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01 MEMBERSHIP

The Allergen Bureau membership to the end of June 2019 was 34 Full Members, 37 Associate Members and 41 Individual Members – a total membership of 112.

The Allergen Bureau was pleased to welcome Cargill Protein Europe as a new Full Member.

There were four new Associate Member Category A, B or C companies during this six-month period, • Agrifood Technology, • Dessert Factory, • Romer Labs Australia, and • Van Dyck Fine Foods; plus six 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.

02 DEVELOPING INDUSTRY CAPABILITY

3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium (FAMS2019)

The 3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium 2019 was held successfully at State Library Victoria, Melbourne from 13-16 May 2019. The symposium theme was ‘Navigate the science, Manage the risk’.

Overall, FAMS2019 was attended by 201 conference delegates from 124 organisations and 15 countries, representing all sectors involved in food allergen management.

Most of the FAMS2019 presentations have been kindly made available by speakers and can be accessed via the Allergen Bureau website. Click Here to view the FAMS2019 program and presentations.

The Allergen Bureau was pleased to award the FAMS2019 Allergen Bureau travel grant for postgraduate or early career researchers to Ms Hesrie van Heerden, Food & Allergy Consulting & Testing Services (FACTS), South Africa. Her poster abstract ‘Emerging allergen related regulatory implications of introducing Cannabis sativa into the Food and Beverage industry’ was judged as best meeting the criteria of addressing globally consistent, science-based, food allergen risk assessment and labelling. Read more.

Ms van Heerden provided a report on her experience of attending FAMS2019 for publication in the Allergen Bureau eNews. Read Hesrie’s FAMS2019 Report.

FAMS2019 was proudly presented by the Allergen Bureau, Dairy Food Safety Victoria, National Measurement Institute, and University NSW.

Platinum Sponsorship of FAMS2019 was kindly provided by R-Biopharm.

The Allergen Bureau would like to thank all sponsors, speakers and delegates for making FAMS2019 such an amazing event.
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, China and webinars.

All of the following presentations can be accessed from our [2019 Conference Presentations webpage.](#)

- **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.

Technical and VITAL helpline support

Technical support and information were provided to both Allergen Bureau members and non-members through the Allergen Bureau helpline. The Allergen Bureau received 44 enquiries requiring responses from our scientific and technical experts - of which 22 were VITAL related and 22 were about general allergen management.

The VITAL related enquiries included a wide range of subjects including: how to use the results from analytical allergen testing in the VITAL Program; how to interpret information about cross contact allergens provided by suppliers; and general questions about the functionality of VITAL Online. The questions about analytical allergen testing often demonstrate a lack of detailed knowledge in the limitations of allergen testing and this supports our continued focus in this area, such as the information provided on our Food Allergen Analysis webpage, and from the VITAL Training Providers.

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 324 recipients as at 30 June 2019. Allergen Bureau Members receive our eNews as a priority service. Non-members – including eNews or VITAL subscribers (7,794) - receive the eNews 2 weeks after the priority distribution to members.

Total number on mailing list 8,118 (+ from 8,072 in previous six months)

Website & eNews

Some Allergen Bureau website statistics (non-bounce sessions1) from July- Dec 2018:

- Unique visitors 7,745 (+ from 6,974 in previous six months)
- Sessions 10,923 (+ from 9,243 in previous six months)
- Page views 43,601 (+ from 35,169 in previous six months)
- Average pages views per session 3.99 (+ from 3.80 in previous six months)
- Average time on site 6:01 mins (+ from 5:57 mins in previous six)

- New visitors v return visitors 73% v 27% (74% v 26% previous six months)

The most viewed webpages were:

- The VITAL Program 14% of pageviews (- from 15% in previous six months)
- Home page 11% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- What are Food Allergens? 7% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- Allergen Risk Review Website 5% of pageviews (NEW PAGE)
- Food Allergen FAQs 5% of pageviews (- from 4% in previous six months)
- Food Allergen Analysis 3% of pageviews (NEW PAGE)
- VITAL Science 3% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- Food Allergen Fundamentals 3% of pageviews (same as previous six months)
- 2019 Conference Pres 3% of pageviews (NEW PAGE)

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

- Australia 4,358 (40%) [- 3,769 (41%) in previous six months]
- New Zealand 829 (8%) [- 659 (7%) in previous six months]
- United Kingdom 797 (7%) [- 518 (6%) in previous six months]
- United States 706 (7%) [- 617 (7%) in previous six months]
- Netherlands 457 (4%) [- 301 (3%) in previous six months]
- Germany 413 (4%) [- 345 (4%) in previous six months]
- Spain 292 (3%) [- 198 (2%) in previous six months]
- France 262 (2%) [- 399 (4%) in previous six months]
- India 230 (2%) [- 203 (2%) in previous six months]
- Italy 192 (2%) [- 177 (2%) in previous six months]

The geographic distribution of Sessions remained relatively stable from the previous six-month period, with all of the top 10 countries recording an increase in the number of Sessions – except France which recorded a decrease.

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1. In a non-bounce session, the person interacted with the entrance page. Bounce sessions occur when the person leaves the website from the entrance page without interacting with the page.
VITAL® Program Version 3.0

With the provision of new allergen Reference Doses from the VITAL Scientific Expert Panel, planning commenced on incorporation of these 2019 Reference Doses into the VITAL Program Version 3.0. A workplan was developed for updating key VITAL Program resources, including:

- The Food Industry Guide to the VITAL Program;
- VITAL Online – the user-friendly, web-based VITAL Calculator;
- VITAL Best Practice Labelling Guide for Australia and New Zealand; and
- The VITAL Training Package (i.e. material provided to VITAL Training Providers)

The VITAL Program Version 3.0 is scheduled for launch in September 2019.

Allergen Bureau members and VITAL users will be informed of changes to the VITAL Program through the Allergen Bureau website, our monthly eNews and ad hoc eAlerts.

Engagement with key stakeholders on the key changes to VITAL and the implications for industry and consumers will be held throughout the remainder of 2019.

VITAL® Online - usage

At the end of June 2019, 3,101 organisations had registered for a VITAL Online account (an increase of 366 organisations in this six-month period). Over 4,850 individual Users (an increase of 570 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 22,300 VITAL Online reports (up from 19,700 reports at the end of 2018). Over 13,700 ingredients, 1,250 processing profiles and 11,000 recipes have now been created within VITAL Online!

The number of VITAL Online Users and Sessions (non-bounce sessions) in this 6-month period was almost identical to the previous reporting period - 1,612 Users and 4,080 Sessions for Jan-Jun 2019, compared to 1,617 Users and 4,081 Sessions for Jul-Dec 2018. While usage was higher than for the same reporting period last year (1,415 Users and 3,768 Sessions for Jan-Jun 2018), it was less than the peak usage period of Jul-Dec 2017 when 1,789 Users and 5,358 Sessions were recorded.
VITAL® Working Groups

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

Risk Review Anomalies
The Allergen Bureau and the Ai-Confectionary Sector Technical Committee working group investigating risk review anomalies completed the industry guidance on this issue.

VITAL Phase 3 – Certification

External verification of specific products showing VITAL process is in control. The VITAL Scheme is scheduled for launch in September 2019.

The next steps in this process are to:
• Finalise agreements with Certification Bodies to certify to the VITAL Standard;
• Publicly launch the VITAL Standard;
• Develop auditor training for the VITAL Scheme; and
• Progress accreditation of the VITAL Scheme with JAS-ANZ.

Agricultural allergen cross contact

Investigating options for addressing management of agricultural allergen cross contact.

This new working group is being led by Jasmine Lacis-Lee (Allergen Bureau and DTS Food Assurance) and the Project Leader is Joanne Price (Individual Member and HJ Langdon).

Allergen Bureau members were invited to participate in this proposed working group and the response was extremely positive with over 20 members wanting to be involved. Initial teleconferences were held to help develop the overall project brief - including scope, deliverables, key activities, resource requirements and team members. Following Allergen Bureau Management Committee approval to support the working group, the overall project was divided into two phases:
• Phase 1 – “Quick Wins for Industry”; and
• Phase 2 – “Overarching Guidance document – The Agricultural allergen cross contact Food Industry Management Guide”.

The group was then divided into smaller sub-groups to tackle key tasks within each of the two phases.

A presentation on the working group was given at FAMS2019 by Joanne Price. To see Joanne’s presentation Click Here.

Australia New Zealand Allergen Collaboration

The ANZ Food Allergen Collaboration (the Allergen Collaboration) held its annual face-to-face meeting in Sydney on 5 June 2019, in Sydney. The Allergen Bureau were represented by Directors, Kirsten Grinter and Debbie Hawkes, and Manager, Ray Murphy.

The purpose of the Allergen Collaboration is to strengthen engagement and collaboration amongst a range of key stakeholders. It is intended to provide a means of sharing information and developing common approaches to enhance the effectiveness of risk management of food allergens, with the objective of supporting consumers to make safer food choices.

Allergen Collaboration representatives were provided with updates on the Food allergen portal statistics, food recall statistics and food allergy statistics in ANZ. Project updates were provided on Food service education; allergen Reference Doses and Action Levels, and the Uptake of voluntary initiatives. Food allergy issues for discussion included: Product differentiation/reforulation; Precautionary Allergen Labelling; and Agricultural co-mingling.

Further issues presented at the meeting were: an Update on Codex Alimentarius; updates from jurisdictions responsible for food regulation (i.e. the Implementation Subcommittee for Food Regulation; New Zealand; and the Australian states and territories); and progress on the Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL) proposal P1044.

Further Allergen Collaboration meetings are planned – to be held via teleconference – throughout the next 12 months.

Visit the Food allergen portal

AFGC Allergen Forum

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

The Allergen Bureau were approached by AFGC to collaborate on the final draft for stakeholder consultation. On behalf of the Allergen Bureau, Lisa Warren (VITAL Support) has helped complete the draft Guide.

Visit AFGC Allergen Forum and AFGC Labelling
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 via telecon on 25th April 2019 to finalise the new allergen Reference Dose recommendations discussed at the November 2018 meeting in Copenhagen.

Dr Ben Remington, TNO, (who has been a VSEP collaborator since its inception in 2011), was made a member of the VSEP in May 2019.

Dr Katie Allen (Murdoch Children's Research Institute) resigned from the VSEP in June 2019. The Allergen Bureau thanks Dr Allen for her invaluable contribution to the VSEP and wishes her well with her future endeavours.

The VSEP were supported by Joost Westerhout, Marie Meima, Marty Blom and Astrid Kruizinga.

A VSEP meeting was held in Melbourne, May 2019, to coincide with the 3rd Food Allergen Management Symposium (FAMS2019) attended by most of the VSEP.

Members of the VSEP gave the following presentations at FAMS2019. To access Click Here.

- **Symposium Plenary, A View Toward the Future of Food Allergen Management**, Professor Steve Taylor, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska
- **Thresholds – Definition, Data Collection, Limitations, and Harmonization**, Professor Steve Taylor, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska
- **The modelling behind the translation from Individual Thresholds to Population Threshold dose distributions**, Ben Remington, Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)
- **Uncertainty factors and thresholds**, René Crevel, Rene Crevel Consulting Ltd
- **From Population Thresholds to Reference Doses**, Professor Steve Taylor, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska
- **Quantitative Food Allergen Risk Assessment**, Joseph L. Baumert, Food Allergy Research & Resource Program, University of Nebraska
- **Food consumption estimates for practical application in risk assessments and risk management programs**, Ben Remington, Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)

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.

January - March 2019

The number of recalls and the percentage of allergen related food recalls during the period (4 allergen related recalls, 24%) were both comparatively low compared to previous periods. Three recalled products were due to the presence of undeclared allergens. One recall was due to a packaging error of a product containing an allergen (almond).

- Food recalls during quarter 17
- Allergen related recalls 4 (24% of recalls)

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

Tree nuts
The two recalls involving tree nuts were both Australian. One chocolate product contained undeclared pistachio. The other recalled product was a brand of yoghurt containing almond that had been packaged in the tub for another product (not carrying appropriate allergen declarations) although the correct foil (with the ingredient list) was applied.

Gluten
One breakfast cereal, imported from the USA, was recalled due to the presence of undeclared gluten.

Peanut
One Australian made, marinated, ready to cook, Thai style stir-fry chicken product, sold through independent supermarkets in Victoria was recalled due to the presence of undeclared peanut.

April - June 2019

The percentage of allergen related food recalls during this period (10/27 allergen related recalls, 37%) was comparable with 2018. However, 4 recalls appear to be the same product (rice flavouring containing undeclared milk and egg) from four different importers and 2 recalls involve 4 variants of the same product (vegan gelato/sorbet containing milk) from one manufacturer. When adjusted to class each of these as one recall, the percentage decreases to 26% (6/23 allergen recalls), which is lower than 2018 but not as low as Q1 2019.

Three recalled products were due to production errors with product being packaged incorrectly, either in the wrong package or in an incorrectly printed package.

- Food recalls during quarter 27
- Allergen related recalls 10 (37% of recalls)

Offending allergens: milk (8); egg (1); gluten (1)

Milk (and egg)
One Australian brand of garlic bread was sold in packaging that, due to a printing error, did not declare the presence of milk. Another Australian ready to cook turkey product, containing milk, was incorrectly packed in the packaging for a related product that does not contain milk.

Two recalls involved four Australian vegan gelato/sorbet products (2 variants per recall), from the same manufacturer, containing undeclared milk.

Four recalls involved rice flavouring from Korea, which contained undeclared milk and egg. The recalls were initiated by apparently different importers/distributors over a 4 day period but appear to identify the same brand/products (CHUNG JUNG ONE Rice flavouring).

Gluten
One Australian packed chilled, ready to cook, chicken product containing gluten, from a major supplier, was recalled as it had been packed in error for a related gluten-free product.

One brand of white corn tacos, imported from the USA and sold in independent supermarkets in most States, was recalled due to the presence of undeclared gluten.
The Allergen Bureau Board during this six-month period was:

- Kirsten Grinter, Allergen Bureau President (Nestlé Australia Ltd)
- Caroline Gray, Allergen Bureau Vice-President (DuPont Nutrition and Biosciences)
- Debbie Hawkes, Honorary Treasurer (Hawkins Watts)
- Jasmine Lacis-Lee, Honorary Secretary and Company Secretary (DTS Food Assurance)
- David Henning (Invited Director)

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
- 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.