**MEAT HYGIENE (DEFINITION OF MEAT AND WHOLESOME) AMENDMENT BILL 1995**

**Legislative Assembly, 20 July 1995, pages 2884-5**

Second reading

**The Hon. D.S. BAKER (Minister for Primary Industries**) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Meat Hygiene Act 1994. Read a first time.

The Hon. D.S. BAKER: I move: That this Bill be now read a second time.

I insert the second reading explanation in Hansard without my reading it.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Meat Hygiene (Definition of Meat and Wholesome) Amendment Bill 1995.

The amendments address two specific and separate sections of the Act:

1) Regulation of Smallgoods

2) Procedure for declaring and determining action on ‘diseases and conditions’ detected in meat processing establishments.

Objectives Regulation of Smallgoods

The amendment seeks to replace the specific exemption of cooked products from the definitions of ‘meat’ and ‘meat processing’ under the Act by refining the definitions to include the range of processed meat products as defined in Clauses 6 through 10 of the national Food Standards Code, Standard C1.

The definitions of ‘meat’ and ‘meat processing’ under the Meat Hygiene Act 1994 specifically exclude cooked products. The reason for this, at the time of drafting, was to avoid regulating companies producing food products containing cooked meat, such as bakeries and pasta wholesalers.

An assumption was made at the time of preparation of the Act that all smallgoods producers were making some fresh products (for example, fresh sausages), some cured and/or salted uncooked products and/or uncooked fermented products.

Initial assessment of smallgoods operations and entry to compliance programs was arranged and completed quickly, in line with the ‘fast-tracking’ program announced by the Premier on 6 February 1995. A total of 55 companies in SA are currently accredited to produce smallgoods. It is now evident that a small number of companies make only cooked products. Under the current wording of the Act, these manufacturers are exempt from the requirements of the Meat Hygiene Act.

The SA Meat Hygiene Advisory Council has expressed concern that the matter be addressed as soon as possible. The Council is of the view that existing surveillance procedures are inadequate and there are significant risks to human safety associated with all smallgoods processing, whether the final product is cooked or not. The Council is also concerned that all meat processing in smallgoods establishments is subject to documentation and regular, consistent auditing, to ensure that product safety and wholesomeness can be affirmed.

The importance of industry-wide consistency and coverage of regulatory hygiene controls was reaffirmed early in 1995 when the Federal Government announced an initiative to introduce mandatory quality assurance based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) and a mandatory code of hygienic production in all smallgoods factories in Australia within 12 months. In March 1995 the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Senator Collins, announced the resolutions of ARMCANZ 5, which included mandating HACCP and national standards throughout the meat processing industry.

The smallgoods industry in South Australia is committed to supporting the initiatives taken so far, which have unified the industry and established uniform operating and auditing standards. It is concerned at the possibility that once company programs are defined and documented under the fast-tracking program, some producers may find their operations are not covered under the Act.

The smallgoods industry therefore strongly supports amendment of the current Act to provide for coverage of all operators.

Careful examination of the definition provided by the national Food Standards Code, Standard C1 and consultation within the industry has shown that the proposed amendment will not result in any significant increase in the number of meat processors actually operating under meat hygiene regulations. The only group of initial concern were paté makers—inquiry revealed that all the key South Australian wholesalers of paté products are fully aware and supportive of the regulations and already accredited under the Act.

It is the intention of the Government to exclude from the application of the Act makers of pastry products containing cooked meat, such as pies (because they are regulated under separate national Food Standard, C4) and makers of canned meat products (because they are regulated under Standard C2). Diseases and Conditions of Animals and Meat Section 5(2) of the Act provides for the Minister to declare diseases and conditions subject to specific action by inspectors or company staff.

Currently, pending the passage of new regulations, all operations at slaughtering operations are covered by regulations under the Meat Hygiene Act 1980 which include reference to specific diseases and conditions subject to specific action by inspectors.

New regulations under the Meat Hygiene Act 1994 will refer specifically to the National Standard for Hygienic Production of Meat for Human Consumption, which will effectively replace existing State regulations. The National Standard includes specific diseases and conditions detected both ante-mortem and post-mortem in meat processing plants and specifies actions required on their detection by both inspectors and company staff. Inclusion of a separate reference to Ministerial notice of diseases etc under the definition of ‘wholesome’ (Section 5(2)) is therefore now unnecessary, as long as the definition of ‘wholesome’ (Section 3) is clarified by reference to regulations.

Explanation of Clauses

 *Clause 1: Short title*

*Clause 2: Amendment of s. 3—Interpretation*

The deletion of the definition of diseased animal or bird is consequential on a later clause that substitutes section 5.

The definition of meat is substituted. It is proposed to alter the way in which meat products are included within the ambit of the definition. Under the current definition the cut off point is cooking. Under the proposed definition the cut off point is if the product (whether cooked or not) contains less than 300g/kg of meat.

*Clause 3: Substitution of ss. 4 and 5*

4. Meaning of meat processing The definition of meat processing is altered to reflect the proposed alteration in the definition of meat. The references to the meat being intended for human consumption or consumption by pets are made consistent.

5. Meaning of wholesome The current definition requires the Governor to declare diseases or conditions rendering meat unfit for human consumption or consumption by pets. It is proposed to remove this requirement. In its place it is proposed that the definition rely on the provisions of the Codes (as applied by the regulations) requiring holders of accreditation to classify meat as unfit in certain circumstances and not to process the meat for human consumption, or consumption by pets. A general reference to disease rendering meat unfit is included.

*Clause 4: Amendment of s. 12—Obligation to hold accreditation*

Section 12(2)(c)(iii) relates to cooked meat. With the alteration to the definition of meat processing, this subparagraph is otiose.

*Clause 5: Amendment of s. 29—*

General powers of meat hygiene officers

*Clause 6: Amendment of s. 30—Provisions relating to seizure*

These amendments are consequential to the amendments to section.

Mr CLARKE secured the adjournment of the debate.