

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ROADMAP FOR MEAT EXPORT MODERNISATION

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Project Description

In mid-2020, the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management convened a joint government-industry Meat Modernisation Working Group (MMWG) to accelerate the modernisation of the Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS) as it nears the 10th anniversary of its introduction.

As part of this agenda, the MMWG commissioned a high-level Digital Transformation Roadmap, co-funded by government and industry through the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC), to leverage technology and improve data capture, sharing and analysis, and recommend a path ahead for investment by both industry and government. The MMWG has informed a compelling vision for modernisation and how digital transformation will support risk- and performance-based, data-informed regulation and unlock further potential of the Australian export meat sector as a trusted, competitive and forward-thinking supplier to growing markets.

The roadmap will be submitted by the MMWG to the Minister to complement a broader report from the group on meat modernisation.

Project Content

Through AEMIS, the Australian Government certifies the disease-free status, safety and integrity of Australia's meat and meat products and confirms industry has appropriate quality management systems and meets importing country requirements. Compliance is integral to the sector, which captures, analyses and reports large volumes of data for regulatory and business needs.

However, many processes remain paper-based and manual, and a number of government-managed systems such as the Manual for Importing Country Requirements (MICO), Export Documentation System (EXDOC) and Audit Management System (AMS) are static databases and/or do not reflect modern systems or analytic capabilities. More advanced systems, such as Meat Export Data Collection (MEDC), are working well, but do not enable automated updates from establishments' own systems, resulting in duplication of effort.

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Industry has a diversity of systems with varying interoperability and some establishments lack reliable connectivity. Industry has been exploring technologies, such as smart glasses, to support business continuity, food safety outcomes and reduce labour inputs. Applications have been limited to date, but COVID-19 has sharpened focus on their potential for off-site verification and audit. More broadly, the meat and livestock sector continues to work towards automated national livestock identification and electronic vendor declarations and it is critical that the export meat sector is fully integrated to benefit and contribute to these systems.

Projects for updating systems are planned by both government and industry, and in some instances funded, but the pace of change is not considered fast enough in the context of challenges they each face.

Project Outcome

The Digital Transformation Roadmap provides recommendations on the activities that should be undertaken to address these gaps and opportunities, with a progressive realisation of digital maturity from ready (connected and online) to aligned (enabling and informing processes and service delivery) to transformative (disruptively changing the way processes and services are undertaken). It is the first step in a process that will require sector-wide consultation, further analysis and planning, including detailed costings and assessment of return on investment.

Based on the strengths, gaps and opportunities identified in the current system, digital transformation activities have been identified that will deliver the desired outcomes, linked to the meat modernisation agenda. It is important that prior to undertaking any activities, the process it is intended to support should be reviewed to discern if it remains relevant and fit for purpose in a modern regulatory environment. Only then should consideration be given to digitising or automating a paper-based or manual process or modifying an existing system, or if it should be replaced by another system or a more disruptive technology that achieves equivalent or better outcomes, more efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Roadmap describes the activities to be delivered in order to achieve the following future-state outcomes:

- / Real-time, relevant data capture, objective analysis and feedback enables risk profiling tailored to establishments, their product target markets, delivering efficient regulation by government and proactive quality management systems by industry
- / Paper-based and manual processes and outdated technology are replaced for administrative simplicity, operational efficiency
- / Technology reduces handling and human presence, supports food safety and integrity outcomes, enables business continuity and efficiently utilises and reduces labour
- / Processor data and systems are part of an integrated supply chain for continuous improvement and added value
- / Improved and integrated data and systems with inbuilt analytics enable more proactive and confident market access negotiations and issues resolution
- / The regulatory framework enables rapid uptake of technology that delivers equivalent outcomes and ensures appropriate data governance to facilitate improved data sharing.

Benefit for Industry

A key objective of the Digital Transformation Roadmap – which will be refined in future stages – is to focus on the critical control points in the supply chain and opportunities to streamline and reduce regulation in alignment with strengthened sector-wide quality management by industry. This will support the competitiveness of the sector.

USEFUL RESOURCES

AEMIS Review Recommendations Report: <https://bit.ly/31K0ZdK>