

Hon Nathan Guy

Minister for Primary Industries

Hon Nikki Kaye

Minister for Food Safety



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Media Statement

Govt accepts all WPC inquiry recommendations

Primary Industries Minister Nathan Guy and Food Safety Minister Nikki Kaye today released the report on the first stage of the *Government Inquiry into the Whey Protein Concentrate Contamination Incident* and said the Government accepts in principle all 29 recommendations.

“This part of the inquiry focused on our dairy food safety system and we are pleased to confirm it found the whey protein concentrate (WPC) incident in August this year (2013) was not the result of any failure in the regulatory system,” Mr Guy says.

“The inquiry report finds New Zealand’s food safety regulatory model is consistent with international principles and is among the best in the world,” Ms Kaye says.

“This is a finding of fundamental importance to reassure our off-shore markets,” Mr Guy says.

“The report was peer reviewed by an international expert in the structure and management of food safety systems, Professor Alan Reilly who heads the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. He confirmed he was satisfied with the quality and integrity of the inquiry’s report,” Ms Kaye says.

“The report makes a number of recommendations, most of which are about further strengthening the New Zealand food safety system for the challenges that lie ahead.”

“Exports to China have trebled since 2007. On top of that, food safety

requirements and systems are continuing to evolve,” Mr Guy says.

“New Zealand’s export performance depends heavily on the success of the dairy sector and we are committed to ensuring its underpinning food safety system remains world-leading.”

The Government will allocate between \$8-12 million per year for the following key recommendations:

- **Strengthening capability in emerging export markets, particularly China.** Additional personnel are needed to support growing China trade. The Government has committed to an additional four people in China and six people in other international markets. The specific location of personnel will be agreed between the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Food Safety, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Trade. The Government has committed an additional \$4.430 million in 2014/15 rising to \$8.295 million in 2017/18 and out-years to increase the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) presence overseas.
- **Establishing a centre of food safety science and research.** This will bring together New Zealand government agencies and research organisations allowing for collaboration, including with overseas science centres. (At least an additional \$5 million per year made up of contributions from Government and industry.)
- **Increasing dairy processing and regulatory capability.** A working group will be set up to develop a strategic plan and this will see a further \$1 million per year invested in dairy capability.
- **Establishing a food safety and assurance advisory council** to provide high level independent advice and risk analysis. (\$250,000 per year.)
- **Fast-tracking work to consolidate and simplify legislation and regulations.** (\$250,000 for 2014/15.)

“The inquiry report also recommends we fast-track the revision of New Zealand regulatory requirements for the manufacture of infant formula and work is already underway on this,” Ms Kaye says.

“This is a special work programme due to the vulnerability of babies and young children.

“Legislative change is required to meet some of the recommendations and we will be delivering some of that through the Food Bill, which we hope to pass as soon as possible next year. We are looking at aligning other food legislation with an omnibus bill in 2014,” Ms Kaye says.

“The inquiry findings and recommendations should renew confidence in New Zealand’s dairy food safety system,” Mr Guy says.

“We would like to thank the inquiry team, led by Miriam Dean CNZM QC, for completing this report within three months.”

This report released today is on Parts B and C of the Government's inquiry and is separate to the compliance investigation being undertaken by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). Part A of the Government's inquiry will look at the question of what happened and the regulator's response.

In August, MPI indicated the compliance investigation would take three to six months to complete. Part A of the Government's inquiry cannot be completed until that compliance investigation is completed.

A copy of the report can be found at: <http://www.dia.govt.nz/Government-Inquiry-into-Whey-Protein-Concentrate-Contamination-Incident>

A table of the 29 recommendations and the Government's response is attached.

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