

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION
TO THE QUARANTINE & BIOSECURITY ENQUIRY
REGARDING THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS
BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND AQIS**

In the complex and diverse business of the international trading of red meat, a strong, effective and proactive regulator, is one of the key factors underpinning Australia's unique health and hygiene status.

In supporting that scenario, industry must also have a forum that it can engage AQIS as that industry regulator, openly and transparently, to discuss the full gamut of operational and technical issues essential to the efficient running of a sustainable meat processing business. The Export Meat Industry Advisory Committee (EMIAC) has been that forum and provides a platform for the tabling, discussion and agreement to all issues relating to the regulatory control of our sector of industry.

AMIC's delegation to EMIAC reflects the importance of the forum to our sector of industry as well as its diverse nature – both sheep and beef processing, large multinational and small regional processors, northern operators and southern operators.

When the new export regulations for the US were first introduced in 1963, the then Department of Primary Industry set up the forerunner to EMIAC, the Meat Industry Advisory Committee (MIAC) as a forum for developing regulation on the basis of practical industry input. As the industry has grown and matured, so has the need for MIAC and then EMIAC to evolve and change to meet an increasingly complex global environment.

Misunderstandings or interpretations in the past about the priority of issues have been negated in more recent times with the agreement at EMIAC 50 that all issues, no matter what the priority will be tabled at EMIAC for industry and government assessment and agreement. This has given confidence to industry about the commitment to and effectiveness of this forum. The agreement to establish sub-committees to work through any necessary detail and report back to EMIAC on the outcomes are also an essential part of that agreed review process.

AMIC appreciates the commitment to the EMIAC process by AQIS. There have been however six areas of the EMIAC process that have seen or need recent change or comment. AMIC and AQIS have worked closely together to effect a cooperative approach to this change. These have included:

1. Lack of strategic direction. The quantum change to inspection methodology developed through the joint AQIS/AMIC Strategic Initiatives Evaluation Group (SEG) could deliver significant change and benefits to both AQIS and AMIC's processing members. This includes better utilization of scarce inspection resources and a more appropriate focus on food safety and quality assurance systems that will meet and exceed emerging global consumer expectations for food products.
2. A Whole of Government and Industry Partnership on Market Access – EMIAC at times has been unable to provide information for industry from a whole of

government perspective on some market access issues and has encountered difficulty in progressing some technical market access questions that were really more trade policy based anyway. AQIS' support for the formation of the Red Meat Market Access Committee (RedMMAC) has been appreciated by AMIC. RedMMAC is a whole of government partnership with industry on market access and has helped to rectify those short-comings. AQIS and the EMIAC process have become an integral part and an essential contributor to the RedMMAC approach to market access and an essential component to resolution of many of the technical issues.

3. Cross Communication - There has been no mechanism for communication across the various industry consultative groups especially QEAC. EMIAC has to some extent operated in isolation and it would benefit all if issues such as the 40% contribution to AQIS charges that affects a range of market sectors was addressed through better communication with QEAC.
4. Sub-Committees - Sub-Committees under EMIAC have been at times given a lower priority and as a result have been inadequately resourced with limited time for in-depth analysis. The main EMIAC forum does not have the time to adequately explore the detail of these committees and as a result some issues are not examined in the manner required. An increase in the resources allocated to sub-committees by AQIS and AMIC would certainly benefit this process. Provision of cross communication from other export programs at sub-committee level would also be of benefit.
5. Staff Commitment Essential - AMIC has been very appreciative of the stability of AQIS representation at EMIAC. It has helped to provide continuity, corporate knowledge and consistency in resolving issues. The effectiveness of EMIAC can be directly related to the level of experience of the staff allocated by AQIS and can be quickly negated if the most senior AQIS representatives are not present. AQIS are to be congratulated for the commitment of senior staff to the EMIAC process of recent times which facilitates decision making and adds to the effectiveness of the forum. We would urge that commitment to be maintained at the highest level if EMIAC is to continue to function effectively for industry.
6. The Principal Role of AQIS and EMIAC is Market Access - AMIC sees the principal role of AQIS and the industry forums that we engage AQIS in such as EMIAC, as developing and maintaining market access for Australian red meat products throughout the world. If we accept this as a basic premise, then as an organisation AQIS cannot be a reactive organisation waiting until issues arise before acting. They must by definition be proactive and aggressive in seeking fair, open and transparent market access for our products and have strategic objectives consistent with this philosophy.

We are happy to discuss these issues in more detail.

Processor Group
Australian Meat Industry Council
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