

27 September 2019

New Zealand Food Safety/Haumarū Kai Aotearoa  
PO Box 2526  
Wellington 6140

Tēnā koe

## **Re: A strategy for New Zealand Food Safety**

Regional Public Health (RPH) serves the greater Wellington region, through its three district health boards (DHBs): Capital & Coast, Hutt Valley and Wairarapa and as a service is part of the Hutt Valley District Health Board. We work with our community to make it a healthier safer place to live. We promote good health, prevent disease, and improve the quality of life for our population. Our staff includes a range of occupations such as medical officers of health, public health advisors, health protection officers, public health nurses, and public health analysts.

RPH has three main suggestions regarding the New Zealand Food Safety Strategy; consideration of an additional priority centering partnership with Māori, placing the NZ Food Safety Strategy development in the context of national systems and strategy reviews and strengthening consumer food safety education.

### **Additional priority for the strategy: Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations**

An outcome sought by the New Zealand Food Safety Strategy is “Māori have trust and confidence in the food safety system because we work in partnership”. RPH supports this goal; however this partnership is not explicitly stated as an area of priority in the four outlined priorities listed in the draft document (with the exception of a short mention included in the fourth priority). While obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi should underpin the entirety of the strategy, we urge an explicit priority be stated to highlight the importance of partnership of New Zealand Food Safety with Māori.

### **Placing the New Zealand Food Safety Strategy development in the context of national systems and strategy reviews**

The document states that Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) will be an intelligence led business that proactively prepares for the future. RPH is aware of two wider system reviews that will impact on this and these are listed below.

- Proposed national policy statement for highly productive land<sup>1</sup>
- Action for healthy waterways<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/proposed-nps-highly-productive-land>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/action-for-healthy-waterways>

We would strongly urge that this food safety strategy is seen in the context of these documents.

### **Consumer food safety communication and education**

MPI has identified an increase in consumer expectations and demands, however there appears to have been a lack of investment in the promotion of food safety in recent years. With pressures on production and the development of new technologies, it is becoming increasingly important to place a strong focus on consumer food safety education. While we acknowledge the work that is currently underway such as the “Clean, Cook, Chill” information on the MPI website, this does not seem to be a current focus.

Two specific areas of education are discussed below:

1. **Mahinga kai (food gathering sites).** The Deputy Director-General of New Zealand Food Safety, Mr Bryan Wilson, expressed in the foreword a desire to deepen the understanding of Kaitiakitanga in relation to Aotearoa’s food safety system. By working with Māori and developing an understanding of what is important to Māori, NZ Food Safety can work in partnership to develop tools and methods that are appropriate and effective in communicating potential food safety risks in the collection of, for example, watercress, whitebait and shellfish.
2. **Consumers with reduced immunity.** A second particular area of importance that requires improved consumer awareness is food safety education for consumers with reduced immunity (due to illness, medication, pregnancy or older age). RPH regularly receives notifications of vulnerable people who have contracted listeria, including pregnant women, who appear to have minimal awareness that their food choices are placing them at risk.

The priority to “proactively support consumers to feel confident making choices about food” will require investment in the above key areas in addition to general consumer education. This will be a key step in achieving the outcome the “consumers can be confident that food is safe and suitable, and they can make informed choices”.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. The contact point for this submission is Dr Craig Thornley, Medical Officer of Health (04 570 9002 or [craig.thornley@huttvalleydhb.org.nz](mailto:craig.thornley@huttvalleydhb.org.nz)).

Ngā mihi

**Dr Craig Thornley**  
**Medical Officer of Health**

**Janice Hemi**  
**Acting Service Manager**