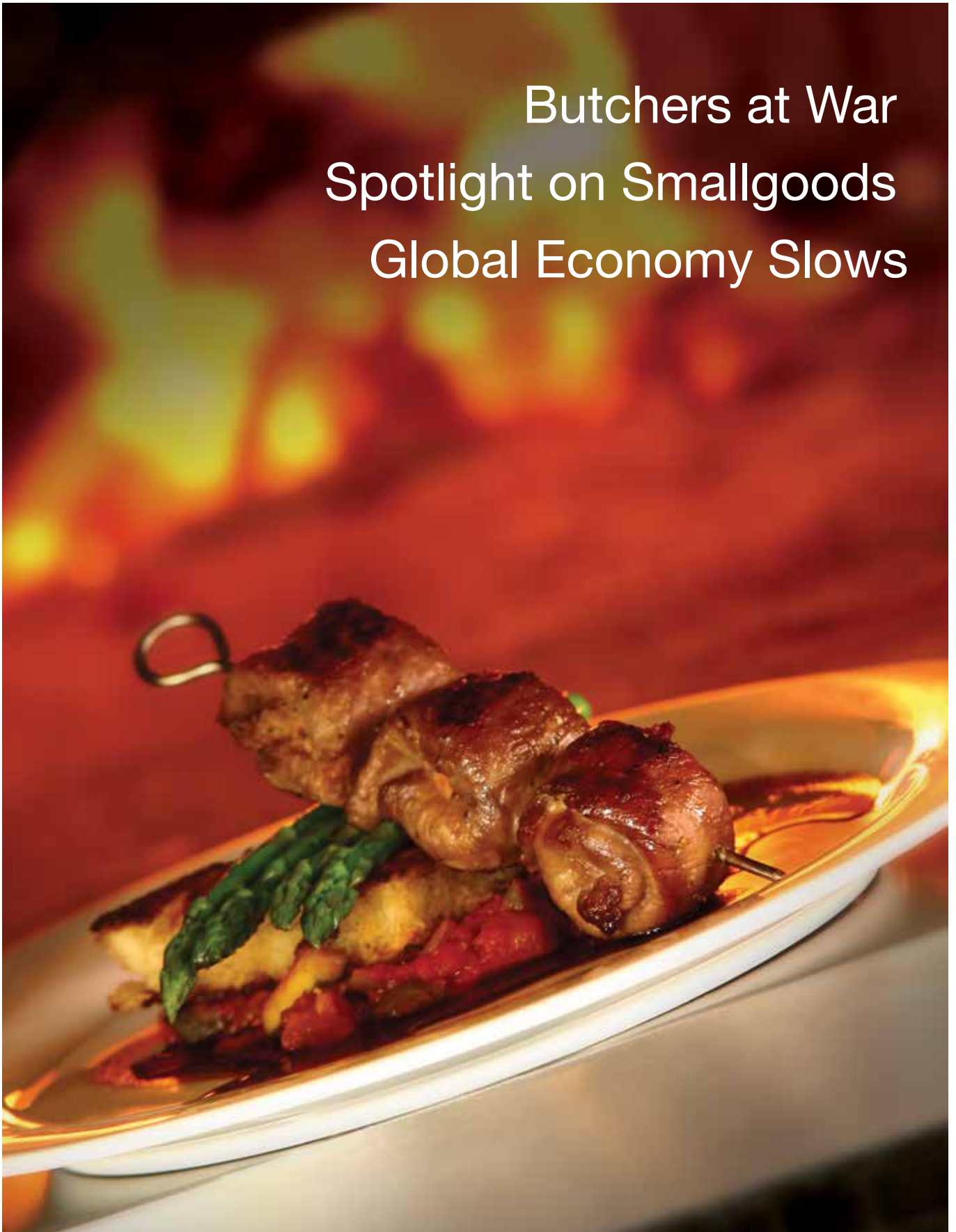


Butchers at War
Spotlight on Smallgoods
Global Economy Slows



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Collision course ahead for Aussie beef as supply increases and global demand slows. See story on page 27. Photo Courtesy: Hyatt Hotels

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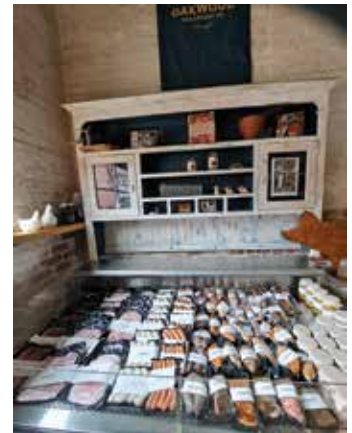
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See pages 33 & 35



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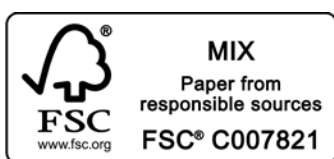
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Get Ready for PEAL



Adam Hosford, Wedderburn's National Sales Manager, says businesses need to prepare for the introduction of new allergen labelling laws.

New labelling laws will take effect in February next year requiring food businesses throughout Australia and New Zealand to clearly label allergen contents in plain English and bold text in a specific format and location.

The Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) Code was amended last year with businesses having until February 25, 2024 to ensure their product labelling meets the new laws.

Changes have been made to the labelling laws in response to consumer consultation which found that labels and packaging did not always clearly identify allergens.

FSANZ estimates that the cost to society of allergen related harm is in the vicinity of six to eight billion dollars annually.

According to Adam Hosford, National Sales Manager for equipment specialists, Wedderburn, the FSANZ Code was updated to enable consumers to make safer food choices with clearer and more consistent allergen labelling.

“The new Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL) will require allergen information declared in a specific format and location on food labels using simple, plain English terms in bold font,” Mr Hosford said.

“The new labelling laws mean that any food labelled on or after 25 February next year must comply with the new product labelling laws, compliance with which is monitored by authorities in all states and territories.

“In order to meet the new labelling requirements, which are a significant change from those that currently exist, for some businesses it may mean that label format changes, equipment software updates or equipment upgrades may be required,” he said.

Between now and February 25 next year businesses have the option to comply with existing allergen declaration requirements under the FSANZ Code or commence a transition to the new PEAL requirements.

Any foods labelled with existing allergen declarations before the end of the transition period may still be sold for up to two years after 25 February 2024, however, food labelled on or after that date must comply with PEAL.

Employing over 300 staff across 18 offices throughout Australia and 10 offices in New Zealand, Wedderburn has been specialising in commercial scales, packaging and point of sale equipment since its establishment in 1896.

The company is offering a free assessment to businesses of their current labels and labelling equipment to assist in determining what action will need to be taken to prepare for PEAL compliance. ■

Winners and Grinners

Tassie Game Firm in Telstra Awards

Tasmania's Lenah Game Meats was named a finalist in the Telstra Best of Business Awards' *Promoting Sustainability* section.

The business has been supplying indigenous meat and furs for 25 years and is Australia's largest processor of human-consumption wallaby meat.

The small privately owned Tasmanian company was founded by agricultural scientists John and Katrina Kelly and marketer Sally Bruen in 1993.

The national competition attracted over 20,000 entries.

FNQ Beef Pairing Honoured

Glenn Plath of Yungaburra Butchery secured his position as supplier of Far North Queensland's best-quality beef in late November last year.

Together with beef producers, Peter and Jacki Reeves, the trio won the Rocky Creek Best Beef Awards.

They scored the honour with a pen of three British White/Brahman cross steers that scored a lean meat yield of 56.42 percent, an MSA index of 59.29 and an average weight of 330.7kg.

They won from a total of 69 carcasses across the three weight ranges entered by 20 local producers for sale through six different butcher shops.

The contest was open to butchers from Ingham to Cairns and across the Tablelands.

It was a first-time win for Glenn, who needed three nudges from the organiser to enter his first meat industry competition and was surprised to win against the calibre of the competition.

Bec Clapperton of DAF, Townsville, was chief judge, point scorer and results collator and Armidale-based MSA grader, Laura Garland assessed the carcasses.



Peter Reeves (right), receives the perpetual trophy from competition organiser Cailand Byrnes. Photo: Sally Turley

Bec awarded one animal in the top one percent of the state, another into the top ten percent, and almost three-quarters of the carcasses graded into the top 50 percent of Queensland's beef herd.

Department of Agriculture and Fisheries extension officer, Bernie English, said it was the best line-up of cattle in the carcass competition adding that MSA grading meant the results were benchmarked against cattle nationally.

Mort Named Top Regional Exporter

Toowoomba-based processor Mort & Co was named the country's top regional exporter in the 60th annual Australian Export Awards announced late last year.

The company was honoured for its sustainable approach to lot feeding.

Hancock Agriculture's 2GR Wagyu brand took out the agribusiness, food and beverage category in the Awards after lifting its exports by 336 percent in 2021/22. ■

Upcoming Events Calendar

EVENT	DATES	VENUE	CONTACT
Meatstock Butcher Wars	14-15 April 2023	Toowoomba Showgrounds	https://meatstock.com.au/toowoomba/
	5-7 May 2023	Sydney Showgrounds	https://meatstock.com.au/sydney/
Intercollegiate Meat Judges	12-15 April 2023	Rockhampton	https://icmj.au/our-events/
	4-8 July 2023	Wagga Wagga	
FoodPro	23-26 July 2023	Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre	https://foodproexh.com/
AusPack	12-15 March 2024	Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre	https://www.auspack.com.au/

JBS Re-opens Cobram Processing Plant

JBS Australia re-opened its processing facility in Cobram, Victoria in February to service the growing demand for lamb, goat and mutton proteins both in Australia and overseas.

The Cobram plant is currently operating five days a week with a capacity to process up to 4,000 head of livestock per day in time.

Initially, the plant will employ 150 people with plans to increase to 350 employees as JBS gradually upscales production.

According to Sam McConnell, Chief Operating Officer of JBS Southern, JBS Australia is proud to reopen its Cobram facility to support jobs and economic growth in the local community.

“Today’s changed market conditions and increasing demand for lamb products has allowed us to invest in this fit-for-purpose facility which will partner with local businesses and livestock producers to deliver Australian lamb, mutton and goat to domestic and international consumers,” Mr McConnell said.

JBS is investing \$20 million in the latest processing and safety technologies to restart the Cobram plant.

As part of the Great Southern and JBS Australia businesses, the Cobram facility will focus on delivering against a range of sustainability targets.

Due to the ongoing labour shortage, JBS will be filling some roles via the Federal Government’s Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme.

There are a number of roles that remain available at the plant and JBS encourages local applications from the community.

Brent Eastwood, CEO of JBS Australia said that the reopening reinforces the company’s commitment to continually invest in Australia, its facilities, people and local businesses.

“Our customers, both here and overseas, are demanding high quality Australian lamb and goat produce,” Mr Eastwood said.

“Re-opening the Cobram facility has been a key priority for our business to meet this demand and explore growth opportunities overseas for the benefit of the local Cobram economy, livestock producers and our people,” he said. ■

King of the Sausage Crowned

The Australian Meat Industry Council’s (AMIC) showcase national retail event, the Sausage King National Finals, were announced in February, the culmination of over 30 regional and state competitions held throughout 2022, along with state finals.

Hundreds of independent butchers compete annually across Australia for the chance to be crowned national champions.

In recent times, the spotlight has been cast on the meat industry as a key driver and essential service within the agricultural industry.

According to AMIC’s General Manager, Retail, Stuart Fuller, the competition is more than just producing a high-quality product, it is about highlighting the key role played by the independent butcher in the community and showcasing their knowledge and expertise.

“Whether the finalists are a sole trader in a small regional town or a larger butcher shop in a shopping centre, they are butchers who are highly skilled tradespeople and take great pride in producing a quality product,” Mr Fuller said.

“Strong community connections to their customers and a desire to make quality tasting products highlight their passion and commitment to their businesses,” he said.



Traditional Beef Sausage Winner, Kory Edwards (left) of South Nowra Meats in NSW pictured with MLA’s Doug Piper.

Traditional Australian Beef Sausage winner, Kory Edwards of South Nowra Meats in New South Wales said he dreamt about winning an award like this when he became a butcher.

“I cannot believe it; you dream about these things when you become a butcher and it has come true,” Mr Edwards said.

“Every butcher shop in Australia has a beef snag, it is fabulous to win an award like this to say you beat every other butcher shop in Australia.

“It will be really good for our business, we’ll do really well because of this, our turnover will be massive,” he said.

Best Butcher’s Burger winner, Andrew Loveday from Loveday’s Quality Meats from Burleigh in QLD was thrilled with the win.

When asked what the key is to an award-winning burger, Mr Loveday said it was in meat selection as well as a great recipe.



Best Butcher's Burger winner Andrew Loveday of Loveday's Quality Meats in Queensland with Catherine Golding, MLA.

"We love going into the competition, it reassures our customers that we are doing a good job for them, it is great peace of mind," Mr Loveday said.

"We try extremely hard, what we dish out for the judges is what we give the customers every week, we don't change anything for the judges," he said.

AMIC's Apprentice of the Year competition was held in conjunction with the Awards with five state finalists completing a practical assessment, theory exam, and mystery box challenge over two days.

The Apprentice of the Year winner was Glenn Murphy from Prime Quality Meats in New South Wales who was ecstatic with winning the prestigious award.

"I feel so good, you've got no idea, the encouragement that people have given me, proving to them all that I could do it, and that their faith in me was well placed has given me great satisfaction," Mr Murphy said.



Apprentice of the Year winner, Glenn Murphy, from Prime Quality Meats in NSW.

"I've really enjoyed it, I have a plan from here to be a TAFE teacher, I'd like to have an apprentice come and work with me in my shop and I think I've got a lot of skills I could pass on.

"Thanks to Craig Cook, the owner of my company, for his encouragement, I told him the first day I started my apprenticeship that I wanted to be NSW Apprentice of the year, I'm not sure what he thought at the time but he encouraged me every day since then," he said.

Mr Stuart Fuller said that he was grateful for AMIC's partners and the finalists for their participation.

"I'd like to thank all of the finalists, our platinum partners, and event partners for their support of the industry and the awards, it is important and greatly appreciated," Mr Fuller said. ■

Vale – Darren Moore

Queensland's meat retail industry is honouring the contribution of Darren Moore who died suddenly earlier this year.

He worked at the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) as member relationship officer for more than ten years and served as a mentor to many apprentice butchers.

AMIC's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Patrick Hutchinson, said that Darren was deeply passionate about industry issues and a strong advocate for independent local retail butchers, their businesses and their staff.

"Darren's knowledge, skill set and experience across a raft of issues, along with his connection to people made him a likeable and respected person, Mr Hutchinson said.

"His resolve and tenacity to get things done as well as his work ethic were hallmarks of his strong character as an individual, he will be terribly missed by his friends at AMIC," he said. ■



Darren Moore was well respected in the meat industry.

Butcher Wars Goes International



Last year, Butcher Wars was held in Brazil at 'Churrascada', arguably the largest barbecue event in the world.

Starting at Meatstock in Australia and New Zealand, Butcher Wars is fast becoming a hit activation at events internationally.

Butchers compete as individuals, live on stage and have just 30 minutes to really show off their skills, culminating in amazing displays.

Tens of thousands of people this year alone will watch butchers take the stage at Butchery Wars and now the event is looking at expanding internationally.

According to Jay Beaumont, Director of Meatstock while expansion of the event was held-back with the impact of COVID, a recovery is now underway.

“We had a lot of interest, but then COVID resulted in a lot of events and travel being put on hold for many people, so we’re just starting to see it ramp back up now,” Mr Beaumont said.

“Last year, we did three events in Australia and one in Brazil at ‘Churrascada’, which is possibly the best barbecue festival in the world and a huge feather in our cap.

“In 2023 and 2024 there are events planned (or in discussion) for Scotland, Germany, Greece and we’re also going back to New Zealand which is really exciting.

“We’ve also had interest from Asia, Italy and America,” he said.

It is the format of the competition that makes it exciting for spectators.



Butcher Wars inaugural appearance on the world stage was in Brazil.

The energy is really high, it is fast and easy for spectators to follow along and understand what’s happening.

“The first time we ran a Butcher Wars I just couldn’t believe that so many people were interested in watching butchers show-off their craft, it had never been lauded on a public facing stage before,” Mr Beaumont said.

“As an industry we’ve been great at focusing internally, but this was a forward-facing activation to show the public why butchery is a skill and a craft worth celebrating, it’s about



The global expansion of Butcher Wars will include a return to New Zealand.

educating the customer, which I think is important for our future,” he said.

Shannon Walker, manager of the Australian Butchery Team, and one of the event organisers, has been instrumental in supporting butchers with mentoring, advice and encouragement.

“Those first few butchers that got on that stage were brave and had no idea what they were walking into or what the pressure of a crowd would be like,” Mr Walker said.

“But six years and over a dozen events later, the format is well known amongst butchers interested in competitive butchery.

“We also now have a great network of butchers who have competed and can also offer advice and support to others in the industry looking to have a go,” he said.

With the major impacts of COVID now relegated to history and travel getting back to normal, expect to see Butcher Wars popping up all around the world. ■



Australian-made Butcher Wars has expanded internationally with interest shown in the event around the world.

Butchers heat up for Meatstock Melbourne

By Deborah Hill

Meatstock Butcher Wars kicked off for 2023 in Melbourne, with soaring temperatures on and off the stage.

In trying conditions on the Saturday, but cooler on Sunday, Australian butchers competed in searing heat and total fire bans, to be crowned the Butcher War champion for Melbourne.

Witnessed by thousands of visitors to Meatstock, sixteen butchers competed over five heats to vie for the title of the Butcher Wars, sponsored by AMIST.

This year's competitors came from across the country, representing both men and women.

Each butcher is allocated a half saddle of pork and half lamb to create, within 30 mins, retail ready meals.

Judges appraise the butchers on speed, technique, creativity and final appearance of the display.

According to Butcher Wars organiser, Mr Shannon Walker, the standards continue to get better and better every year, and what is great to see is so many new butchers challenging themselves, and against their peers.

Taking out the championship for Melbourne was Brett Laws of Pryde Meats, New South Wales, while Wade Thompson of Meat Talk Butchers, Victoria came second.

Gary Thompson, who took out first place in 2022 for Melbourne, came in third.

The Young Butcher for the Melbourne event was taken out by Mitchell Hawes, who was also the Young Butcher recipient in 2022.

“What this event about is learning from your peers, the camaraderie and the fellowship that comes with it, to see other butchers help each other out with preparation and give advice is what this about,” Mr Walker said.

“It was fabulous to see Gary Thompson and Paul Suleyman, both well respected in the industry, sit down with butchers in a formal session to provide tips and ideas on how to compete, but also provide mentoring to those new to Butcher Wars.

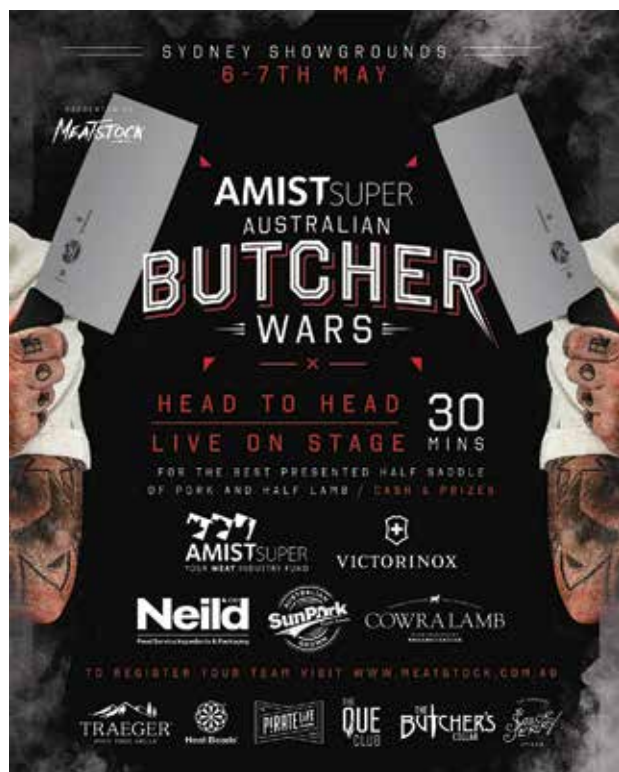
It has been another successful event to showcase the skill and passion of Australian butchers,” he said.

Meatstock Butcher Wars, Sydney will be held 5-7 May, 2023. Meatstock Butcher Wars, Toowoomba will be held 14-15 April, 2023.

If you would like to compete in the event, please contact Shannon Walker on 0424 055 190

Melbourne competitors

- Brett Laws – Pryde Meats – 1st place
- Wade Thompson – Meat Talk Butchers – 2nd place
- Gary Thompson – The Squealing Pig – 3rd place
- Ben Mahoney – Clifton Beach Butchery
- Craig Munro – Munro’s Quality Meats
- Mitchell Hawes – Frohlies Meats: Young Butcher
- Laura Ross – Sinclair Meats Ballarat
- Jamie Kuehr – A Cut Above Family Butcher
- Reese Jones – Borella Butchery
- Michael Hay – Smokers Butchery
- Ashley White – Ashley White
- Bec Gamble – Bec Gamble
- Liam Crawley – Crawley’s Quality Cuts
- Lisa Land – Inglewood Highway Meats
- Shane Connaughton – Olivers Meats
- Daniel Tauteka – Fred’s Providore ■





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Are you ready for the new labelling laws?

Plain English Allergen Labelling (PEAL) is the new requirement for allergen labelling. The deadline for compliance is 25 February 2024. Wedderburn is here to help. Book a free assessment today.

Statement of ingredients with allergens in bold

CHICKEN SCHNITZEL

INGREDIENTS: CHICKEN BREAST (60%), WATER, PANND BREADCRUMBS (10%) (**WHEAT FLOUR**, YEAST, SUGAR, SALT, **WHEAT GLUTEN**, CANOLA OIL, COLOURS), RICE FLOUR, CANOLA OIL, **SOYA PROTEIN CONCENTRATE**, **WHEAT FLOUR**, TEXTURED **SOYA PROTEIN**, SUGAR, **WHEAT STARCH**, SALT, MINERAL SALT, **WHEAT GLUTEN**, VEGETABLE GUM.

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Summary statement of allergens in bold

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*Carmelo Cimino,
Balranald butcher*

Butchers Survive Full Force of Nature

By Deborah Hill

On the back of COVID, mother nature has wreaked havoc on agriculture, with devastating floods across much of the eastern seaboard.

Our major river systems – the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee – are still under flood watch and it has meant that livestock producers have struggled to get cattle to market, or processor deliveries to butchers.

In the central mid New South Wales region down into the Riverina on the Victorian border, two rural butchers – one in Balranald, the other in Hay – have felt the impact of the floods.

Meat on Market, Balranald

Located on the main street through town, Meat on Market provides a full butcher service to the local community and tourists visiting the local national parks which include Mungo National Park and Yanga National Park.



Balranald caravan park on the banks of the Murrumbidgee was still partly closed due to flood water in mid-January.

The owner Carmelo ‘Mel’ Cimino grew up in the district and completed his apprenticeship in the shop.

He worked for about five years in the shop before taking a break to work at a feedlot, Hellsgate, which specialises in Wagyu, not far from Balranald.

Mel found dealing with Wagyu and the feeding regime to gain the desired marble score was invaluable experience, leading to a greater appreciation of the beef available locally.

“I started my apprenticeship when I was in Year 10 after telling Dad I wasn’t cut out for school, but I wasn’t allowed to leave until I had a job, so I asked around on Friday after school, and started in the butcher shop on Monday,” Mel said.

continued on page 14

continued from page 13

“I had no real understanding about butchering before I started, living in the bush, you do your own home kills but beyond that I had no concept about what a butcher did.

“Since my apprenticeship, I had always wanted to buy a butcher shop, so when the owner of the shop where I did my apprenticeship wanted to sell, I took the opportunity,” he said.

Tourists make up about 40 percent of business in peak season and it is meeting people from all over the world that is what Mel loves about the job.

In the 20 years since his training, Mel has seen the trend from knowing basic butcher cuts evolve into needing knowledge on how to cook the cuts, what to serve and providing ready meals and value-add products.

“The caravan set make up most of our business and they look for easy to cook and store products, so we Cryovac it for them if they need,” Mel said.

“Some will stay at the caravan park in town and pop in every other day, or stock-up for a few days camping in the national parks,” he said.

The caravan traffic has definitely impacted business, with many of the roads closed in the district and the national parks unlikely to open in full before Easter.

For local farmers, getting their livestock to Wangaratta or Swan Hill was equally as challenging.

“If you put in an order, you couldn’t always be sure you would get everything on the list. I could drive down myself and get it, but that then takes time away from the shop,” Mel said.

The shop typically goes through 12-15 lambs a week, two to three pigs and three bodies of beef with primal cuts being carton.

Normally Mel and his team of two butchers and a cashier, would break-down bodies in store, but it has been difficult to buy full bodies in recent times.

Chicken products are increasingly popular with cheaper prices and smaller cuts for the tourists and the high proportion of the elderly population in the town.

“We are still rebuilding after the floods and COVID, so it has snowballed in the past three years, we haven’t had a particularly good run, hopefully, once the tourists start coming back with the receding floodwater, business will pick up,” Mel said.



Sandra and Garry McRae, Hay butcher.

“It is just one of those things, nothing we can do about it, we just need to ride it out and we don’t need much water or rain to put it back to where it was, the dams are still full.

“We weren’t as bad as some communities, we haven’t lost houses, but some farmers lost a bit of crop,” he said.

Macker's Meats, Hay

The Macker's Meats building has had a long history as a butcher shop, built in 1876. It was Garry McRae’s father who had the shop at one point, before selling to Gordon Long in 1983.

Garry served his apprenticeship with his father, but once it was sold, Garry chose to pursue other work pathways, he then served as manager of the shop with Gordon, before buying it with his wife, Sandra, bringing it back into the family in 1990.

The building itself has not changed substantially, upgrades to cool rooms, flooring and display cabinets have been made to meet current standards, however, the shop front has remained essentially the same.

“I remember as a young bloke, talking to the meat deliverers who talked about a cellar under the floor of the shop where the meat was kept, like a cool room, it’s still there with brick-lined floor and the rails,” Garry said.

“When I did my apprenticeship, the first task of the day was to light the wood-fired boiler to heat the water, we used to use the wooden apple crates from the grocer next door as kindling,” he said.

For Garry, those days are remembered fondly, but it is the art of butchering that gets him to work every day.

The skill needed to convert the daily delivery of lamb, pork, beef and chicken into tasty, flavoursome products is what he continues to find interesting, his meat is sourced from Wangaratta or Hardwicks in Kyneton.

“Chicken is the big seller now, but most of our customers are used to the higher prices of red meat, they are more likely to be concerned about grocery prices than the cost of meat at the butcher,” Garry said.

“We make everything in-house from the garlic butter to the crumb mix, so that our products are uniquely ours.

“We make a range of sausages, we have done well over the years in the Sausage King awards, continental sausages continue to be a favourite but the big sausage seller is actually the thick and thin plain sausages – we make anywhere from 50 to 100kg a day,” he said.

Like Mel, the traveling caravan tourist is a major source of business for Mackers Meats and, with the floods, the numbers are well down, but slowly recovering and Garry agrees that Easter is when it is most likely to be back in full swing.

In the Hay district, farmers were not selling livestock at the market as much because of road closures, but also to undertake the clean-up of their own properties.

Mackers Meats is very much a family affair with Garry’s wife, Sandra, full-time in the shop, as well as his daughter, who is a fully qualified butcher and his son, also qualified, works part-time.

A fourth butcher comes in as needed, with another two staff members on a part-time basis.

The unique feature of the shop front is the array of kitchen gadgets available on display above the fridge.

Over the years, passing travellers invariably forget to pack something and, as a consequence, Garry and Sandra have everything from colanders to sharpening steels to can openers.

The placement over the display fridge means that a whole range of gadgets can be shown without taking away from the floor space.

“Our customers and the tourists are pretty switched on when it comes to meat, they understand the quality, they appreciate where it comes from and are happy to buy good product,” Garry said. ■

Certified Free-range Pork on Stream

Pastoral Pork Company has introduced a certified free-range production stream for its Otway Pork label.

The free-range facilities at the company’s Shelford Farm, north-west of Geelong in Victoria, have the highest standards in animal welfare to meet Australian Pork Limited’s premier Quality Assurance certification, APIQ.

The custom-made facilities at Shelford include straw-lined mobile shelters for the pigs’ comfort and where they can display their natural tendencies and behaviours.

According to Trevor Fleming, Pastoral Pork Company’s General Manager for Sales and Marketing, the company has spent decades developing its outdoor production and sustainability practices.



Otway Free-range pork has introduced an APIQ certified production stream.

“Our Otway brand was one of the first protein brands to be launched in Australia and we have placed sustainable and ethical practices at the heart of our production systems every day for more than 30 years,” Mr Fleming said.

“Our farmers and staff are passionate about raising healthy pigs, naturally, and it is this dedication that has enabled us to deliver the highest quality pork for which we are renowned.

“Since Pastoral Pork Company launched Otway in 1999, demand has grown consistently from both retail and food service customers and we maintain our focus on ensuring butchers have access to our premium products,” he said.

Otway’s APIQ certified free-range pork is available as whole bodies and parts in Victoria and New South Wales and boxed via premium distributors in other states.

Founded in 1992, The Pastoral Pork Company brings together expertise in pig production, nutrition, agricultural engineering and business and is recognised as having pioneered outdoor pork production in Australia. ■

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Master Butcher at Oakwood

By Deborah Hill

Australia has some pretty good butchers, then there are the superb butchers and there are Master Butchers.

In this country we are fortunate to have some with the highest level a butcher can achieve – ‘fleischmeisters’ – a German term for meat masters.

Ralf Finke is one of six fleischmeisters in Australia, born and trained in Germany, to a family of butchers, Ralf began his training at 16, taking more than eight years to complete his training that includes everything needed to be a butcher, plus meat inspection, business skills and smallgoods, and it shows.

At Oakwood Smallgoods located in Castlemaine, Victoria, the first thing that is clear is the smell of German-style smallgoods.

The display is more than frankfurts and leberkase, with terrines, sausage styles from around the world, hams, smoked seafood, matured meats and the dry-age cabinets.

The store opened in 2016 on a shoestring, with Ralf and his wife fitting out the shop themselves and drawing on traditional techniques to establish the smoke ovens, maturing room and processes to make quality smallgoods.

What Ralf is keen to highlight is that butchers do not need expensive sophisticated machinery to create beautiful smallgoods, but an understanding of the basics.

The maturing room, for example, is a converted cool room with basic equipment such as fans to control airflow, temperature and humidity.

Some products use traditional casings, while others use an ox bung.

Within this room are products such as bresaola, venison and beef at a temperature set to 15-16 degrees Celsius at under 70 percent humidity.

The chiller room contains the cooked smoked goods – kranskys, frankfurts, kabanos and ham.

After the smoking process, the sausages are placed in a bag filled with a brine solution, sealed and cooked in a Sous Vide, the process means it has a shelf-life of around six months without the use of preservatives.

“The use of a Sous Vide at 65 degrees Celsius, means that the products are cooked more slowly and the meat retains its juiciness and doesn’t become tough,” says Ralf.



Oakwood Smallgoods apprentice Braden Hike (Left) pictured with Ralf Finke has the advantage to learn the trade from a German-trained fleischmeister.

“A lot of butchers and chefs try to rush this process by turning up the temperature, it never works.

“Doing it this way has been developed over many years to create beautiful hams and smoked goods,” he said.

Oakwood Smallgoods has two hand-built smoke ovens, large enough for a rack of hams to be accommodated.

The base wood for the heat is Red Gum, while the flavour is German Beechwood.

During the lead up to Christmas, Oakwood produced 2,000 full leg hams through the two ovens.

With time, the bricks have become ‘seasoned’ which means they are covered in a tar like substance from the fire, which prevents bacteria growing on the surface.

Teaching the traditional ways

Ralf enjoys passing on his knowledge to private general public classes and to professional butchers and chefs.

Classes cover the range of smallgoods – terrines, sausages and smoking – and Ralf will soon have a licence to conduct salami-making classes.

The traditional recipes for German-style smallgoods have not changed since Ralf’s fathers’ time but, what has changed is the regulatory environment in which butchers operate.

Ralf has worked with PrimeSafe on a number of occasions to assist butchers get their business in order when an infringement notice has been issued.

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spotlight on smallgoods

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“It doesn’t matter whether you have a state-of-the-art facility, or a humble shop, it is important to observe the basics,” Ralph said.

“Keep your benches clean, your knives clean and your hands clean, and make your products and store them the correct way, mistakes can happen, but follow a process every single time and the risks are significantly lowered,” he said.

As a consultant, Ralf has worked with many butchers to turn their businesses around with simple changes to their operation.

“A simple low-cost re-decorating can freshen up a business very quickly, some new aprons, re-arranging the display, new labels, painting the wall are all pretty easy to do,” Ralph said.

“Try to make your workrooms flow from one process to another so that it is more efficient and less mistakes can creep in and put the sausage filler near the mincer and have the casings on hand.

“Let the kids who come with their parents into the shop try something, a positive experience for the child means that they will ask mum and dad to come back.

“I am more than happy to help butchers get back on track, just give me a call and I can take a look and see what simple things can be done.

“I speak the language of butchers, so I can give the advice they need in terms that make sense,” he said.

“Use quality ingredients and be proud of your work...”

Oakwood Smallgoods uses local product to minimise the amount of distress for the animal – to treat it with respect – Dorper saltbush lamb, Angus cattle and Inglewood pork are all sourced locally with processing done at Hardwick’s, Kyneton, less than an hour away.

In an average week, the business will use eight to 12 pigs, a body of beef and five to eight lambs with breaking down of the carcass done onsite.

“If you are going to make good quality sausages, then be proud of your work and the ingredients and set the price per kilo accordingly,” Ralph said.

“We don’t have specials here, it is always the same price, our customers have come to learn that we have a very good product, that they won’t find elsewhere and are happy to pay the price.

There is an expectation that goes with the price – quality – if they want a cheap, budget sausage that’s fine, but you won’t find it here,” he said.

Ralf has been the judge for the AMIC Charcuterie awards and seen the quality of Australian smallgoods improve significantly since his arrival in Australia many years ago.

He says participating in competitions like this, can give a butcher the feedback they need to improve their work.



Oakwood Smallgoods provides smallgoods using traditional methods, made on-site without extravagant equipment.



When Ralf set-up Oakwood Smallgoods in Castlemaine, central Victoria, he and his wife, built everything themselves, including two smoke ovens..

“If they are willing to listen, I am more than happy to give honest feedback, what you don’t want to hear and the comments that you do,” Ralph said.

The proof of Ralf’s philosophy is evident with a beautifully presented store, contract work to other butcher stores, market stalls and apprentices.

In six years, Oakwood Smallgoods has gone from earning \$50 in the first week of opening to a business with an exceptional reputation. ■

Meet the Bogans

By Stephanie Flynn

Believed to have been coined in the 1980's, the Aussie term 'Bogan' is used as a reference to unsophisticated people from the remote outback, so meet Darwin's self-confessed bogans, Sandie and Grant Stack, whose love of all things wild and free, became the signature of their start-up business, Bogan Biltong two years ago.

As Tasmanian born Sandie approached the golden age of 50, she realised the difficulties faced by mature-aged people in securing meaningful employment and thought it was time to establish her own business.

Sandie had met South African born, Grant, some years before and the two had been thinking of a way to merge her love of cooking with his knowledge of making Biltong, a knowledge Grant had inherited from working with his grandfather on his farm and is a uniquely South African food.

In naming their business and establishing a marketing theme, they were also keen to signify the merging of their two cultures

Starting their new business venture as a home-based production business in 2021, Sandie and Grant set about producing supplies and establishing three wholesale clients which included Darwin's Casino, the Beach Front Hotel, and the Noonamah Tavern, all three of which continue to support them today.

They expanded by opening a stall at Darwin's famed Mindil Beach markets, which operates every Thursday and Sunday during the tourist season, and simultaneously setting-up a website to support their market outlet.

Soon after, they sent a letter with a sample pack of their range of Biltong products to iconic tourism outlets and fishing stores as well as retail butchers but consciously steered away from approaching supermarkets due to the boutique nature of their production.



Grant and Sandie Stack have commercialised their Biltong Manufacturing business.

"Now we have a lot of retail butchers as our customers, mostly they have approached us which was surprising because technically they could make it themselves, but the knowledge and drying of Biltong is an art and they have so many other products they need to make, so it is worthwhile for them to buy the authentic product from us," Sandie said.

The business has now grown to such an extent that Sandie and Grant have taken the leap from a home-based business to a commercial operation, relocating to a new industrial factory early this year which has required a substantial capital investment, upwards of \$80,000.

While admitting it is a big move during a year that is likely to pose challenges for the economy and certainly rising interest rates, Sandie and Grant have insured themselves by not borrowing the capital, instead electing to sell their 'bogan'

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Bogan Biltong's new commercial premises has a dedicated processing room.

spotlight on smallgoods

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toys including their boats, four-wheel drives, quads and buggies to fund their business expansion.

They have also elected to live in the upstairs portion of the factory, which ensures they can manage their cashflow during the considerable wet season downtime that acts as a deterrent for tourists in northern Australia.

Biltong is not Jerky

As Grant explains, Biltong is different to Jerky, which is marinated then dried whereas, with Biltong, the meat is cured first then spiced and then dried at a low and slow heat, usually at room temperature, which means the final product has a higher moisture content as a result.

“Traditionally, there are distinct levels of ‘wetness’, some people only want fresh Biltong, where it is only dried for a day or two, then it is sliced and served in a similar way to smallgoods,” Grant said.

“Using Australian beef, we have developed four flavours in the beef Biltong of which the Traditional is based on the flavourings of coriander and black pepper, the Chakalaka is based on the South African vegetable relish recipe using beans, onion, tomato and curry, and we have introduced two chilli-based flavours, a mild and the ‘Ring Stinga’ which, as the name suggests, is a hot chilli.

“This year, we will be introducing a buffalo range of Biltong but, as with any new product, it requires a good deal of trial

and error to get the spices right, the buffalo meat has a more gamey flavour to it than beef, so it requires a different spice mix,” he said.

Biltong is best kept in a cool, dry place and has a shelf-life of four months or more, Bogan Biltong uses a four-month best-before date, but, according to Sandie, it can also be kept in the fridge depending on peoples’ preferences.

“Some people like Biltong drier and others prefer it to be wetter, so how you store it makes the difference,” Sandie said.

“If it is kept out in the open it is going to absorb more moisture so it will be softer, whereas putting it in the fridge makes the Biltong drier,” she said. ■



The ‘Bogan theme’ has been carried through to product packaging and naming.

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Local Bio-preservatives Hold the Key

By Susan Webster

Tasmanian researchers are looking at bio-preservatives to replace salt to preserve smallgoods and prolong their shelf-life.

Scientists from Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) are using natural organic products, commonly used in meat preservation, to extend the shelf-life and improve food safety of foods.

Research leader, food microbiologist Professor Tom Ross said that longer shelf-life also increases the opportunity to reach more distant export markets and can reduce food waste.

“While there has been research overseas into the use of alternative preservatives, there has been none done in Australia,” Professor Ross said.

“When we were talking to people in the industry about this technology there was a view that we need to localise it,” he said.

The Tasmanian research will investigate preserving a variety of smallgoods, from Christmas hams and shaved hams to pizza meats.

The project partners the university with two Australian companies, Mantiss Pty Ltd and George Weston Foods as well as a Spanish company, Chemital.

According to Grant Swanepoel of Mantiss one of the biggest issues in Australia is consistency between published and actual shelf-life.

“That results in food spoilage and waste, and the food miles associated with that,” Mr Swanepoel said.

“We believe the product that we are validating here is going to bring security to consistency of published shelf-life,” he said.

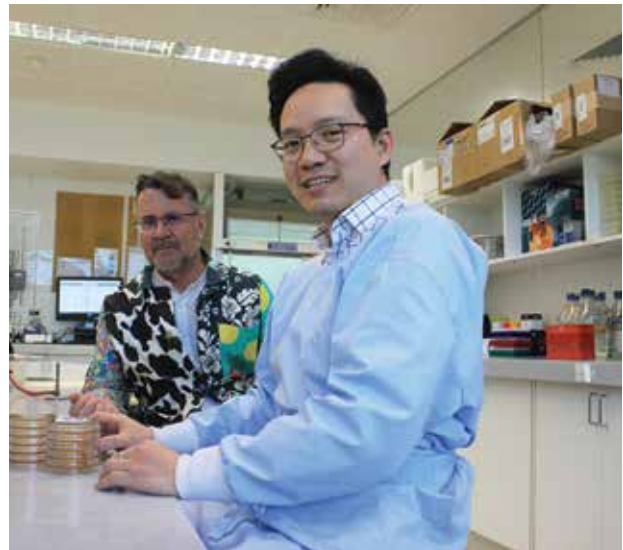
The collaborative project will see a family of preservatives evaluated and modified for Australian conditions for the local processed meat industry.

Smallgoods are usually preserved by adding salt, fermentation or cooking or by using vacuum or modified atmosphere packaging (MAP).

Potassium and sodium salts of nitrates currently are permitted food additives to preserve meat products, mainly pork-origin smallgoods.

Nitrate has no preservative properties until it is converted to nitrite by bacteria during pickling.

Thereafter, it prevents the growth of spoilage pathogens



Professor Tom Ross (Left) and Dr Chawalit 'Jay' Kocharunchitt are key members of the Australian research team looking at extending the shelf-life of smallgoods using local bio-preservatives

such as *Clostridium botulinum*, however, nitrite can also react with amino acids to form nitrosamines, which are known carcinogens.

Excess salt can affect product palatability and international research is circling the impact of nitrates on human health – with some medical authorities calling for their abolition.

“Having newer preservation methods will open the door for developing newer, healthier, and more convenient products that, nonetheless, give the same enjoyment, are safe, and have a more dependable shelf-life,” Professor Ross said.

The project, entitled ‘Development of Complementary Preservatives for Australian Meat Products’, was launched in January and is co-funded by the companies and an AusIndustry Global Innovation grant.

A parallel grant has been submitted in Spain, although the research centres on Australian smallgoods.

Other TIA researchers involved in the research are Dr Lyndal Mellefont and Dr Chawalit ‘Jay’ Kocharunchitt.

The researchers hope to have early results in mid-2023.

“We could look back at this in 20 years and say a piece of research was done back then to produce ground-breaking technology in food safety for this category and from that moment on we changed direction as an industry,” Mr Swanepoel said.

“If we improve shelf-life, we give the consumer and retail customers a better experience that also ultimately reduces food waste and that is a fantastic outcome,” he said. ■



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VHSBNO3PAIL	Casing Sheep Bungs No.3	Pail of 100	Fermented & Cooked Salami
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VHH3235BB1	Casing Hog 32/35	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage
VHH3538BB1	Casing Hog 35/38	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage
VHH42BB1	Casing Hog 42+	Bag of 1	Italian Sausage



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Lamb Wins in New Trade Deal

Australia's lamb and sheep meat exports are the only proteins in the red meat sector to win tariff-free access to India under the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) which came into force late last year and heralded a total elimination of the 30 percent tariffs effective 1 January this year.

All other Australian protein exports, with the exception of seafood, as well as live animal exports appear on the exclusion list of the Australia-India ECTA and will continue to attract existing rates of tariffs ranging between five and 30 percent.

The elimination of tariffs for lamb and sheep meat is a big win giving exports competitive access to a large market and comes at a time when the national herd has recovered from drought and an increase in lamb and sheep meat production is expected in 2023.

In announcing the entry into force of the Australia-India ECTA, Senator Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism said that Australia and India are natural trading partners, and the Agreement will unlock enormous potential in the trading relationship.

"The ECTA's entry into force opens up the world's largest democracy, with nearly one and a half billion people to Australian exporters," Senator Farrell said.

The Government is also pursuing further competitive advantages to expand this trade relationship with India and build on the ECTA through a Comprehensive Economic



Senator Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism.



Mr Sam Munsie, AMIC's General Manager for Trade and Technical Affairs.

Cooperation Agreement which will address deeper market access.

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) has welcomed the entry into force of the ECTA which it sees as an important first step in Australia's trade liberalisation with India as it provides momentum for further tariff improvements under the forthcoming India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement.

In welcoming the coming into force of the Agreement, AMIC'S General Manager for Trade and Technical Affairs, Mr Sam Munsie, said that the ECTA will provide direct benefits to the sheep meat industry and Indian consumers.

"The removal of the 30 percent tariff on Australian sheep meat imports was a priority for the red meat industry in the ECTA negotiations and will allow Australian sheep meat products to be more affordable for Indian consumers," Mr Munsie said.

"A number of Australian processors have a history of supplying the Indian market and the tariff removal will help create opportunities for a broader range of sheep meat exporters, which may lift trade volumes from their existing low base.

"Ultimately, though, rather than being a large value or volume market, India will allow exporters to further diversify their markets and customer base but will nonetheless have positive impacts throughout the whole sheep meat supply chain," he said.

Australian lamb and sheep meat exporters can access information on the ECTA at Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Free Trade Agreement Portal www.ftaportal.dfat.gov.au. ■



Founders Bianca Tarrant and Dave McGiveron started 'Our Cow' in 2019.

'Our Cow' – on trend

A New South Wales-based independent processor, 'Our Cow', is calling for more butchers to join its expanding business as it continues its meteoric rise to success since it started operations in 2019 supplying meat grown by local farmers directly to the public via its online retail butcher shop.

Butchering is a specialised trade which requires true craftsmanship says co-founder Bianca Tarrant.

"You can taste a difference in meat that has been prepared by a butcher and our customers love knowing there is a skilled human and not just a machine behind the produce they are enjoying," Ms Tarrant said.

"We are looking for skilled butchers, boners, slicers and meat workers and we urge those who have recently lost their work with Woolworths to consider a tree change.

"The Northern Rivers of New South Wales is a wonderful place to live and we care about quality and strengthening the connection between Australian farmers and those they feed," she said.

Experiencing the devastation of the prolonged NSW drought, the season of bushfires followed by floods, cattle farmers Bianca Tarrant and Dave McGiveron started selling their own

beef directly to consumers online through Facebook and the whole concept of 'Our Cow' was born.

Four years since its establishment, the company's processing facility in Casino employs over 40 staff, generates around \$20 million in annual recurring revenue from over 50,000 online customers and supports more than 150 farmers across Queensland and New South Wales.

The company's growth has been supported by an increasing consumer trend globally to buy brand direct from sustainable producers and manufacturers.

'Our Cow's' mission is to service a stable and consistent market not only for the founders' own livestock but for other farmers who choose to farm in a way that positively impacts their environment.

Commencing with beef, the company now works with farmers of all major proteins including grass-fed beef, organic chicken, free-range pork and grass-fed lamb and its product range is expanding continuously.

It has recently added what the company describes as the 'Wagyu of Lamb' to its stable of products, a highly marbled lamb meat with a low-fat melting point, which comes from the Australian White breed of sheep.



'Our Cow' sells a full range of organic and sustainably produced meats directly to consumers through its online store.

'Our Cow' links farmers who are choosing to farm in an environmentally, ethical and sustainably sound manner directly to consumers who choose to source their food from such producers.

Its online store includes a subscription option to an 'Exclusive Eaters Club' which boasts over 6,000 regular members and is supplied by over 100 farmers across NSW and Queensland.

The company already supplies some independent retail butchers and is planning to expand this aspect of its business.

Customer orders are delivered nationwide via a refrigerated courier partner, Cryovac packaged into meal-size portions, either fortnightly, monthly or at six-weekly intervals. ■

Scientists Support Meat Industry

Fifty Australian scientists have now signed a major international declaration in support of the essential role of animal agriculture in a sustainable food system.

The Australian scientists from universities and research institutions across the nation join more than 550 others from around the globe as signatories to The Dublin Declaration of Scientists on the Societal Role of Livestock, which was created in October last year following the two-day International Summit on the Societal Role of Meat.

The Dublin-based summit brought together the world's most respected academics and researchers from the US, Europe and Australia and was designed as a science-focused follow-on from discussions held at the United Nations Food System Summit in 2021.

Australian Meat Processor Corporation Chief Executive Officer, Mr Chris Taylor, attended the summit and said its three areas of focus included the role of meat in diet and health, the role of meat in a sustainable environment, and the role of meat in society, economics and culture.

"The summit most importantly not only set out to provide the science behind the role of meat and livestock systems on a global scale – but to also separate evidence-based discussion from ideology and policy making, and to really provide clarity – or clear the fog," Mr Taylor said.

"The content presented was underpinned by over 1,000 peer reviewed scientific papers.

"And the overwhelming outcome was that the highest standards of science and research do not support the often reductionist approach taken by those trying to wage an ideological war against animal agriculture," he said.

The one-page Declaration is continuing to gain traction within the international science community rising from some 200 signatories in October 2022 to more than 600 in December that same year.

Its opening statement says, "livestock systems must progress on the basis of the highest scientific standards" and that they are "too precious to society to become the victim of simplification, reductionism or zealotry".

The Declaration acknowledges today's food systems "face an unprecedented double challenge" including the provision of food security and nutrition for the globe's growing population.

It also acknowledges issues around "some methods and scale of animal production systems" which face challenges relating to biodiversity, climate change and nutrient flows.



Chief Executive Officer of Australian Meat Processor Corporation, Mr Chris Taylor.

Mr Taylor said the Declaration provided a broad range of balanced scientific views and would go a long way towards publicising and promoting what the science says.

The full outcomes and research presented at the summit were published in a special March 2023 issue of *Animal Frontiers*, the highly respected *Journal of The American Society of Animal Science*.

The Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) is the research and development corporation for the red meat processing industry in Australia.

As the research, development and marketing service provider for Australian processors, the organisation runs programmes of activity that are funded by processor levy payers, private contributions and the Australian Government.

Australian Meat Processor Corporation's mission is to drive world-class innovation, adoption and strategic policy development through genuine partnerships built on trust.

Those wishing to explore more information on the Dublin Declaration can visit the website at www.dublin-declaration.org. ■



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Beef Supply and Demand on Collision Course

As we head into the second quarter of 2023, the road ahead for protein industry players right along the supply chain is one of continued challenges and, according to leading agri-business specialist, Rabobank, it will be a year of ongoing uncertainty and a time for reorienting growth expectations and business plans.

While Rabobank expects global animal production to grow modestly, the major features of the year will be continued change, high costs along the supply chain, swings in consumption, elevated bi-security risks and increasing levels of statutory requirements as sustainability targets move into the action phase.

In Australia, while both lamb and beef production are expected to rise between four and six percent, the rise in production will collide with softening demand in the nation's key export markets, as well as domestically, as an inflation-driven economic downturn bites into consumer spending.

While opportunities still exist, these will be more restricted with growth favouring value-for-money products, efficient producers and processors, bio-secure producers as well as exporters advantaged by foreign exchange movements.

In releasing its annual 'Global Animal Protein Outlook – Deciding How to Grow Amid Challenges and Opportunities', Rabobank's Global Strategist for Animal Protein, Mr Justin Sherrard, lead author of the report, said that 2022 was a year like no other for the animal protein industry and 2023 will see a continuation of these challenges.

"In 2022, companies grappled with rising input prices, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical strife, many of which remain unresolved as we move through 2023," Mr Sherrard said.

"These factors have increased costs across the market, but while prices rise quickly, they tend to fall more slowly.

"We, therefore, expect prices to remain high throughout 2023, with aquaculture and poultry seeing supply growth but reductions in the supply of beef due to contraction in the US after years of drought and a weakening in the pork market in Europe," Mr Sherrard said.

According to Rabobank's Outlook report, there are alternative strategies protein companies can pursue in the face of the pressures expected in 2023, some of which are cyclical while others are becoming more structural.

Animal protein companies which focus on managing near-term cyclical pressures should stay the course with lessons learned during the COVID pandemic about cost management, margin optimisation and meeting consumer needs as well as the use of new technologies.

Those animal protein companies which focus on longer-term structural changes, are advised to build supply chain resilience to strengthen access to inputs and consumer connections which will also enable the transition of production systems and the achievement of sustainability goals.

In concert with these efforts, adoption of an innovation mindset will enable companies to adapt to changing market requirements and adjust business models to steer towards opportunities.

CHALLENGES

"No Relief to High Input Costs..."

Among the key challenges ahead, according to Rabobank, are the continuation of high costs for feed, energy, freight, finance and labour costs with no relief insight as the year progresses.

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While protein producers are directly impacted by these price hikes, processors will also feel the impact as they face rising input prices and declining purchasing power.

The benefactors of this situation are likely to be proteins, such as poultry, which have efficient feeding and shorter cycles, but beef and pork will face greater challenges in managing the impact.

“Industry Moves to Proactive Disease Management...”

African Swine Fever and highly pathogenic Avian Influenza are continuing to drive production losses and uncertainty in the global protein landscape, Foot and Mouth Disease and Lumpy Skin Disease, particularly relevant to Australia at this time, also jeopardise production and market access.

Rabobank’s Outlook report suggests that an improved global understanding of effective mitigation strategies, being shared and backed by both Governments and producer groups, will see the industry move toward proactive disease management.

A key factor in proactive prevention is investment in technologies such as sensors capable of tracking changes to animals’ feed and water consumption, which are possible predictors of potential health challenges.

According to Rabobank, it is likely that cost constraints of disease response to contain outbreaks is likely to accelerate investment in preventative and predictive technologies in 2023.

“Sustainability Certification Schemes Set to Broaden Focus...”

The report suggests that 2023 will see carbon measurement driving markets and the sustainability agenda with a focus on translating greenhouse gas emission targets into actions that can be measured and reported.



Rabobank’s Global Strategist for Animal Protein, Mr Justin Sherrard says 2023 will see continuing challenges for protein sector operators.

As this transition will coincide with a slow-down in the global economy, animal supply chains will face the additional challenge of finding a return on investment in reducing emissions as consumer sentiment softens.

It is likely that certification schemes will broaden their focus from only considering supply chains to also establishing farm-level accreditation and product labelling.

Rabobank believes that it will be important for protein companies to align such accreditation and labelling with supply chain systems to ensure consistency, credibility and consumer engagement.

KEY OBSERVATIONS IN THE GLOBAL MARKET PLACE

“Australian beef exporters to see slowing global demand...”

According to co-author of the report, Rabobank senior protein analyst for Australia, Mr Angus Gidley-Baird, supply and demand will be on different trajectories in 2023 as livestock numbers increase and producer demand drops with livestock prices expected to ease as a result.

“Australian sheep numbers are expected to recover from drought-impacted years and this higher inventory will support increased production of between four and six percent in 2023,” Mr Gidley-Baird said.

“While cattle numbers have not recovered as quickly as sheep numbers, beef production is likely to lift by five percent this year.

“But the increasing supply is likely to coincide with a slowing of demand, with import prices for Australian beef having declined since early 2022 and order volumes also showing a drop on softer consumer demand.

“At some point, these two markets – the production market and the consumption market will collide resulting in livestock prices correcting downwards,” he said.

“Global Trade Likely to Pivot...”

According to Rabobank, there is likely to be a shift in global distribution of beef in the global market place as beef production in the United States declines by three percent in 2023 and a further two to five percent a year over the next three years.

The driver of US beef production declines has been an extended drought with around 50 percent of US cattle producers affected.

As a result the US is likely to become a net importer of beef and its exports are expected to decline by six percent over the course of 2023.

Domestic beef demand in the US is also coming under pressure with stagnating consumer income growth, high inflation, rapidly rising interest rates and supply chain disruptions.

Consumption of beef in the US declined by two percent in 2022 and is expected to decline a further five percent this year.

In Europe the picture is also bleak with consumption coming under pressure as consumer budgets tighten. ■



*Mick Sheehy,
KPCA's Chief
Executive Officer*

Man, No Match for Mighty Fitzroy

Stock losses in the tens of thousands and major infrastructure damage which will take years to re-establish are expected as the meat industry in the Kimberley, arguably the nation's most isolated region, enters the recovery phase following record breaking floods in January.

The major damage to roads and infrastructure has seen the region's only abattoir battling to acquire enough stock to continue its operations and moves are underway to find creative solutions to ensure the Kimberley retains its processing capacity.

The only highway linking the Port of Broome to Darwin via a bridge over the Fitzroy River, which runs through the middle of the region, is likely to remain out of commission to road trains at least until June leaving the Kimberley split into two.



Forming an integral part of WA's Great Northern Highway, the Fitzroy River bridge collapsed and will take years to repair effectively splitting the Kimberley in two.

By Stephanie Flynn

Cyclone Ellie crossed the Northern Territory coastline in early January as a Category One storm, but its remnant low pressure system created immense flooding in both the Territory and the Kimberley region in northern Western Australia as it tracked westward.

Dumping over a metre of rain in a few days, the Kimberley's mighty Fitzroy River swelled to 40km in width taking out many indigenous communities, drowning cattle and pastoral stations and decimating the only major highway bridge linking Broome to Darwin.

Three months later, the Kimberley remains divided in two with pastoralists on the eastern side of the Fitzroy unable to access the region's processing facility, the Kimberley Meat Company (KMC), located between Broome and Derby on the western side of the river.

According to the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association's (KPCA), Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mick Sheehy, the flood has highlighted the fragility of the infrastructure in the north, most notably the Great Northern Highway.

"When you use two words like 'infrastructure' and the 'north', fragility is not a word that you want in that mix," Mr Sheehy said.

"The climate is tough, the environment is tough, but the environment is doing what it does, we are not talking about a back country road here, this is Highway One we are talking about, and it really is the only one.

continued on page 30

continued from page 29

“We have explored alternative routes from the east side of the Fitzroy to the west like station roads and auxiliary roads, but they will not hold-up to be an alternative for road train traffic.

“We have to be able to get across the Fitzroy River and the reconstruction of the Fitzroy Bridge is of paramount importance to the meat industry being able to function, works on a low-level crossing with a road train capability are unlikely to conclude before June,” he said.

Mr Sheehy said that until that time all eyes are focussed on creative solutions to keep the region’s only abattoir functioning when it is due to re-open in March at the conclusion of the wet season.

A well-resourced organisation, the KPCA was heavily involved in the initial response arranging fodder and fuel drops to pastoralists by helicopter and is now equally involved in the recovery phase.

The KPCA is working on solutions to supply the abattoir with enough cattle to continue operating including the possibility of using live export ships to move cattle from the east Kimberley via the Port of Wyndham to the processing facility on the Fitzroy’s west-side coastline.

“We are getting some work done on the roads on the west side, despite the wet season, which will enable some cattle to get to the KMC when it reopens,” Mr Sheehy said.

“It is important for us to support KMC as much as we can, it is a huge asset for pastoralists in the region to have a local abattoir.

“But, markets are loyal as long as you are serving them and, if you cannot service a market, the market needs to find alternative sources of supply, so the sooner we can get the abattoir operating again the better it is for everybody in the industry,” he said.

The live export sector has fared better with pastoralists in the west Kimberley able to access port facilities in Broome and those in the east having access to both the port in Wyndham and in Darwin for export.

According to Mr Sheehy, the industry has not been able to fully quantify the losses and it will not be until after the conclusion of the wet season when pastoralists commence mustering stock that the full ramifications of the flood event will come to light.



The live export sector has not been as dramatically affected with the Port of Broome able to service exports from the west Kimberley.

But, he said cattle losses will likely amount to tens of thousands as well as thousands of kilometres of fencing with station roads and creek crossings also likely to have been destroyed.

He is of the view that the recovery of all of this infrastructure and livestock herds will take years rather than months.

The industry is yet to determine the adequacy of Federal and State Government Emergency funding and is seeking guidance from AgForce in Queensland, a state which has the experience in major flood recovery, as to the lessons learned and also the funding they have had available.

Mr Sheehy said that first stage of the Fitzroy River crossing, a barge system which will have the capability of ferrying people, including staff for cattle stations and the processing facility, as well as light vehicles, is almost completed.

Although the WA Department of Main Roads has indicated that the second phase, a low-level crossing which is road train capable, is likely to be completed by June, the meat industry faces years before full recovery can be achieved.

“The third and final stage is construction of the new Fitzroy Bridge which could take two to three years to build,” Mr Sheehy said.

“The low-level crossing will be taken out of service during the wet season each year so we are looking at major disruption for the next three years until the new bridge is completed.

“I do think the fragility of the infrastructure is the big lesson, the Great Northern Highway which includes the Fitzroy Bridge is the only major highway linking the remotest parts of the region and it will be out for years, we have to do better than that, it is nobody’s fault that this has happened, but we do need to do better going forward,” he said. ■

Treatment Improves Meat Colour

By Susan Webster

Researchers have found a way to revive dark-cutting beef by combining high-pressure processing (HPP) with modified atmosphere packaging (MAP).

Combined HPP and MAP treatments were found to inhibit the growth of microorganisms and extend the shelf-life of dark-cutting beef for up to 14 days.

The Australian/Chinese team enhanced the colour and shelf-life of dark, firm, and dry beef steaks by applying HPP at 400 MPa and packaging them within 60 percent O₂-MAP.

According to the researchers, this treatment combination also preserved the oxidative status and tenderness of beef.

Dr Benjamin Holman from the NSW Department of Primary Industries' Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute worked with other meat scientists from the College of Food Science and Engineering at Shandong Agricultural University.

"Dark, firm and dry beef is sometimes termed 'dark-cutting' and is penalised by industry because of its high ultimate pH (>6.1), its dark red to almost black colouration and its inconsistent and dry surface texture," Dr Holman said.

"Other quality defects that have been associated with this beef include its slightly unpleasant odour, high water-holding capacity and reduced shelf-life.

"The pH and moisture content also encourages the growth of spoilage microbes," he said.

According to Dr Holman these factors contribute to a reduced sensorial appeal of the beef, less returns and higher opportunity costs to the beef industry.

The research team was seeking processing strategies that might recover the eating quality, shelf-life and colour of dark-cutting beef.

The study aimed to define industry-best practice when combining HPP/MAP processing technologies to



Dr Ben Holman

improve quality and extend the shelf-life of dark-cutting beef.

HPP is pasteurisation technology using pressure, rather than heat, to modify characteristics of certain foods, including beef.

Pasteurisation helps to extend the shelf-life of food by deactivating or suppressing spoilage microbiota.

HPP can also tenderise beef and address defects such as hard texture and poor tenderness.

"Using carbon dioxide can reduce the pH of the beef and inhibit the growth and reproduction of bacteria to extend the shelf-life, while MAP helps improve beef colour, which broadens shopper appeal," Dr Holman said.

"However, improvements to beef colour must be considered against the reported association with reductions in beef tenderness and juiciness scores and we thought that there might be a benefit in combining processing strategies to recover the quality of dark-cutting beef," he said.

The research, using samples from six Chinese crossbred cattle aged 18–24 months, found that storage time, HPP pressure level, and the interaction of these two factors had a significant impact on the colour and shelf-life of dark-cutting beef. ■



Normal beef (left) and dark-cutting meat (right).

MLA's Market Snapshot

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) has released the latest Snapshot reports for beef and lamb in domestic and international markets which include consumer, retail and food service analyses.

Key Insights:

- Beef exports: down 4.9 percent year-on-year in 2021–22 to 863,746 tonnes shipped weight (swt). Australian exports have been influenced by supply, logistic and labour challenges. Top export destinations by volume in 2021–22 were Japan, Korea, China, the US and Indonesia.
- Sheep meat exports: total export volume up 4.3 percent year-on-year (to 413,426 tonnes swt). Increased product availability from Australia and strong demand from key markets – US, Canada, Korea and Japan – as well as emerging markets such as Papua New Guinea, the Middle East and Southeast Asia drove this growth.

Domestic

BEEF

The Australian consumer accounts for around 30 percent of total beef and 95 percent of sheep meat production with the majority of mutton exported.

It is 'top of mind' by four times that of pork, twice of chicken, and accounts for the largest proportion of retail sales for proteins.

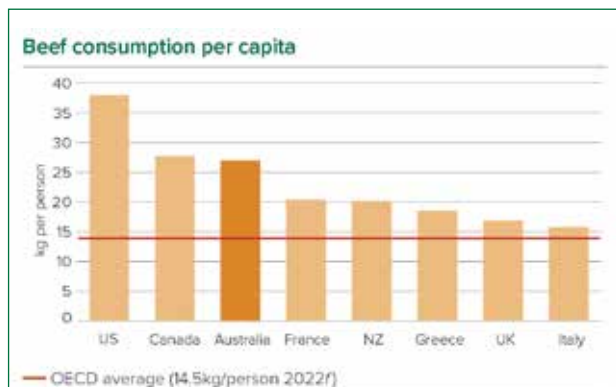
The research showed that when consumers shop for fresh meat, the top factors influencing their decisions are freshness, value per kilo and the level of fat on the cut.

Australians are the third largest consumers of beef at around 26kg per person, compared to the global average of 14.5kg.

Domestic foodservice

Since the pandemic, food service has been slowly recovering at a steady 16 percent in 2022.

Australians' spending increased by 8.6 percent in 2022 on dining out with key drivers being convenience, socialising and variety.



Quick Service Restaurants (QSR) and fast-food account for a significant portion of the dine-out spend.

Takeaway sales accounted for 28 percent of the value share of total foodservice sales in 2021, a significant increase from 23 percent in 2019, with delivery seeing the largest growth.

Domestic retail

The major supermarkets continue to dominate beef sales with Woolworths and Coles accounting for over 80 percent of fresh meat sales; butchers make up 17.2 percent.

Premium cuts and healthier options of red meat continue to experience growth.

Beef mince is the leading cut across both online and in-store but there are differences across cuts bought online versus the store.

Many retailers are seeking to differentiate their meat offerings through local grown, sustainable and more profitable sources.

SHEEP MEAT

Awareness of lamb with Australians continues to increase, as it is perceived as 'special' compared to other proteins and is often chosen for taste.

Post-pandemic, lamb sales have steadied at around 20 percent into foodservice, with many retailers restricting menu options for efficiency.

Typically, lamb features mostly in Italian and Indian cuisines, but has strong potential in Turkish, Mexican and Asian menus.

Lamb has similar market share to pork in domestic retail, accounting for 11.1 percent of sales (by value), where consumers look for premium cuts.

Rising production costs have pushed the retail price upward, creating a situation where shoppers look for more cost-effective options such as sausages and mince.

EXPORTS

Australian exports are expected to grow, as restocking matures, in comparison to falling American production, allowing for greater penetration into markets such as South Korea, China and Japan.

Current Australian beef exports account for 13 percent globally, with Brazil exports accounting for 21 percent, US 15 percent and India 14 percent.

Total beef exports were at 1.2 million tonnes swt across chilled and frozen grass and grain-fed sources. Based on value, frozen beef accounted for 60 percent of value. ■

ABARES Maps Climate Scenarios

The much heralded ‘Snap Shot of Australian Agriculture 2023’, was released last month, providing a key analysis by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) not only of the achievements of the sector, but also the climate and sustainability challenges that are ahead.

ABARES has established two scenarios to project insights into potential effects of deteriorating climate conditions on farm profitability to 2050 and, while the livestock sector fares well under the more modest of these scenarios, the impacts become more significant under the scenario that charts more extreme temperature increases.

On the issue of sustainability, while Australian agriculture’s share of national greenhouse gas emissions averages around 14 to 16 percent, it sits above the global average of 13 percent, and ABARES expects the profile of future emissions for the sector will increase to 20 percent by 2035.

Noted in the ABARES’ Snap Shot are the efforts of Australia’s beef industry, which accounts for over half of Australia’s emissions, in its goal to be carbon neutral by 2030 and its annual reporting against 53 indicators of progress under the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework.

Climate scenarios called Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs) have been established by ABARES not as projections of outcomes in 2050 but as estimates of ‘adaptation pressure’ faced by regions and sectors.

RCP8.5, the more extreme of the scenarios, assumes limited curbing of global emissions by 2050, and projected impacts on the livestock sector become significant if this occurs, however, under the less extreme scenario, RCP4.5 which assumes a more rapid reduction in global emissions peaking by 2040, the pressures faced by the industry and profitability are comparatively modest.

According to ABARES on many criteria Australia’s agricultural industries are very sustainable compared to global competitors with the emissions intensity of Australian beef estimated to be lower than beef from the nation’s major trade competitors.

Nevertheless, due to Australia’s extensive grazing production systems, the estimation of emissions intensity is higher than in some major markets, including the European Union and the United States, where feedlot systems dominate. ■

Squeal

Author P.J. Booth

Self-published

Squeal, the third book published by Peter Booth, takes charcuterie to a whole new level, and assumes the reader has the basics under their belt. Born from a pre-covid trip to Europe and lockdown boredom, Booth explores the more exotic reaches of charcuterie.

In his prologue, Booth says that for those who wish to go further with charcuterie, “It is for those who made the journey and want to continue. It makes no apologies. Nor do I. It is for the brave...”

With that in mind, ‘Squeal’ gives a brief revisit to the basics before diving headlong into unique charcuterie recipes peppered with anecdotes of his trip to Europe before the pandemic and the experiments conducted during Melbourne’s longest lockdown in the world.



The first recipe chapter focuses on air-dried sausages – using the technique to describe them rather than the regional origins.

Each recipe is given ingredients based on a specific weight of meat whereby the salts, spices and herbs are given as a percentage, rather than grams.

Recipes are sourced from France through to Croatia, from duck to pork.

Whole muscle products – venison, hams, bresaola, pork shoulder, jambon are given the same guidance.

Not often considered in the world of charcuterie are seafood proteins, air-dried tuna sausage in a casing definitely fits that category. Accompaniments such as French Anchovy Sauce uses preserved anchovies as the base.

Octopus carpaccio or pickled, pickled prawns and mussels, are unabashedly included as a cured meat.

Booth ventures into ‘The Variations’ where well recognised products, mostly bacon, are given a make-over with experimentation – beef bacon, bacon with Indian spice mixes, bacon using the jowl and lamb bacon, pork loin cured like bacon...

From here ‘Squeal’ delves into The Unusual Products with duck stuffed with pate and pistachio, which is eaten cold, therefore a charcuterie.

Smoked ox tongue and other offal are also given the full treatment with warnings that it is truly for the brave.

Available from Books for Cooks, retailing at \$75.

See page 35 for details on how to win a copy. ■



Enter the competition to win one **Khabin** 10-inch Cimetar Steak Knife & 12-inch Steel. And one of five **Khabin** 6-inch Granton-edge Boning Knives.



The words in the list below are all hidden in the grid. They may be found in straight lines running horizontally, vertically or diagonally. Some of the letters are shared by more than one word.

When you have found all the words in the list, there will be 23 letters remaining, these form the answer to the competition.



When complete, send your copy by mail or email. Include your name, address and phone number to go in the draw for another great prize from **BUNZL**.

Results will be published in the next issue of *Australian Meat News*. Entries close 30 April 2023.

For last issues' winners and answers, see page 35

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| FISHBOWLS | REEDS | TRICKS | FRESH FOOD |
| AGRONOMY | WOOL | MUD | RICE |
| SPRAY DRIFT | EROSION | DRILL SOW | BOOST |
| ALCHEMY | BIRD LIFE (2) | LANDSCAPE | REHYDRATE |
| RESTOCK | CLEAN | AWASH | COMMON |
| FROGS | REDTAPE | ASSUME | AXE |

“

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Post: Australian Meat News. PO Box 415 Richmond VIC 3121 Email: athol@ausmeatnews.com.au

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BOOK COMPETITION WINNER

Congratulations to Les Oxley, who won a copy of *Jerky Everything*, by Pamela Braun. Les reads *Australian Meat News* because; "it keeps you up with the latest". Les worked, hands-on in the processing industry for 35 years and as a shearer. Now retired, he breeds chickens and pigeons.



Les, thanks for entering our competition and enjoy the book. ■

WIN WIN

To enter our competition to win *Squeal* by P.J. Booth (RRP \$75).

Answer the question below.

Send your answer and name, address and phone number to:



Australian Meat News Book Competition

Email: athol@ausmeatnews.com.au (preferred)

or by post: PO Box 415, Richmond VIC 3121

Question: *Who won the Australian Meat Industry Council's Apprentice of the Year for 2022?*

Entries close 30 April 2023 ■

Winners November 2022 Find a Word



Congratulations to the winners and thank you to our sponsor BUNZL. Bunzl will contact all winners and make arrangements to deliver their prize.

Khabin 10-inch Cimetar Steak Knife and 12-inch Steel

Jamal Fetlayleh, Abu Ahmad Butchery, Punchbowl NSW

Khabin 6-inch Gratton-edged Boning Knife

Clair Jabbour, Meat Station, St Peters NSW

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Millie Mugridge, Jindabyne Butchery, Jindabyne NSW

Robert Minehan, Dural Village Chicken, Dural NSW

Armin Capala, Narasell Pty Ltd, Junee NSW



AUSTRALIAN meatnews

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The magazine covers news and feature stories on the retail and processing sectors as well as broader industry issues.

The publication schedule for the remainder of 2023 is:

Issue	Advertising Booking Deadline
June	12 May
August	14 July
November	18 October

INSERTS

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