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DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

What a busy and rewarding couple of months it has been!

One of the highlights was attending my first NZFSSRC/NZIFST Conference in July. Alongside an excellent programme of food safety presentations, it was inspiring to see the breadth of topics being explored across the food sector and the diverse range of professionals contributing to the conversation. The conference also provided a wonderful opportunity to celebrate excellence within our community at the Awards Dinner, including recognition of NZFSSRC's own Professor Tim Harwood for his significant contribution to the food science sector.

Another recent highlight was participating in our inaugural **Food Safety Culture Champions** event in Auckland. Our experts brought together an enthusiastic group of food quality and safety leaders from across a variety of sectors, creating a vibrant environment for learning, discussion and connection. The

energy in the room was outstanding, and I am excited to see this new Community of Practice grow into a trusted forum where members can continue to share experiences, ideas and practical solutions.

I've also greatly appreciated the opportunities to get out and visit some of our members. My sincere thanks to the Poultry Industry Association New Zealand (PIANZ) and OxyEnergy for hosting tours of their facilities. Seeing food safety systems operating in real-world environments provides invaluable insight and helps strengthen the connections between research and practice. Closer to home, I was also fortunate to enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the iconic Whittaker's chocolate factory, a memorable reminder of the innovation and excellence that exists within New Zealand's food industry.

As you'll see throughout this newsletter, there is plenty happening across the Centre. From celebrating achievements and recognising impact to showcasing our researchers and upcoming opportunities to connect, I hope you enjoy this update and thank you for your continued support of NZFSSRC.



WELCOME TO NEW & OLD MEMBERS

We are always thrilled to have new members joining - bringing new perspectives to NZFSSRC's Industry Leaders Group. Our [June Webinar](#) featured a new member: [ALS Global's](#) Steve Howse explored changing EU export requirements and analytical laboratory support for New Zealand's food sector. In [August](#), Natasha Telles-D'Costa, [Veeva](#) talked about 'Hype or Heaven - Demystifying the AI conversation across the Food Safety and Quality space' in our August Webinar.

We welcome [Deer Industry New Zealand](#) (DINZ) on board - representing deer farmers, processor and markets and bringing a strong R&D ethos. We are also pleased to have [Eurofins](#) and [Synlait](#) back in the fold.



NZFSSRC/NZIFST conference

Is our food safety success our Achilles heel? Those who missed the July NZFSSRC/NZIFST Conference in Auckland can get the rundown on the excellent food safety presentations in [Aug/Sept issue of FoodNZ](#) (p38)

In his opening plenary, economist Shamubeel Eaqub warned that the downside of our premium food exports is the unaffordability of food at home, and political consequences. Is the food industry losing its social licence?

Other presentations covered the whole gamut of food safety issues, from water contaminants and cold plasma sanitisation, to emerging *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and the problem of maintaining food safety standards on the graveyard shift.



NEW FOOD SAFETY CULTURE CHAMPIONS COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Foodborne illness remains a very real challenge in New Zealand. Behind every statistic is a person, a family, and potentially a life that could have been changed forever. Yet Food Safety can feel lonely and thankless.

A range of food safety professionals from across NZ food sectors gathered atASUREQuality's wonderful new facilities at Blockhouse Bay. They heard from NZFSSRC experts including [Wendy Newport-Smith](#), [Phil Bremer](#), [Miranda Miroso](#) [Food Safety Culture Lab](#), and [Ray Haddad](#) [Food Surety](#)

The conversations on the day reinforced the value of creating a Food Safety Culture Champions Community of Practice: a space for industry practitioners, leaders and researchers to learn from one another, share challenges, and accelerate the practical application of food safety culture. [Read more](#).

Want to join? Please email w.newport-smith@massey.ac.nz

Want to learn about Food Safety Culture check out our [July Webinar](#).



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ŌTĀKOU WHAKAIHU WAKA



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NEW PHD: SEEKING INDUSTRY PARTNERS TO PARTICIPATE

NZFSSRC is pleased to be supporting PhD student Sophia Liu in a new project titled "**Optimising Food Safety Culture Across Borders: A Comparative Case Study of Cross-Border Food Manufacturing Operations**".

This collaborative project with University of Otago and Massey University supervisors, aims to evaluate how national culture shapes Food Safety Culture dimensions, influences frontline behavioural norms, and drives perception dynamics by comparing manufacturing plants operating under the same corporate umbrella in both China and NZ.

Do you work for an organisation that is headquartered in China but operates processing facilities in NZ? If so and you are interested in participating in this study please contact NZFSSRC science leader: miranda.mirosa@otago.ac.nz



Food Safety Culture Lab

SPONSOR A FOOD SAFETY CULTURE SUMMER RESEARCH STUDENT

Food businesses now have a chance to co-fund a 10-week summer research scholarship exploring a food safety culture question relevant to their operations, supervised by the [Food Safety Culture Lab](#) at the University of Otago – New Zealand's leading academic team in the field. Food safety culture, the shared attitudes and behaviours that shape how safety is actually practised on the ground, is one of the most powerful levers a business has for reducing risk, and this scholarship offers a low-risk way to tap into that expertise while building a pipeline to emerging talent.

Sponsoring businesses contribute \$3,500, which the NZFSSRC matches dollar-for-dollar, and help shape the research topic alongside full supervision from the Lab. Students can be based onsite or hosted in Dunedin with remote check-ins, and sponsors receive practical outputs – posters, videos, and resources – they can apply directly to their business.

If you are interested in hosting a student, register your interest with the [UoO Food Safety Culture Lab](#) by **30 September**; more details are available on the [Food Safety Culture Lab webpage](#).



SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION RECOGNISED

To the delight of all at the Centre, NZFSSRC's Deputy Director Tim Harwood (Manager, Food and Bioactives at Cawthron Institute) was announced this year's winner of the MPI Significant Contribution to Food Safety Award.

The Award recognises his long and practical contribution to New Zealand's seafood industry and his work supporting customary seafood harvesting and safety in communities like the Bay of Plenty.

Cawthron Institute is one of the Centre's valued science partners, with Tim as the main link. Tim is a key player in food safety science and leads the Centre's seafood industry taskforce and Cawthron's Seafood Safety Research Platform. Congratulations Tim! [Read more](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR RESEARCHERS

PHF Science's Lucia (Lucy) Rivas is one of our food safety scientists leading research projects that span a variety of food safety issues encompassing disease-causing bacteria such as *Listeria*, *STEC* and *Yersinia*. She has built a career at the intersection of microbiology, genomics and public health. [Read more](#)

Upcoming Events

Packaging in Transition:

Navigating Food Safety, Sustainability and Compliance



28 October 2026
The University of Auckland
Old Government House

PACKAGING IN TRANSITION | 28 October Auckland:

The NZ Food Safety Science & Research Centre and the Bioeconomy Science Institute invite you to a symposium at Old Government House in Auckland on 28 October. The title says it all. Whether changes are driven by the continuing push towards sustainable options and away from plastic, or new regulations coming into force, there are important food safety considerations.

The [programme](#) will traverse all the issues in breadth and depth. Stay ahead of this fast-moving, often problematic transition. Companies need support from our scientists and technologists. We're here to provide it.

[Register here](#)



SAVE THE DATE: NZFSSRC FUTURES FORUM | 3 NOV WELLINGTON:

We have a fast paced, future focussed programme coming together as we speak. So we hope you will join us in Wellington to hear from a range of fascinating speakers and network with industry leaders, government officials and researchers. Never been before? Check out [2025 sessions](#) - noting these are only shared some time after the actual event.

Other upcoming events where you can see us:

['Feeding the Future' Infant Nutrition Council Conference](#) 25-27 August 2026
(Auckland)

[Red Meat Sector Conference](#) 28-29 September 2026 (Wellington)

[IDF World Dairy Summit](#) 15-20 November 2026 (Auckland)

Joint NZFSSRC/NZIFST Conference 29 June - 01 July 2027 (Christchurch)



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