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MEMBERSHIP

The Allergen Bureau membership to the end of December 2018 was 35 Full Members, 38 Associate Members and 47 Individual Members – a total membership of 120.

The Allergen Bureau was pleased to welcome back Mondelēz International as a Full Member.

There were four new Associate Member Category A, B or C companies during this six-month period, • Bakkerij Dam, • Loving Earth, • Merieux Nutrisciences, • and Signature Desserts Pty Ltd; plus eight new Individual Members Category D.

The Allergen Bureau relies on the support of its member companies to continue to inform the food industry about allergen management. We ask our member companies that they help to spread the word about the benefits of Allergen Bureau membership. The Allergen Bureau warmly welcome new members – including medium and small enterprises and individuals that can join as Associate Members.

3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium (FAMS2019)

Planning continued for the 3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium to be held at State Library Victoria, Melbourne from 13-16 May 2019. The symposium theme was determined as ‘Navigate the science, Manage the risk’.

FAMS2019 is an assembly of the best minds across the spectrum of food allergen management. From researchers to consumer groups, food manufacturers, suppliers, and testing laboratories, to clinicians, dieticians, the policy makers and enforcement agencies. This biennial symposium, unique to the Southern Hemisphere, has something for all.

FAMS2019 offers a 3-day symposium reaffirming the concepts of ‘risk communication’, science of thresholds, reference doses, and their application. Also covered will be updates on regulation and policy, food fraud insights, frontiers in treatment and clinical research, the latest on detection methodologies from the laboratories.

FAMS2019 Keynote Speakers include:
• Joseph Baumert, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska, USA
• René Crevel, Rene Crevel Consulting Ltd, UK
• Prof. Samuel Godefroy, Université Laval, Québec, Canada
• Jonathon Hourihane, University College Cork, Ireland
• Penny Jorgensen, Allergy New Zealand, NZ
• Lauren Kolstad, Food Standards Australia New Zealand
• Prof. Clare Mills, The University of Manchester, UK
• Kirsten Perrett, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, Australia
• Ben Remington, Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), NL
• Maria Said, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, Australia
• Prof. Steve Taylor, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska, USA
• Sandra Vale, National Allergy Strategy, Australia

FAMS2019 is proudly presented by the
Allergen Bureau
Dairy Food Safety Victoria
National Measurement Institute
University NSW

Platinum Sponsorship of FAMS2019 is kindly provided by R-Biopharm.
Industry presentations

The Allergen Bureau was extremely active in industry capability development during this 6-month period, presenting and/or hosting at industry events in Australia and New Zealand.

All of the following presentations can be accessed from our 2018 Conference Presentations webpage.

- **VITAL® Activities – the priorities & challenges** presented by Lisa Warren, Allergen Bureau, at the AIFST Food Science Social, Melbourne, July 2018
- **Allergy, Allergens & Allergen Management for the Food Industry** presented by Georgina Christensen, Allergen Bureau, at the NZMS Scientific food allergen seminars, Auckland and Christchurch August 2018
- **Key Successes of the Allergen Bureau** presented by Debbie Hawkes, Allergen Bureau and Hawkins Watts, at FOODTECH PACKTECH, Auckland, Sept 2018
- **I'm lost! How do I work out which allergen management guidance I need?** presented by Tom Lewis, Allergen Bureau; Bill McBride, GFSI & SQF; Lauren Kolstad, FSANZ; Brad Costello, SAI Global; Geoffrey Annison, AFGC; Peter Bush, FTAA; Lisa Warren, Allergen Bureau; and Kirsten Grinter, Allergen Bureau & Nestlé Australia, at the 2018 AIFST Convention, Melbourne, Sept 2018
- **Allergen Management Introduction** prepared by Georgina Christensen, Allergen Bureau, and presented by Nicole Zerveas, Citrus Australia, at the Citrus Australia Food Safety Forum, Barmera SA, Oct 2018
- **VITAL® Activities – the priorities & challenges** presented by Lisa Warren, Allergen Bureau, at the 10th Meeting of the Allergen Testing Special Interest Group (AT-SIG), Melbourne, Nov 2018.

We thank all collaborators and contributors for helping make these industry events possible.

Allergen Risk Review website launched

The Allergen Bureau’s new, freely available interactive Allergen Risk Review website was launched in late 2018. The Risk Review website is designed to assist the food industry with the process of thoroughly investigating the allergen status of food products and ingredients, from raw materials through to finished products. This process underpins accurate allergen labelling, which in turn helps to protect sensitised consumers from potentially life-threatening allergic reactions.

The Allergen Risk Review website is based on an interactive factory map that shows where allergen risks can occur in different areas of a food manufacturing facility. Clickable icons depict each area of the facility that can be explored to uncover greater detail and case studies. This easy-to-use format is expandable to include the entire supply chain from primary production to finished product and food service.

Information collected in an allergen risk review provides essential information to a food company when implementing the Allergen Bureau VITAL Program – a standardised allergen risk assessment process for the food industry.

The VITAL Phase 1 – Risk Review Working Group (made up of voluntary food industry representatives) developed the website, acknowledging that while many people know about the VITAL Program, additional resources would support its increased use and help to provide users with confidence they were using it correctly.

The Allergen Risk Review website will be regularly updated by the Allergen Bureau based on user feedback. Please get in touch to share your experience of using the Allergen Risk Review website and send through any suggestions for improvement.
Technical support and information

Technical support and information were provided to both Allergen Bureau members and non-members through the Allergen Bureau helpline. The Allergen Bureau received 42 enquiries requiring responses from our scientific and technical experts - of which 22 were VITAL related and 15 were about general allergen management.

VITAL enquiries for this period were quite diverse. Some of the more common topics of enquiry were around how to use VITAL Online, more specific detail on the Reference Doses, and when to use a precautionary allergen label. There were several questions seeking clarity on how to treat particulate cross contact within the VITAL Program and VITAL Online.

General allergen management enquiries are predominantly about what foods are allergens, and labelling requirements under both the ANZ Food Standards Code and various international requirements.

Allergen Bureau Member enquiries are generally provided to Members on the same or next day.

Non-members are only able to access the Allergen Bureau phone and email information service as a priority for one enquiry. Subsequent enquiries and requests for assistance by non-members are considered on a case-by-case basis, as time and resources allow.

eNews

Six, monthly editions of the Allergen Bureau eNews were circulated to our member’s mailing list - of 336 recipients as at the end of 2018.

Allergen Bureau Members receive our eNews as a priority service.

Non-members – including eNews or VITAL subscribers (7,735) - receive the eNews 2 weeks after the priority distribution to members.

Total number on mailing list  8,072 (+ from 7,714 in previous six months)

Website

Some Allergen Bureau website statistics (non-bounce sessions ) from July- Dec 2018:

- Sessions 9,243 (+ from 9,108 in previous six months)
- Unique visitors 6,974 (+ from 6,598 in previous six months)
- New visitors v return visitors 74% v 26% (same as previous six months)
- Page views 35,169 (+ from 34,035 in previous six months)
- Average pages views per session 3.80 (+ from 3.75 in previous six months)
- Average time on site 5:57 mins (+ from 5:44 mins in previous six months)

The most viewed webpages were:

- The VITAL Program 15% of pageviews (- from 18% in previous six months)
- Home page 12% of pageviews (- from 11% in previous six months)
- VITAL Online 7% of pageviews (- from 8% in previous six months)
- What are Food Allergens? 5% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- Food Allergen FAQs 4% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- Food Allergen Fundamentals 3% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- VITAL Training 3% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- VITAL Science 3% of pageviews (same as previous six months)

The top ten visiting countries for non-bounce sessions to the Allergen Bureau website were:

- Australia 3,769 (41%) [+ 3,672 (40%) in previous six months]
- New Zealand 659 (7%) [+ 638 (7%) in previous six months]
- United States 617 (7%) [+ 680 (7%) in previous six months]
- United Kingdom 518 (6%) [+ 462 (5%) in previous six months]
- France 399 (4%) [+ 312 (3%) in previous six months]
- Germany 345 (4%) [+ 337 (4%) in previous six months]
The geographic distribution of sessions remained relatively stable from the previous six-month period. The only notable change in the top ten visiting countries being the inclusion of India, with Canada falling out.

With more than 50% of all Allergen Bureau website users and sessions coming from outside of Australasia, we consider this data supports our Vision of being a globally recognised and supported industry organisation promoting best practice food industry allergen management, risk review and consistent labelling to facilitate informed consumer choice.

The Allergen Bureau look forward to again reaching out to the international food industry through our website and eNews communication in 2019.

VITAL® Online - allergen regulations and functionality

The South African legislation was added to VITAL Online on 4th October 2018.

The Allergen Bureau would like to thank the South African food industry for their assistance in the development of this legislation environment – particularly the generous contribution from FACTS Food & Allergy Consulting & Testing Services, an endorsed VITAL Training Provider based in South Africa.

New functionality to ‘Create an Ingredients Report’ and ‘Search Recipes’ was added to VITAL Online in on 10th December 2018.

The ability to create an Ingredients Report showing allergen information was key functionality requested by users. The Allergen Bureau was pleased to make this new feature available – allowing organisations to have a single source of allergen information that can be used in recipe building, risk review and incident management. VITAL Online users can now easily download allergen information for all of their ingredients into a single spreadsheet, with allergen information in the Ingredients Library of VITAL Online being able to be exported into an Ingredients Report.

VITAL® Online - usage

At the end of 2018, 2,735 organisations had registered for a VITAL Online account (an increase of 290 organisations in this six-month period). Over 4,280 individual Users (an increase of 430 Users in this six-month period) having accessed VITAL Online through their own username and password.

Since the launch of VITAL Online in August 2015, these organisations have generated 19,700 VITAL Online reports (up from 16,400 reports at 30 June 2018). Over 12,100 ingredients, 1,100 processing profiles and almost 9,900 recipes have now been created within VITAL Online!
The top ten visiting countries to the VITAL Online website (non-bounce sessions) were the same as the previous reporting period.

Australia continues to show the greatest usage of VITAL Online with an increase in the percentage of users from the previous six-month period, but with the proportion of sessions remaining relatively stable.

An increase in the proportion of usage and sessions in Germany was the most significant change during this six-month period, with New Zealand, the US, and Spain all decreasing - but following all three of these countries increasing in the previous reporting period.

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<tr>
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<th>July - Dec 2018</th>
<th>Previous period (Jan - June 2018)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>47% +</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
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In the past two years, half of all VITAL Online Users (50%) and about two thirds of all VITAL Online Sessions (68%) are from within Australasia. This suggests that, currently, Australasian Users are more actively using VITAL Online than international Users – most likely because ANZ Users have a longer history of using, and are more familiar with, the VITAL Program than Users outside of ANZ.

As the Allergen Bureau seek to promote the VITAL Program and VITAL Online as global best practice in food allergen risk assessment, we will work toward increasing the proportion of VITAL Online users outside of Australia and New Zealand, while maintaining and improving our core commitment of informing the local ANZ food industry.

VITAL® Working Groups

Allergen Bureau Working Groups are resourced and led by Allergen Bureau member company volunteers and an Allergen Bureau Director provides support to each Working Group.

VITAL © Phase 1 - Risk Review

The [Allergen Risk Review website](#) was launched in late 2018 and is reported earlier in this report under ‘Developing industry capability’.

The Allergen Bureau thank the following people for their contribution to this working group and for realising such a wonderful output through their collaborative efforts.

• Susan Colling, Newly Weds Foods
• Alan Edwards, NSW Food Authority
• Jessica Feather, Woolworths
• Amanda Hawkins, Cerebos
• Jasmine Lacs-Lee, DTS Food Assurance
• Kaye Wood, Nestlé Australia
• Lisa Warren, Allergen Bureau (Project Lead)
• Karen Robinson (Previous Project Lead, Previously McDonald’s)
• Kirsten Grinter, Nestlé Australia (Sponsor, Allergen Bureau President)

VITAL Phase 3 – Certification

External verification of specific products showing VITAL process is in control

Industry trials of the Draft VITAL Standard were commenced with Allergen Bureau members. Members involved in the trial provided a desktop review of the structure and content of the VITAL Standard and committed to implementing an assessment of some of their products against the VITAL Standard, to be followed by an auditor ‘gap analysis’ to identify any implementation issues. Certification bodies utilised by the member companies involved in the trial provided a desktop review of the structure and content of the VITAL Scheme.

The next steps in this process are to:

• Develop industry training for the VITAL Standard;
• Develop auditor training for the VITAL Scheme;
• Finalise agreements with Certification Bodies to certify to the VITAL Standard;
• Publicly launch the auditable VITAL Standard; and
• Progress accreditation of the VITAL Scheme with JAS-ANZ
Risk Review Anomalies

The Allergen Bureau and the AI-Confectionary Sector Technical Committee have a working group investigating risk review anomalies.

This group is investigating anomalies where allergens are known to be present but are:

- not formulated as an ingredient (as per ANZFSC definition); and
- inappropriate to label as per VITAL ‘May be present: XXX’.

Legal advice was provided on the legal implications of recommended approaches. Draft industry guidance was developed with the aim of progressing industry guidance and consumer communication in the first half of 2019.

FSANZ Allergen Collaboration

The group managing the communication of Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL) and Action Level concept to allergic consumers had previously agreed to use the anomalies in chocolate issues as a case study to refine effective communication methods - before applying these more broadly to the PAL and Action Level concept. Formal recommendations on the approach to the anomalies issue was provided and the Allergen Collaboration were looking to progress the communication piece in early 2019.

Visit the Food allergen portal

AFGC Allergen Forum

The review of the AFGC Food Industry Guide to Allergen Management and Labelling remains a key focus of the AFGC Allergen Forum work on food allergens.

Visit AFGC Allergen Forum and AFGC Labelling
5th Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Meeting (FAAM 2018), and, International Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Alliance Meeting, Copenhagen Oct 2018

The Allergen Bureau were represented at food allergy meetings held in Copenhagen, Denmark by Kirsten Grinter (Allergen Bureau President and Regulatory, Scientific Affairs and Nutrition Manager at Nestle Oceania) and Dr Simon Brooke Taylor (Food Safety & Risk Analysis Consultant, Allergen Bureau and VITAL® Scientific Expert Panel member).

FAAM 2018 is a leading event in the areas of food allergy and anaphylaxis. So much exciting research was shared spanning: the clinical and allergy research perspective; the allergic consumer management of anaphylaxis; as well as food technology and allergen risk management. Over 1,000 attendees participated in FAAM 2018 and this provided both Kirsten and Simon a unique opportunity to discuss food allergen issues of global relevance, with that knowledge able to inform the ongoing work of the Allergen Bureau to inform the food industry.

The IFAAA meeting gave the Allergen Bureau an opportunity to share the work of the Allergen Bureau with international consumer groups, as well as all the partners and experts working in food allergy. The Consumer Groups Action Day was a fantastic meeting and you could feel the enthusiasm in the room as we are all contributing in different ways to improve and evolve allergy and allergen management. The Allergen Bureau presented on improving food choices for consumers with food allergy and what we have learnt from a cooperative and pre-competitive approach.

To see Kirsten’s presentation Click Here.

VITAL® Scientific Expert Panel

The VITAL Scientific Expert Panel (VSEP) consists of international scientists specialising in allergen management, food allergy and risk assessment. The VSEP is a collaboration between the Allergen Bureau, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP) of the University of Nebraska & the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO). Collaboration between the Allergen Bureau and members of the VSEP is regular and ongoing.

A VSEP meeting was held in Copenhagen on 16 Oct 2018, to coincide with the EAACI-FAAM meeting attended by most of the VSEP.

The Copenhagen VSEP meeting again brought together this amazing team of people and food allergy experts: Dr Steve Taylor (Chair of Panel) – Food Allergy Research & Resource Program (FARRP) (USA); Dr Joseph Baumert (FARRP); Dr Geert Houben – Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO); Dr Rene Crevel (RENE CREVEL Consulting Ltd); and Dr Simon Brooke Taylor (Food Safety & Risk Analysis Consultant, Allergen Bureau). Dr Katie Allen (Murdoch Children’s Research Institute) was an apology. The VSEP were supported by TNO, including Ben Remington (who has been a VSEP collaborator since 2011), Joost Westerhout, Marie Meima, Marty Blom and Astrid Kruizinga.

The VSEP meeting focussed on the latest science with regard to Reference Doses, the underpinning methodology and modelling approaches, next steps regarding publications, and outcomes for robust allergen risk review and management. It was fabulous to see the continued passion and momentum generated by everyone involved in the VSEP to ensure scientific rigour and credibility that supports stronger outcomes for both the allergic consumer and the food industry. The Allergen Bureau will provide more information about the outcomes from this VSEP meeting through our eNews in 2019, as we look to share next steps and impacts for the VITAL Program.

Planning commenced for the next VSEP meeting to be held in Melbourne, May 2019, to be held to coincide with the 3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium (FAMS2019) to be attended by most of the VSEP.

Read more about VITAL Science and the VSEP.
The following food allergen related recall summary - based on FSANZ recall data - has been prepared by the Allergen Bureau to inform its members.

**July - September 2018**

There were an above average number of recalls (29) in the period. Despite this, the percentage of allergen related food recalls during the period was the same as the previous quarter (16 allergen related recalls, 55%). Fourteen of the recalled products were Australian made, and two were imported (one from India and one from Israel). A majority of the recalled Australian products appeared to be premium or boutique brands. Many of these products also contained multiple undeclared allergens, possibly suggesting poor knowledge of allergen labelling requirements in these sectors?

- **Food recalls during quarter**: 29
- **Allergen related recalls**: 16 (55% of recalls)

**Offending allergens**: milk (6); egg (5); gluten (4); soy (4); fish/seafood (3); crustacea (2); tree nuts (2); sulphites (2); peanut (1); sesame (1)

**Manufacturing related recalls**

There were two recalls in the period due to manufacturing error:

One brand of Coconut Chocolate Butter labelled as “MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF NUTS” was recalled as the batch contained substantially higher than expected levels of tree nuts, carried over from a previous production product. One ready to eat seafood salad product was recalled due to blurred labels, making ingredients and allergen statements unreadable.

**Milk**

The recalls due to undeclared milk (6) all involved Australian products. The diverse products comprised wine, ice cream, meat pies, chocolates, coconut mayonnaise and a ready to eat paprika chicken meal.

**Egg**

The five recalls involving undeclared egg were all Australian products and four contained other undeclared allergens: seafood salad, wine, ice cream, and the paprika chicken meal. One recall, a pancake mix, involved only undeclared egg.

**Gluten**

The four recalls due to undeclared gluten also involved the seafood salad and paprika chicken meal products, as well as millet meal (Australian), and sesame biscuits imported for India that also contained undeclared peanuts.

**Soy**

The four recalls due to undeclared soy were all Australian products and comprised the seafood salad mentioned above under various allergens, a Thai salad kit, chocolate “snowballs” and Taramosalata.

**Fish and Crustacea**

The seafood salad mentioned above also contained undeclared fish and crustacea, due to the blurred label.

Undeclared fish was also in the Taramosalata and the paprika chicken meal, and undeclared crustacea in the meat pies and the paprika chicken.

**Tree nuts**

Recalls due to tree nuts involved the inadequately labelled Coconut Chocolate Butter (discussed above) and in sesame halva imported for Israel.

**Sulphites**

Sulphites were also undeclared in the seafood salad meal and the wine.

**Sesame seeds**

The recalled meat pies, mentioned under milk and crustacea above, also contained undeclared sesame.
FOOD ALLERGEN RELATED RECALLS

October - December 2018

There were a comparatively low number of recalls (18) in the period and the percentage of allergen related food recalls during the period lower (8 allergen related recalls, 44%) was also lower. Six of the recalled products were Australian made, and two were imported (one from France and one from China). Only one of the recalled products contained multiple (2) undeclared allergens.

- Food recalls during quarter: 18
- Allergen related recalls: 8 (44% of recalls)

Offending allergens: milk (2); tree nuts (2); gluten (2); soy (1); peanut (1); egg (1)

Milk
One brand of Australian made Indian sweets was recalled due to the presence of undeclared milk (and cashew nut). The other recalled product containing undeclared milk was “Dairy Free” shredded cheese imported from France.

Tree nuts
The two recalls involving undeclared tree nuts were both Australian and comprised the Indian sweets mentioned above, that also contained milk, and Baklava that contained undeclared pistachio.

Gluten
The two recalls due to undeclared gluten were both Australian made and comprised a range of lupin soups and a brand of rice noodles (Banh Pho).

Soy
The single recall due to undeclared soy was an Australian product; Truffle Aioli Mayonnaise.

Peanuts
The sole peanut related recall was chilli paste imported from China.

Egg
The sole recall due to undeclared egg was Australian made Coles brand Big Yum Beef Pie.

GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

The Allergen Bureau Board to the 6th Annual General Meeting of 25 October 2018 was:
- Kirsten Grinter, Allergen Bureau President (Nestlé Australia Ltd)
- Caroline Gray, Allergen Bureau Vice-President (DuPont Nutrition and Health)
- Debbie Hawkes, Honorary Treasurer (Hawkins Watts)
- Karen Robinson, Honorary Secretary and Company Secretary (Invited Director)
- David Henning (Invited Director)

Following an election of Directors and the 6th Annual General Meeting, the Allergen Bureau Board was:
- Kirsten Grinter, Allergen Bureau President (Nestlé Australia Ltd)
- Caroline Gray, Allergen Bureau Vice-President (DuPont Nutrition and Health)
- Debbie Hawkes, Honorary Treasurer (Hawkins Watts)
- Jasmine Lacis-Lee, Honorary Secretary and Company Secretary (DTS Food Assurance)
- David Henning (Invited Director)

We welcomed Jasmine Lacis-Lee as a new Director. We thanked Karen Robinson for her services to the Board over several years.

These Directors provide voluntary, unpaid services to the Allergen Bureau and we gratefully acknowledge both their time and the generous support they receive from their employer companies in this capacity.

The Allergen Bureau Management Committee during this six-month period was:
- Kirsten Grinter
- Caroline Gray
- Debbie Hawkes
- Jasmine Lacis-Lee (from 25 October 2018)
- Tom Lewis, Allergen Bureau Chief Executive

The Management Committee are responsible for planning and management of Allergen Bureau activities according to the annual operating plan and budget.

The Allergen Bureau thanks all Allergen Bureau members for their continuing support for this important food industry initiative.

The Allergen Bureau focuses our efforts on those issues that are of greatest importance to Allergen Bureau members. We look forward to continuing this work in partnership with our members to drive food industry initiatives and projects.