The New Zealand red meat industry
Response to COVID-19
Paul Goldstone, Policy Manager
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NZ Red Meat Industry Overview

41 MIA member representing 99% of production and exports

95% of sheepmeat and 86% of beef production is exported to more than 120 countries

The meat processing industry employs 24,700 workers around the country.

NZ$9.1 billion in exports, New Zealand’s second largest goods exporter

46% of total exports accounting for $3.5 billion were halal certified in 2018/19

New Zealand’s largest manufacturing industry

90% of animals are processed as Halal
US coronavirus hotspots linked to meat processing plants
• Analysis shows factories a source of virus transmission
• Workers and unions urge health and safety overhaul

'Chaotic and crazy': meat plants around the world struggle with virus outbreaks
Critics warn of workers tightly packed together and pressure to keep operating at maximum speed

'We're modern slaves': How meat plant workers became the new frontline in Covid-19 war

Meat plant must be held to account for Covid-19 outbreak, says German minister

Prisons and meat processors are hotbeds of coronavirus.

11,000 coronavirus cases tied to three meat processors: report
Cedar Meats worker tells of fear and uncertainty
COVID-19 from the beginning was fundamental to our reputation for being able to run credible processing systems and to show NZ, our customers and our workers that health and safety of our workers is paramount. If we couldn’t run processing operations safe from COVID-19, then it could threaten our ability to provide assurance for other claims – food quality, food safety, and environmental sustainability.

A competent response to COVID-19 is part of a broader story of credibility, and underpins our assurances for sustainability.
Protocol to Manage Risk of COVID-19 for Continuation of Meat Processing – Alert Level 3
Version 5 - 28/08/20

Background
The protocol has been written by MIA to provide guidance and a measure of certainty and consistency for meat processors and associated services.

The protocol has been shared with WorkSafe and MPI and is consistent with the Ministry of Health Covid-19 order.

The Covid-19 response is highly challenging and policies and procedures are developed in a highly uncertain environment. MIA members are asked to feedback to MIA how this protocol is working in practice, so the protocol can be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Verification
MPI Verification Services will verify compliance with this protocol. If there is an issue, MPI VS will discuss with the plant manager. If that cannot be immediately resolved, MPI will refer to WorkSafe (the regulatory agency for workplace health and safety) for resolution of the issue.
Lessons learned

Strong compliance and transparency and acting credibly and ethically provided a strong platform for our industry to manage the crisis in a very uncertain environment.

Strong relationships between the companies and also with Verification Services and WorkSafe was important. We also engaged with the Unions. This helped with securing the confidence of the workforce.

Our diverse export markets and a deep understanding and relationships across our supply chains bolstered our resilience during the COVID-19 crisis. In part this can be attributed to New Zealand’s network of trade agreements which enabled that flexibility.

The WTO, as well as multilateral and plurilateral trading networks will have a vital role in continuing to shape the trade rules to enable economic recovery. However, that international rule-based trading system was already being challenged by the rise of protectionism and nationalism. COVID-19 may increase the challenges on the international trading system.