



# Meat Export Policy

## Modernisation of the Australian Export Meat Inspection system

### Policy Objective

The objective of the post-mortem inspection modernisation process is to:

- Enable a reduction in regulatory costs without impacting regulatory compliance or market access outcomes, increasing global competitiveness and market reach; and
- Maintain Australia's strong global reputation for a robust regulatory meat export system.

### Current inspection system

The Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption (AS4696) requires that a suitably qualified meat inspector performs post-mortem inspection and make decisions on each carcase and its carcase parts.

In the case of meat and meat products being prepared for export, inspection activities are currently delivered by Official Meat Inspectors (a competent person who is appointed, by the competent authority to perform official meat inspection activities on behalf of, and under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture Water and Environment (the department)).

Inspection activities on export registered meat establishments are delivered either by department officials called Food Safety Meat Assessors (FSMAs) or Australian Government Authorised Officers (AAOs). The latter are employed by the establishment or by a department approved service provider, such as an independent AAO employer, to satisfy importing market requirements for Australian Government health certification.

FSMAs and AAOs are subject to ongoing performance verification against national performance standards. This has been proven to deliver a consistently high standard of meat inspection.

### Proposed Meat Inspection system policy position

The department only deliver inspection services required to fulfil its certification obligations under importing country requirements.

The Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS) is the system of meat inspection, verification and compliance that provides trading partners with certainty about the Australian export meat system.

The implementation of this proposed policy position covering the meat inspection activity will result in government mandating that the department will only be responsible for the provision

of meat inspectors where it is required by an importing country that the task be undertaken by a departmental officer.

It will not provide meat inspectors where they could otherwise be provided through the use of AAOs except where the overseas country allows for a departmental FSMA to undertake the inspection effectively at the carcass point position rather than end of chain.

Lower than projected uptake of the AAO model has limited cost-effectiveness and the expected cost savings have not been realised since the introduction of AEMIS. Mandating (rather than the current “opt-in” approach) the use of AAOs except where there is an importing country requirement to use departmental officers will ensure the department's regulatory expense footprint is minimised for the sector. In practice, and in alignment with current importing country requirements, a departmental meat inspector (Food Safety Meat Assessors (FSMAs)) will only be provided where carcasses and carcass parts are being produced for the export to markets requiring that (e.g. the USA) FSMAs undertake the assessment of the carcass and/or carcass parts.

The department will provide an FSMA in circumstances where an export establishment has been:

- built to support a single inspector, and;
- throughput is not at a level inhibiting the single inspector model, and;
- requires, due to importing country requirements a federal government FSMA to undertake carcass and/or carcass part inspection.

## Removal of Cost efficiency agreements which result in non-regulatory work being undertaken

In order to embed and clearly define the regulatory culture of the department, cost-efficiency arrangements agreed on a case by case basis enabling FSMAs to provide minor additional non-regulatory services will cease (noting that a national approach will be implemented, in consideration of the additional incidental inspection related functions undertaken at some establishments).

Departmental regulatory officers will focus on regulatory compliance and ancillary regulatory activities.

- Cost efficiency arrangements involving the carrying out of non-regulatory functions contradicts and confuses the role of the regulator.
- Inspection and inspection related regulatory activity will still be available.

It is important that the department, as competent authority, maintains and consistently displays a strong regulatory culture and demonstrates an effective regulatory service. This is essential to meeting our legislative requirements and maintaining importing countries confidence in our certification system.