Australia, New Zealand Propose Easing Limits On Raw Milk Cheese

Proposed Frameworks Would Allow Manufacture, Sale, Import Of Raw Milk Products Produced To Acceptable Level Of Safety

Canberra, Australia, and Wellington, New Zealand— Separate discussion documents released this week in both Australia and New Zealand outline proposals that address issues relating to production and sale of raw milk cheese and other dairy products in those countries.

Currently, the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code allows the sale in the two countries of French Roquefort cheese, extra-hard Parmesan-style grating cheeses and three raw milk Swiss cheeses (Emmental, Gruyere and Sbrinz).

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority’s (NZFSA) proposed framework for the manufacture, importation, sale and export of raw milk products would allow for the manufacture and sale of raw milk products that have been produced to an acceptable level of microbial safety.

Under this proposed framework, it is expected that not all raw milk products will be allowed to be manufactured or imported into New Zealand. For example, general sale of raw drinking milk is not expected to be permitted, although the current allowance for up to five liters of raw milk to be purchased for personal consumption from the farmgate would stay in place.

Meanwhile, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) this week released a discussion paper that details a proposal under which the Food Standards Code would be amended, for Australia only, to address: applications (current and potential future) for extended permissions in the Code for raw milk products; and providing nationally applicable standards rather than state-based provisions for raw milk products (except cheese).

In its discussion paper, the NZFSA said it believes it is possible to allow the importation of a wider range of raw milk products than is currently provided for, and to enable the production of equivalent products in New Zealand, by ensuring that are made from milk produced under particularly stringent conditions of animal health, and by following appropriate processing hygiene and controls.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the availability of raw milk products within New Zealand. Requests have been made to the NZFSA to allow more raw milk products, particularly cheese, to be imported, and to develop the relevant technical criteria and other guidance material that would allow for the domestic manufacture and sale of raw milk products.

Interest in raw milk products comes from consumers, importers and domestic manufacturers, the NZFSA said. Some consumers want a wider range of products to be available in New Zealand as they are in other countries, and may consider that raw milk products are superior in flavor and texture, as well as offering health benefits.

Importers see potential business opportunities, for example to supply gourmet specialty cheeses, and are concerned about the restrictions imposed by current regulations.

A number of New Zealand dairy manufacturers, including smaller specialist manufacturers, are trying to use the new dairy product regulations to allow the importation of a wider range of products to be available in New Zealand.

Other manufacturing members include: Glanbia Foods, Hilmar Cheese and Southwest Cheese Company. In addition, industry suppliers and foundation members include Dairy Management, Inc. (DMI), Ecolab, the S.A. Education Foundation which was placed in 2004 to fund ongoing education of future dairy managers and the California Milk Advisory Board.

“Currently, there aren’t enough candidates,” Davis said. “Or the candidates are underqualified or haven’t been trained in the current dairy plant operation.”

Hilmar Cheese had announced plans to build the Dalhart facility in November of 2005, and broke ground for the plant in March of 2006. Initial plans had called for the facility to be built in two phases.

Dalhart is centrally located in a region that has experienced significant dairy growth, Hilmar Cheese noted. Dairy farm expansion continues, with several new projects scheduled to break ground during the next year.

USDA milk production statistics reflect the growth of the state’s milk output. Milk production in Texas grew from 6.44 billion pounds in 2005 to 7.4 billion pounds in 2007, and growth has continued this year, with first-quarter output up 11.7 percent from a year earlier and second-quarter production up 14.4 percent.

“From the decision to begin Phase II is a timely addition to cheese and whey capacity,” Jeter said. “The global market is looking for innovative value-added dairy products.”

Privately owned Hilmar Cheese Company was established in 1984 by 12 local dairy farm families in Hilmar, CA. The company’s Hilmar facility is billed as the world’s largest single-site cheese and whey products manufacturing facility.
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Davis also stated that dairy companies can’t keep hiring or recruiting each other’s qualified staff. “Digging into each other’s qualified job pool isn’t in the best interest of the industry,” Davis said. “So we’re going to create a new pool.”

Davis said there are a few companies that are still “sitting on the fence,” but for the most part, convincing the companies to “pony up” was pretty easy once they had the opportunity to see what they were guaranteed in return.

Dr. Vikram Mistry heads the dairy science department at SDSU. “In many ways it was easy,” Mistry said, “because the one thing we knew was, and what remains, is that demand for graduates in the industry is vital for the long-term success of our cheese and whey plants.” Lanigan said. “We realize that changes in tomorrow’s dairy operations will create new and greater opportunities.

“It is our hope that the students utilizing the new dairy plant at SDSU and its curriculum will come to Glanbia or to others in the Jackrabbit Council trained in our current operations but also with new ideas that will make us a more efficient food company,” Lanigan added.

“ ’We’re going to get to the point where the graduate can switch cap and gown for hairnet and whites and get to work.”

— Jon Davis, Davisco Foods

Rick Kaepernick of Hilmar Cheese said it is hard to find students who want to get involved in dairy product technology. Because it is hard to find these students, Kaepernick said his company can’t afford to just recruit on the West Coast.

“We have some real good universities here on the West Coast; whether it’s Cal Poly or UC Davis or Washington State, they all have some version of dairy products, but I don’t think we can limit our recruiting to just the West Coast,” Kaepernick said.

Davis said that many of the companies on the Jackrabbit Council employ SDSU graduates.

“There are two schools that offer dairy programs which cover dairy production, dairy manufacturing in one department; Mistry said. “That’s us and Cal Poly. What industry tells us is that there is a shortage of graduates. So they keep coming back to us for graduates and more graduates. Davis understands the process of recruiting from other areas of the country, but is also in firm belief that diluting the pot, dilutes the pool.

“Our goal is to increase the job pool and create the most qualified student. A’s processors we need to pick a horse and fund one program at one university, not sprinkle money in a couple of spots,” Davis said. “There is just so much money to go around. I can’t see how five universities with archaic equipment and no room for towers or dryers can compete with one state-of-the-art facility.”

Davis said he has no problem with those schools who offer the open vat, specialty cheese way of doing things.

“But from our council’s viewpoint, we need a teaching facility that runs like our plants.”

Davis said DMI’s contributions to SDSU is a perfect example. “DMI’s funds are directed towards whey processing, evaporation concentration and spray drying technology areas. If that money was to be directed to say, four universities, the four parts would never equal the whole at SDSU.”

One thing agreed on by everyone is the need to get educated students that are able to immediately contribute to the dairy plant.

Dr. Lloyd Metzger, who is an associate professor of dairy science at SDSU, said shortening the “come up time” or the time the new employee can work on his own, was the ultimate objective of the new dairy facility.

“Right now the students come out of the program with some practical experience and a very strong dairy education,” Metzger said. “If we have a state-of-the-art dairy plant, we can shorten that timeframe or the ‘come up time’ the student has after they come out of the program.”

Davis said the “come up time” to train someone is usually a year and a half or even two years, depending on the education level and field experiences.

“There might be a lot to learn and a lot to teach. We might be paying them two years before we start making our investment worthwhile,” Davis said. “We’re going to get to the point where the graduate can switch cap and gown for hairnet and whites and get to work.”

The Jackrabbit Council has set out to increase the job pool in three progressive methods.

Designing Dairy Plant

By investing in the dairy plant, the council has ensured students at SDSU will have the “latest and greatest” in cheesemaking equipment including a vat, cooker stretcher, tower, spray dryer, evaporator, filtration equipment and other state-of-the-art dairy processing equipment.

Included in the dairy plant will be processing facilities designed for training students, research and development facilities, and the popular dairy store.

“We’re going to build this modern dairy plant, with all the latest and greatest technologies so students can get exposed to the current, real world of dairy processing, including cheese production and whey processing,” Davis said.

Tetra Pak CPS quickly joined the Jackrabbit Council and will supply some of the equipment that will be operated in the new dairy plant.

“This dairy plant and the SDSU program will allow targeted training using the same degree of technology and automation with which these newer plants are being designed,” said Tim High, president of Tetra Pak CPS.

“There is currently no existing facility that is able to train future managers, operators and supervisors for the high performance dairy production facilities that are being built today,” High continued. “We think this will be a great opportunity for us to grow with tomorrow’s users of Tetra Pak CPS equipment.”

Some of these “high performance facilities” High mentioned are in the mode of the newest dairy plants being built today, including Davisco’s Lake Norden, SD, plant, Southwest Cheese in Clovis, N.M., and Hilmar’s new operation in Dalhart, TX.

“When you go into this plant, you join The Jackrabbit Council

An investment to the Jackrabbit Dairy Council ensures new graduates will be entering our industry fully equipped with the technical skills and education background needed to face the challenges of the future.

Contact Jon Davis, Davisco Foods International for more information or to join.

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507-665-3353 or circle #100 on the Reader Response Card on p. 22
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"We feel that involvement from industry in the design of the plant is extremely important. This will ensure that the investments being made will be in line with the current technology being utilized in the dairy industry," Leddy said.

By supporting the upgrade of the facilities, Leddy continued, he hopes to ensure that the graduates of SDSU will have exposure to equipment and processes that they will see and be involved with upon their entry into the dairy industry. The plant should be operational by the end of 2009 and process nearly 750,000 pounds of milk from the SDSU farm.

Designing Curriculum

Besides working in the dairy plant, students will be going through curriculum developed by the Jackrabbit Council and professors at South Dakota State University. It’s not just going to be boilerplate curriculum like it has been," Davis said. "With the professors, we’re going to have a handle on the student’s education focusing on specific aspects, rather than the generic. We know what they’re lacking and the new curriculum will fill that hole."

Mistry said the curriculum will provide the necessary education to fulfill the BS degree in dairy science. "A long with the new plant, the training program will be designed so the student will be able to run the equipment; will have a BS in dairy science and have experience in dairy plant management,” Mistry said.

Internships and Recruitment

Mistry said it was imperative to fulfill the BS degree in dairy science and have experience in dairy plant management. Mistry said it was imperative to fulfill the BS degree in dairy science and have experience in dairy plant management. Mistry said it was imperative to fulfill the BS degree in dairy science and have experience in dairy plant management.

"We’re going to tell these kids that they can get a college education, turn around, move back to the area where their friends and family are and make $50,000 on the first day. And if they’re good, they can make $100,000 and run a cheese plant,” Davis said. "We’re going to steer these kids in our direction at the high school level.”

And because the dairy plants on the Jackrabbit Council are spread out around the US, Davis said the plan is to be going into the areas of dairy; points of interest will be Rushell, NM; Wausau, WI; Twin Falls, ID; northern New York and Vermont; Fresno or Visalia, CA. "There is 100 percent placement of graduates in the dairy industry," said Mark Spence of Davisco, who is working very closely with Mistry on the project. "We need to get more students, so we’re going to recruit in high schools and we’re going to try and convince those kids to go to South Dakota State."

Valley Queen Cheese receives a good number of graduates from the SDSU program, Leddy said. "We hope by participating in the Jackrabbit Council, we can ensure that this situation exists into the future.” Leddy said.

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"I’m really hoping some of those Panhandle kids look at South Dakota State and say ‘you know, that may be a place I might want to go.’”

—Rick Kaepernick, Hilmar Cheese

A nother way Jackrabbit Council members will help train the students is through active internships. Davis said active internships are like summer employment. "If a kid at South Dakota State wants to go out and work at Glanbia in Twin Falls in the summer between his sophomore and junior year, we’re going to make that happen," Davis said.

Benefits of Membership On

Jackrabbit Council

Every company in the Jackrabbit Council has placed $350,000 towards the construction of the SDSU dairy plant. "The graduate will have had four years of dairy plant experience. He or she will have a BS degree. A fter all that, we are quite certain the graduate will make an immediate impact to any of our council members’ dairy operation,” Mistry said.

Davis said companies on the Jackrabbit Council will have exclu—

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Mark Leddy of Valley Queen Cheese, Milbank, SD, said it was very important to get involved in both the design of the facility and the curriculum.
PERSONNEL NOTES

Tetra Pak Cheese and Process Systems has hired two new employees to its Process Engineering Group. JERRY MILLER will join the company and work out of Tetra Pak CPS’ new Boise, ID, office. Miller will serve as senior process engineer. Miller comes from POWER Engineers and has a BS in mechanical engineering. In addition, PAT BYRNE has accepted the position of project manager. Byrne has nearly 20 years experience in positions ranging from design/drafting to project management. Byrne has an AAS in computer-aided drafting design technology. Byrne also spent time with POWER Engineers, but most recently owned his own design and drafting company.

JOHN CORE has been reappointed as CEO of the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC). Core began his career with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario as a board member in 1981, serving as chair from 1990 to 2001. From 1986 to 2001, Core also served as board member and president (1999-2001) of the Dairy Farmers of Canada. His tenure with the Canadian Dairy Commission began in 2002, when he was appointed chair and CEO of the organization. He continued in this dual role until April 2007, when the two positions were split. Following the split, Core carried on as the Commission’s CEO and was reappointed to the position in October 2007.

JASON BIAN will serve as director of the Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI) office in China, effective Sept. 6, 2008. Bian has served as a package engineer in the paperboard and printing sector, and has more than 16 years experience in food industry product sales.

PAUL BUCK has joined Delkor Systems, Inc. as account manager. Buck will be responsible for handling all national accounts for the company out of his home office in Louisville, KY.

DEATHS

JEFFREY “JEFF” WARD, 52, of Onalaska, WI, died Tuesday, July 29, 2008, at his home. Ward was in the cheese and dairy industry all his life, in both Wisconsin and California, and most recently was the plant manager of Swiss Valley’s Mindoro, WI, cheese plant, a job he truly loved. Ward also worked many years for the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Ward is the son of Glen and Joanne Ward of Holmen, WI.

AWARDS

ALCAN PACKAGING has selected its Neenah Technical Center to receive the Gold 2008 Bon sai Award for its outstanding efforts in environment, health and safety. Each year, Acan Packaging honors the highest achievements to improve EHS performance among its 129 plants worldwide. Neenah Technical Center was recognized for having worked 20 years without a lost-time incident or injury causing a worker to miss time from work. Part of Acan Packaging’s Food Americas sector, Neenah Technical Center houses the company’s innovation center, research and development facility, pilot plant and customer service team.

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The Council will continue to work for council members, but if you’re not on the Jackrabbit Council, you’re going to have to go off campus to recruit them,” Davis said. “We’re making the investment. The students are going to know who invested in their future. We’re going to have first rights to the students and we’re going to do what we can to secure our investment.”

Davis also said the council is aware of companies who are assisting in the project.

“Ecolab and Tetra Pak, First Premier of Sioux Falls and the Bank of the West have played an integral part in all of this,” Davis said. “They already do business with council members. We like working with companies whose vision parallels ours. And as they support our goals, as we grow, we’ll remember their efforts along the way.”

Spence said he’s enjoyed working with organizations such as the American Dairy Association of South Dakota, as well as the S. A. Education Foundation of Milbank, Bank of the West and First Premier of Sioux Falls, all of who have invested money and time to the project.

“These firms share the same vision and they should be commended for their hard work and understanding,” Spence said.

Impact and Goals

Mistry said the goal is to increase the number of students and add SDSU’s dairy science program and headway has already been made. “We had 40 students about five years ago, Mistry said. “We’re at about 70 today. Our goal is 125 or more once the dairy plant is operational.”

Mistry said the SDSU dairy science department has already enrolled its first student from Idaho that he hopes will eventually go back and work for either Glanbia Foods or Jerome Cheese (owned by Davisco).

“It’s really exciting for us to bring in students from outside our geographic comfort zone,” Mistry said. “It brings in a lot of credibility.”

Because of the uniqueness of the Jackrabbit Council, Mistry said the relationship between industry and academia has changed.

“Traditionally what academia does is to provide an education,” he said. “Students get a degree and then they go. In their early days of employment they may have to undergo additional training. Thus, there is a gap between graduation and employment.”

Mistry said in the end, the dairy industry and academia both benefit from this healthy collaboration.

“What this program with the Jackrabbit Council does is to provide a bridge. Where we almost become part of the industry. Where our end product is graduates and they become the raw materials for industry.”

“It’s really a merger of industry with academia to essentially continue the education process,” he added. “We are the training arm of industry and industry is the extended education arm of university.”

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