its three-year term and fulfilled its remit as defined in its Terms of Reference. Of the 33 unique implementation strategies tasked to the STWG by SAFEMEAT, 24 have been completed, 6 are still in progress and 3 have not yet been initiated due to dependency on outcomes of items still in progress.

The STWG has delivered key analyses and made a valuable contribution to the national conversation on traceability reform. It has been a crucial platform for engaging stakeholders and industry on the importance and urgency of improving sheep and goat traceability.

SAFEMEAT will consider whether the STWG could be used as a platform to support engagement with State Farming Organisations on implementing EID for sheep prior to dissolving the group.

SAFEMEAT Electronic Identification Evaluation

The JTG delivered its *NLIS Sheep & Goats Traceability Evaluation report: A comparison and evaluation of traceability of electronic and visual identification in NLIS (Sheep & Goats)* in a segment of the supply chain (the EID Evaluation) to SAFEMEAT Advisory Group in August 2020 and SAFEMEAT Partners in December 2020.

The EID Evaluation assessed the performance of both electronic and visual traceability systems for sheep and goats currently operating in Victoria in line with the National Livestock Traceability Performance Standards Standard 1.1, which requires a level of 98 per cent for short term tracing.

The results of the EID evaluation were compiled and presented to SAFEMEAT as a scientific based report to allow for transparent and unbiased presentation of the data. The findings indicate that electronically identified sheep can be traced with greater efficiency and accuracy than visually identified sheep.

SAFEMEAT presented the EID Evaluation report, along with the CIE Report, to state and territory and Commonwealth agricultural ministers in December 2020 for consideration as supporting evidence for the broader traceability reform process.

Incident Response Manual

SAFEMEAT is continuing its work with consultants to review and revise the SAFEMEAT *Incident Response Manual* (IRM).

A revised IRM was presented to SAFEMEAT in late 2020 and consultation sessions on the IRM were held with members throughout early 2021 to ensure that the IRM meets expectations and accurately captures roles, responsibilities, and interactions with other response arrangements. The IRM has undergone further revisions to reflect the member feedback received during these sessions.

The revised IRM takes into consideration the contemporary emergency management frameworks and the broader regulatory and policy environment that IRM operates within, including interactions and effects on industry body crisis response plans, government regulations, and SAFEMEAT member and stakeholder policies. The overarching IRM project will also include the development of recommendations to embed regular review and testing of crisis response processes in the future to ensure ongoing capacity is maintained.

SAFEMEAT is now working closely with its members to design a training exercise to test the revised IRM and assist members to understand their roles and responsibilities. Members will be engaged in one-on-one training sessions from July 2021, followed by group training sessions and a group discussion exercise in August 2021.

Ensuring the IRM remains fit for purpose is vital to maintaining SAFEMEAT's capability to effectively respond to incidents.

NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards

In December 2020, the SAFEMEAT Partners endorsed the NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards for publication by the Integrity Systems Company.

The new NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards set out the correct use of both visual and electronic tag devices and data flows in the NLIS database by stakeholders in the sheep and goat sector. Extensive consultations were undertaken, and strong cross sectoral industry support and government support was received to create NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards that strengthen traceability and market access imperatives.

NLIS Compliance Dashboard

The JTG has worked closely with ISC during 2020–21 to develop a central NLIS Compliance Dashboard to monitor NLIS performance. The ashboard provides functionality to conduct compliance monitoring at a state and national level.

The JTG is now working to develop a set of performance measures for the dashboard for SAFEMEAT's consideration. These measures will assist states and territories to rapidly assess operating levels and detect issues and concerns, and to target and lift performance across the different areas of the system, supporting industry engagement through increased extension activities.

The development of the dashboard was a key outcome of SAFEMEAT's traceability reform work and aims to promote nationally consistent data collection and presentation with regards to jurisdictional reporting requirements on industry performance against the NLIS regulations.

NLIS Animal Identification Technology Approval Program

In December 2020, the SAFEMEAT Partners endorsed three documents developed by ISC to form the Approval Requirements for the NLIS Animal Identification Technology (AIT) Approval Program; the NLIS AIT Approval Program Fundamentals and Vocabulary, the NLIS AIT Approval Program Rules, and the Requirements for NLIS AIT.

The NLIS AIT Approval Program replaces the existing NLIS Device Standards and reflects contemporary best practice and the emergence of new livestock identification technologies. SAFEMEAT will consider revised governance arrangements for the NLIS Standards Committee in due course.

Looking to 2021–22:

SAFEMEAT plays a key role supporting the collective efforts of both industry and government to maintain Australia's word-leading red meat and livestock integrity systems.

The environment we operate within is becoming increasingly complex. Trade volatility, technical barriers to trade, biosecurity risk and the growing focus on food safety will continue to drive the work of SAFEMEAT. As we move into 2021–22 and beyond, it is imperative that SAFEMEAT remains contemporary in its structure and approach to ensure it can adapt and respond to these emerging challenges.

Over the coming year, the SAFEMEAT Partners, its working groups and sub-committees will convene to consider a range of matters to underpin the ongoing sustainability and prosperity of the Australian red meat and livestock sector. We anticipate progressing several priorities including:

- examining SAFEMEAT's role in overseeing traceability system performance and implementing enhanced compliance monitoring tools
- reviewing residues based on trade risk and implementing enhanced risk mitigation measures
- developing a national feed standard for food producing animals to provide a consistent operating framework for the production of safe feed for the livestock sector

- progressing proposed changes to National Vendor Declarations
- considering enhanced HGP management measures
- developing a new methodology to test the efficacy of the traceability arrangements in place for major livestock species.

We will continue to work diligently and collaboratively, taking a proactive whole-of-chain approach to the challenges that we face for the benefit of every stakeholder in the Australian red meat and livestock supply chain.

SAFEMEAT Partners member organisations in 2020–21:

Independent Chair

Allan Bloxsom (current),
Ross Keane (until December 2020)

Industry Members

Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council

Australian Lot Feeders' Association

Australian Meat Industry Council

Australian Pork Limited

Cattle Council of Australia

Goat Industry Council of Australia

Sheep Producers Australia

Regulator members

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

State Agriculture Authority Representative

State Food Authority Representative

Observers

Animal Health Australia

Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association

Australian Livestock Markets Association

Australian Meat Processor Corporation

Dairy Australia

Integrity Systems Company

LiveCorp

Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd

Guests

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Red Meat Advisory Council

Secretariat

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

SAFEMEAT Advisory Group member organisations in 2020–21

Independent Chair

Andrew Henderson

Industry Members

Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council

Australian Lot Feeders' Association

Australian Meat Industry Council

Australian Pork Limited

Australian Renderers' Association

Cattle Council of Australia

Goat Industry Council of Australia

Sheep Producers Australia

Regulator members

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

State Food Authority Representative

Agriculture Victoria

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia

Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, Northern Territory

New South Wales Department of Primary Industries

Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia

Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

Observers

Animal Health Australia

Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association

Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association

Australian Livestock Markets Association

Australian Meat Processor Corporation

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

Dairy Australia

Integrity Systems Company

Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia

LiveCorp

Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd

National Residue Survey

Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia

Wool Producers Australia

Secretariat

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment