Final report

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Contents

Public summary	4
Technical summary	4
Keywords	5
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
Results and discussion	9
Outputs	21
Outcomes	23
Monitoring and evaluation	24
Recommendations	29
Refereed scientific publications	30
References	30
Intellectual property	31
Acknowledgements	31
Appendices	32

Public summary

The Horticulture Food Safety Initiative (HFSI) was a three-year project delivered by the Fresh Produce Safety Centre (FPSC) to improve food safety capability across the fresh produce industry in Australia and New Zealand. The project responded to increasing food safety expectations, the introduction of Horticulture Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards for berries, melons and leafy vegetables in Australia and the need for practical, accessible and trusted food safety guidance across the fresh produce supply chain. The target audience for the HFSI included growers and packhouses, as well as broader fresh produce supply chain stakeholders including industry bodies, regulators, retailers, researchers, extension and service providers across Australia and New Zealand, with particular emphasis on small to medium, non-certified businesses and English as a second language (ESL) participants.

The project began with a comprehensive review of existing food safety resources and industry needs. A stocktake identified more than 400 resources, but also found that information was fragmented, often technical and not always practical for growers or smaller businesses. Key gaps were identified in areas such as traceability, environmental monitoring, food safety culture, commodity-specific guidance and resources suitable for ESL audience. A fresh produce industry survey also confirmed strong demand for practical training, access to resources and collaborative approaches to food safety. Insights gathered through these initial activities helped guide subsequent material development, communication approaches and industry outreach activities delivered throughout the project.

HFSI delivered a coordinated programme of resource development, extension, industry engagement and support. Major outputs included the comprehensive review of the 2025 Fundamental guidelines for fresh produce food safety, accompanying quick guides (including multilingual versions), a fresh produce food safety help desk, 6 webinars, podcast series and 184 engagement, extension and outreach activities across Australia and New Zealand including two International Fresh Produce Safety Symposiums. A community of practice (COP) was also established as a collaborative platform and grew to 95 members representing the ANZ fresh produce supply chain with the subsequent introduction of sub-COPs for targeted fresh produce food safety topics.

The project utilised a communication and extension Trans-Tasman network to maximise reach and impact, leveraging established industry channels including newsletters, social media, outreach activities, working groups and partner networks to disseminate information, support engagement and facilitate practical application of food safety guidance across the sector.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation showed that the HFSI project generated evidenced improvements across the KASA framework among engaged food safety professionals, produced high-quality guidance resources that have been embedded in regulatory practice and established a durable professional community that extends beyond the formal project period.

FPSC is confident that the HFSI project will provide strong legacy value to industry and that a sustainable funding model is in place to maintain the most impactful activities and outputs, including the COP, annual symposium, guidelines and communication networks. The project has inspired stakeholder conversations about opportunities and challenges in fresh produce food safety which are being considered and scoped into proposals for future work to build on the achievements of HFSI.

Technical summary

This project was primarily an industry engagement, extension and capability-building project rather than a confidential or technical project.

Keywords

Fresh produce; food safety; PPP; community of practice; guidelines; engagement; collaboration; Australia; New Zealand; capability building

Introduction

HFSI was established to help improve food safety practices and capability across the fresh produce industry in Australia and New Zealand. The project was delivered at a time of increasing regulatory, customer and public expectations relating to fresh produce food safety. In Australia, this included the introduction of new PPP Standards for berries, melons and leafy vegetables, which created a need for practical guidance and extension support.

Fresh produce food safety is a shared responsibility across growers, packhouses, processors, retailers, regulators, researchers, service providers and assurance programmes. However, at the commencement of the project, food safety information was spread across many sources and was not always easy for growers and supply chain participants to locate, interpret or apply. This was particularly relevant for small to medium businesses, non-certified growers, ESL growers and businesses not already closely connected to formal food safety certification systems.

The project also recognised that food safety capability cannot be improved through resource development alone. To translate information into practice, industry needed trusted networks, repeated engagement and accessible support. HFSI combined technical resource development with an industry engagement and extension model, supported by a COP, a food safety help desk, targeted outreach activities, digital communication and elevated annual symposiums.

The overall purpose of the project was to move beyond fragmented information and ad hoc engagement, toward a more coordinated system of practical food safety support for the fresh produce industry. This included strengthening supply chain collaboration, improving access to science-based guidance, building capability through extension and training and establishing mechanisms that could support improved food safety practices beyond the life of the project.

HFSI aligned with the Hort Innovation Health, Nutrition and Food Safety investment priority of ensuring food safety and integrity and responded to increasing regulatory, market and community expectations relating to fresh produce food safety across Australia and New Zealand. The project was developed to provide trusted, practical and science-based food safety information, guidance, extension and training to support growers and the broader fresh produce supply chain.

The project built on previous food safety investments and extension activities undertaken across individual horticultural sectors, while adopting a broader cross-sector and trans-Tasman approach. Through collaboration with industry, government, research organisations and existing assurance and extension networks, the HFSI aimed to improve access to practical food safety information, strengthen industry capability and support longer-term adoption of improved food safety practices across the fresh produce supply chain.

The project also aligned with the Hort Innovation strategic focus on industry capability, preparedness, adoption and collaboration by supporting practical extension pathways, stakeholder engagement, development of accessible resources and establishment of sustainable networks intended to continue beyond the life of the project.

Methodology

The project was designed to be delivered through a phased approach, progressing from foundational governance and discovery activities through to industry engagement, resource development, extension delivery and monitoring and evaluation.

Phase 1 – Project start-up

Project governance structures were established. This included development of the project plan, formation of the Project Reference Group (PRG) and establishment of reporting and communication processes (Appendix 1). The PRG was established to provide oversight, partner input and a mechanism for reviewing project progress and risks. A Technical Advisory Group and wider stakeholder network were also established to help inform the technical direction of the project.

Phase 2 – Food safety stocktake and COP establishment

A discovery stocktake of existing fresh produce food safety resources was undertaken. This involved stakeholder engagement, including 34 food safety insight meetings (Figure 1), together with a web-based review of publicly available fresh produce food safety resources across Australia, New Zealand and globally. Resources were captured according to source, country of origin, resource type, topic, commodity, language, complexity, length, version and accessibility. The review process was designed to enable the project team to understand not only what information existed, but also where practical gaps remained for growers and supply chain participants. Resources identified through the project stocktake were collated into a centralised resource register and made available via the FPSC website, providing a single, accessible point of reference to support industry in locating relevant guidance and information.

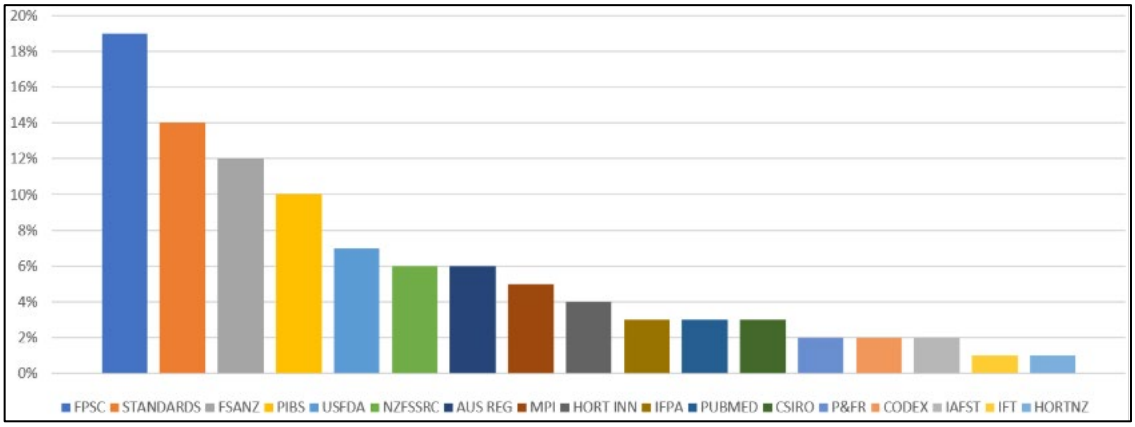

Figure 1. Percentage of interviewed stakeholders who used food safety resources prior to the gathering of resources for audit (n= 34)

The project established a COP as a central mechanism for collaboration, stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing on food safety across the fresh produce supply chain in Australia and New Zealand. The COP includes representatives from growers, packhouses, processors, retailers, regulators, researchers, auditors, certification providers, extension personnel and technical specialists to support cross-sector learning, practical discussion and shared ownership of fresh produce food safety outcomes. The methodology and evaluation approach for the COP drew on the value creation framework developed by Wenger, Trayner and De Laat (2011), Promoting and Assessing Value Creation in Communities and Networks.

The COP was designed not only as an information-sharing forum, but also as an active extension and engagement mechanism to support capability development, collaboration and practical implementation of food safety improvements across the sector. A structured meeting cadence was implemented, with quarterly online meetings and at least one in-person meeting annually, typically aligned with the International fresh produce safety symposium. Meetings included technical presentations, guest speakers, facilitated discussions, live engagement polls and collaborative review activities informed by stakeholder feedback, emerging issues and evolving regulatory requirements. The COP also supported dissemination and review of project resources including the Fundamental Guidelines for fresh produce food safety, Quick

guides and communication materials. To support monitoring and evaluation, live meeting polls; knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) assessments and value creation surveys were incorporated throughout the project, including baseline, midline and endline evaluations. During Phases 4 and 5, additional sub-communities of practice (sub-COPs) were established to support more focused collaboration on priority topics including pre- and post-harvest food safety and quality, regulation and compliance, technology and innovation and incident management.

Phase 3 – Industry survey

A research survey of fresh produce stakeholders in Australia and New Zealand provided a comprehensive industry needs assessment to help inform future resource development, extension priorities and outreach strategies under the HFSI. The methodology included a 25-question survey using a mixed-methods convergent design, combining quantitative online survey data with qualitative phone interview responses to provide both broad industry representation and deeper contextual insights (Figure 2). The survey was designed to capture demographic information, current food safety behaviours and insights aligned to KASA, while also identifying research priorities and informing future outreach strategies. A stakeholder mapping model was also developed to support broad industry representation and targeted engagement across Australia and New Zealand, including growers, packhouses, retailers, regulators, researchers, auditors, industry bodies and service providers (Figure 3). The survey was pilot tested with 10 stakeholder representatives prior to launch, resulting in refinements to strengthen the robustness and relevance of the survey tool.

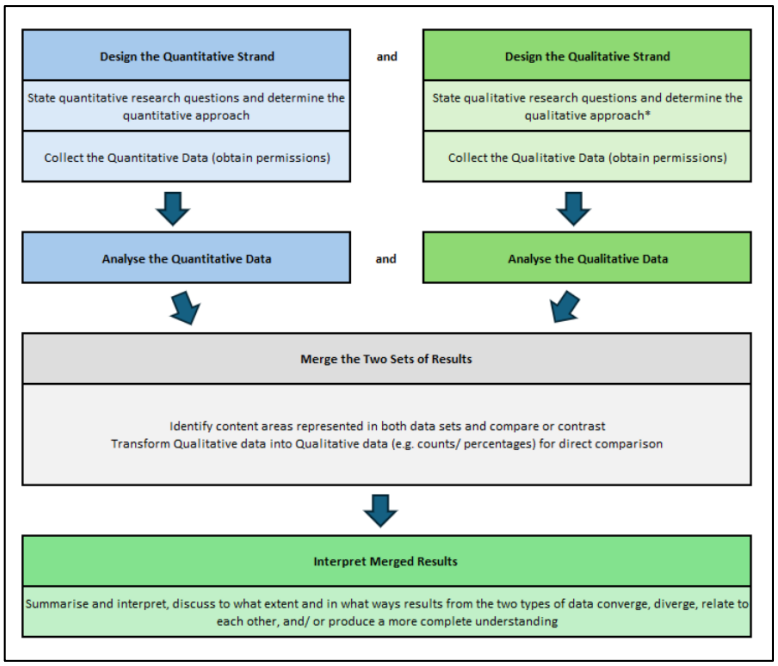

Figure 2. Flowchart of the basic procedures in implementing a Convergent Design (adapted from Creswell *et al*, 2011)

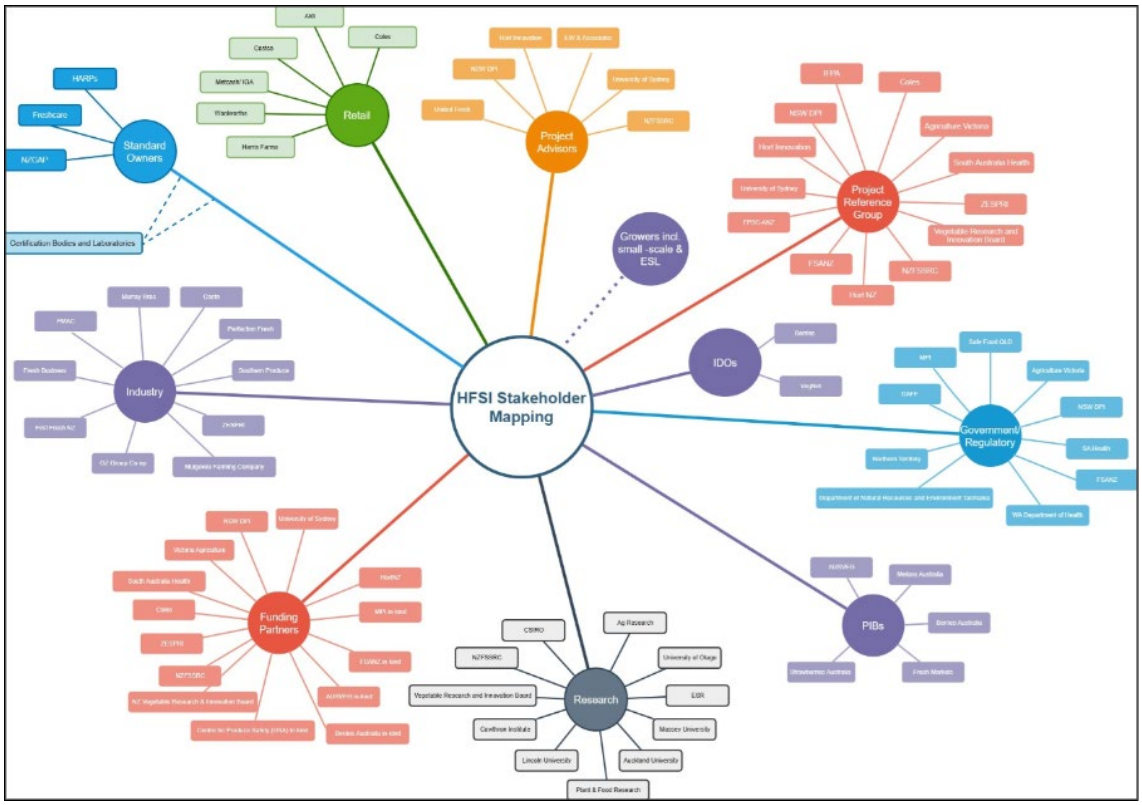

Figure 3. Horticulture Food Safety Initiative Stakeholder mapping as part of the Fresh insights on food safety: A research survey of fresh produce stakeholders in Australia and New Zealand

The Fresh Produce Food Safety Help Desk was developed following stakeholder feedback, industry consultation and review of existing advisory and help desk models across Australia and New Zealand. The help desk was designed as a complementary business-to-business support service providing practical food safety guidance, while recognising and referring users to existing regulatory, certification and industry support pathways where appropriate. The help desk was established to support growers, packhouses, processors and broader supply chain stakeholders through confidential and timely access to food safety information and technical support. Multiple contact pathways were incorporated into the model, including a live online help chat, dedicated email contact and direct mobile phone support to improve accessibility across the sector.

The help desk methodology focused on providing practical, risk-based and responsive support aligned to the objectives of the HFSI. Enquiries were intended to be acknowledged immediately where possible, with a target response timeframe of within 24 hours for initial contact and triage. The help desk also incorporated development of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and monitoring of enquiry trends to identify recurring issues, emerging risks and opportunities for future extension activities and resource development. Insights gathered through the help desk were intended to help inform future outreach activities, webinar topics and updates to guidance materials developed through the project.

Phase 4 – Delivery of Industry engagement plan, outreach activities for specific crops

An Industry Engagement Plan (IEP) was developed as a structured framework for the delivery of extension, communication and engagement activities throughout Phases 4 and 5 of the HFSI (Appendix 2). A core principle of the IEP was adoption of a coordinated, multi-channel extension approach that leveraged existing industry networks and communication pathways. Rather than establishing new standalone channels, the project was designed to work through established platforms including peak industry bodies, government agencies, regulators, certification programmes, retailers, research organisations and extension personnel such as Industry Development Officers (IDOs) and Regional Development Officers (RDOs). This approach was intended to maximise reach, credibility and efficiency of communication through trusted industry networks. A range of extension and communication methods were incorporated into the IEP, including workshops, webinars, field days, conferences, roadshows, working groups, COP and sub-COP meetings and

development of supporting materials. These activities were intended to translate technical food safety requirements into practical guidance and support knowledge sharing and capability development across the industry.

Variations to the original agreement with additional funding, were implemented to respond to evolving industry needs and stakeholder feedback. These variations included expansion of scope to undertake a comprehensive review and update of the Fundamental guidelines for fresh produce food safety, ensuring content remained current, science-based and aligned with emerging regulatory requirements and industry expectations. In addition, delivery of the International fresh produce safety symposiums was elevated in scope and format to enhance industry engagement, collaboration and knowledge transfer. This included broader stakeholder participation, expanded programme content and increased focus on emerging risks, technologies and practical case studies. These variations remained aligned with the overall objectives of the project and were intended to strengthen the relevance and value of outputs delivered to industry.

Phase 5 – Horticulture food safety implementation model and project evaluation

A summative evaluation was commissioned to provide an evidence-based assessment of the HFSI's performance across seven evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, process appropriateness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability and impact. It covers the full project period with regular quantitative (baseline, mid and endpoint) surveys across all activities and a qualitative assessment on overall outcomes, conducted in Year 3.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design integrating quantitative monitoring data with qualitative evidence from three primary sources:

- **Focus group** with seven Community of Practice members (October 2025), analysed using the Value Creation Framework
- **Seven in-depth case studies** drawing on elements of the Success Case Method and Most Significant Change methodology
- **Twelve key informant interviews** across four stakeholder groups: Project Management Team, Project Reference Group, Regulators and government representatives and Funders and partners

Qualitative analysis employed a general inductive approach, with thematic coding supported by Claude AI (Anthropic, 2025) under the direction and review of the evaluator. Findings were triangulated across all methods and sources. The full report can be found in Appendix 3.

The Horticulture Food Safety Implementation Model was developed to assess what activities would be continued as part of the project legacy and how those continued activities would be funded. HFSI deliverables were assessed for their impact, value, reach, net cost, feasibility and dependencies. By combining these assessments, an overall score was calculated for each deliverable which were subsequently ranked from highest score to lowest. Those with high scores are being considered for continuation with minimal modifications. Those with medium scores may require moderate modification for continuation. Those with low scores will require significant review and modification for continuation or they may be discontinued.

Results and discussion

The HFSI delivered a broad and integrated programme of work across resource development, stakeholder engagement, extension delivery, communications, direct technical support and industry collaboration. The project's main strength was that these activities were not delivered in isolation. The project progressively used insights from activities and stakeholder engagement to develop resources and delivery channels that were practical, targeted and aligned with industry needs.

Resource stocktake and gap analysis

One of the foundational activities undertaken as part of the Horticulture Food Safety Initiative was a comprehensive discovery stocktake and gap analysis of existing fresh produce food safety resources across Australia and New Zealand. The purpose of the stocktake was to better understand the breadth, accessibility and relevance of existing food safety information available to the fresh produce industry, while identifying gaps and opportunities to support future resource development, extension activities and industry capability building. The stocktake identified 400+ fresh produce food safety resources, providing an important baseline for the project and confirming that a substantial volume of information

already existed across the sector. However, the review also demonstrated that information was often fragmented across multiple organisations and platforms, making it difficult for growers and supply chain stakeholders to easily locate, interpret and apply relevant guidance. This was particularly relevant for small to medium businesses, non-certified growers and ESL users who may have limited access to specialist technical support or formal food safety systems.

Resources identified through the stocktake were systematically reviewed and categorised according to multiple criteria including food safety topic area, commodity relevance, country of origin, intended audience, technical complexity, delivery format and accessibility. Resources were grouped into 19 key food safety categories (Figure 4). The review assessed not only the quantity of available resources within each category, but also their practical applicability, scientific relevance, usability and suitability for extension delivery.

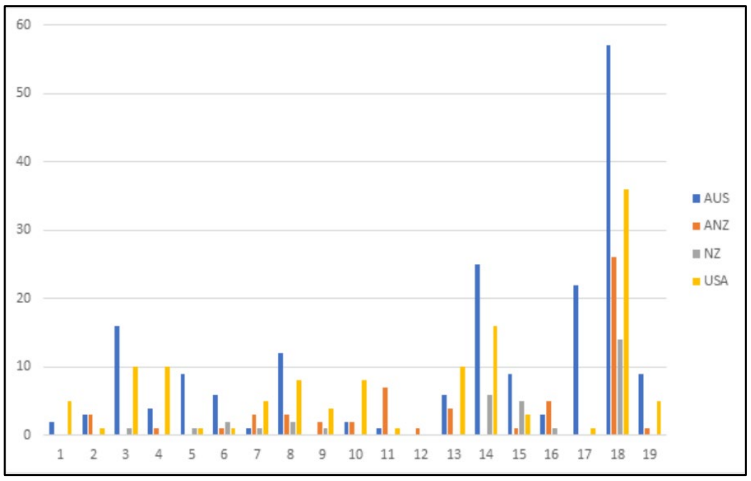

Figure 4. Number of on-line resources in each Category (1-19) produced by Australia, ANZ, New Zealand and USA (n=414)
Food Safety Categories by number are: 1. Food Safety for Growers 2. Traceability 3. Preharvest Water Use 4. Postharvest Water Use 5. Soil Amendments and Fertilizers 6. Chemicals and Pesticide Use 7. Suitability of Growing Areas 8. Severe Weather Events 9. Premises and Equipment 10. Cleaning and Sanitising 11. Temperature Management 12. Animals and Pests 13. Health and Hygiene 14. Risk Management 15. Environmental Monitoring 16. Food Safety Culture 17. Crop Best Practice 18. General Food Safety 19. General Horticulture.

The analysis identified considerable variability in resource coverage across food safety topics and commodities. Approximately 45% of identified resources were Australian in origin, 14% were jointly Australia/New Zealand focused, 8% originated from New Zealand and approximately 30% originated from the United States (Figure 5). This finding was significant because it highlighted the relatively limited availability of New Zealand-specific fresh produce food safety resources across many technical areas. By comparison, the United States had developed a substantial volume of practical outreach and training material following implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), particularly in areas relating to environmental monitoring, traceability, water management and grower education.

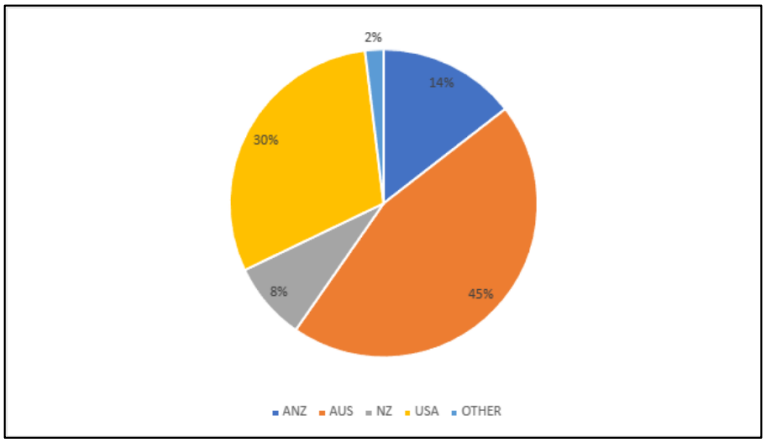

Figure 5. Region of origin for compiled stocktake of on-line resources (n=414)

The stocktake also demonstrated that while a large number of resources existed, many were developed primarily for technical or professional audiences rather than growers or operational teams. Approximately 45% of resources were classified as technical in complexity, with a further 34% categorised as detailed resources requiring higher levels of technical interpretation (Figure 6). In contrast, only around 21% of resources were considered simple or highly practical in format. This finding reinforced stakeholder feedback gathered throughout the project that industry required more concise, user-friendly and practical guidance materials suitable for day-to-day operational use and extension delivery.

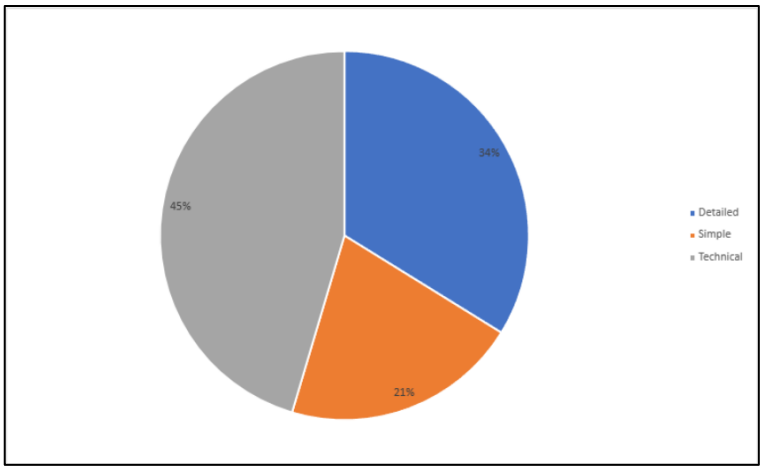

Figure 6. Technical complexity of compiled on-line resources (n=414)

Several gaps and trends were identified through the analysis. Commodity-specific resources for berries, melons and kiwifruit were comparatively limited, particularly within Australian and New Zealand contexts. New Zealand resources were generally lacking across most food safety categories except for risk assessment and environmental monitoring. The review also identified under-resourced topics including traceability, postharvest water management, environmental monitoring, food safety culture, pathogen-specific guidance, severe weather events, cleaning and sanitising, animals and pests and practical incident response guidance. In addition, there was limited availability of materials specifically tailored for smaller businesses, non-certified growers and ESL participants.

The findings from the stocktake directly informed subsequent project activities and outputs. Priority gaps identified through the review were later addressed through development of updated Fundamental guidelines for fresh produce food safety (including new Chapters and Appendices), accompanying Quick Guides, Food safety essential guides, outreach and extension activities. Topics identified as under-resourced also informed COP discussion themes, sub-COP focus areas, symposium topics and future research priorities. To improve accessibility and support ongoing industry use, the identified food safety resources were subsequently collated into a centralised resource register and made available through the FPSC website, providing growers and supply chain stakeholders with a single reference point for locating relevant fresh produce food safety information and guidance.

Fresh insights on food safety survey and needs assessment

The final survey included 156 online respondents and 30 phone interview participants. Online survey respondents were all from Australia (62%) or New Zealand (35%), with Australian respondents from New South Wales (13%), Victoria (12%), Queensland and South Australia (10%) (Figure 7). Participants represented a broad cross-section of the fresh produce supply chain, including growing, packing, retail, wholesale, import/export, agribusiness services, research and government. Packing operations represented the largest participant group (18%), followed closely by growers (17%), highlighting strong engagement from primary production and post-harvest sectors (Figure 8).

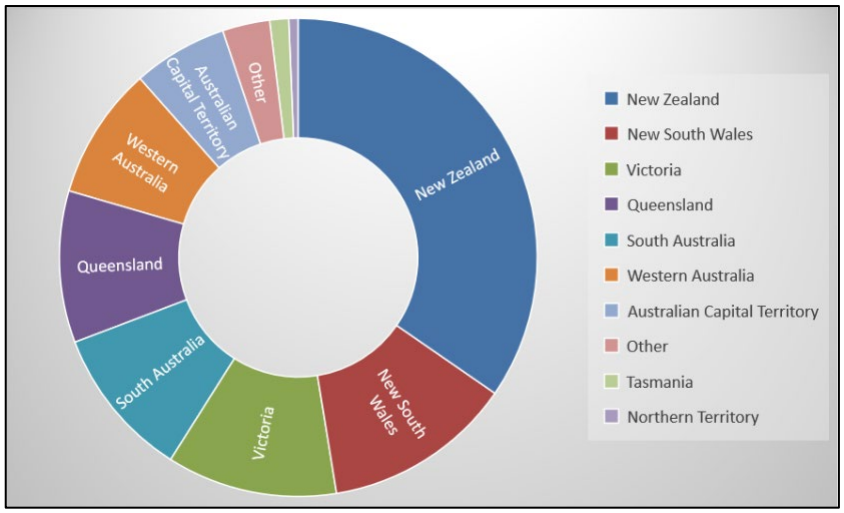

Figure 7. Fresh Insights Industry Research Survey Results (online): What State/Country is your business based in? (n = 156)

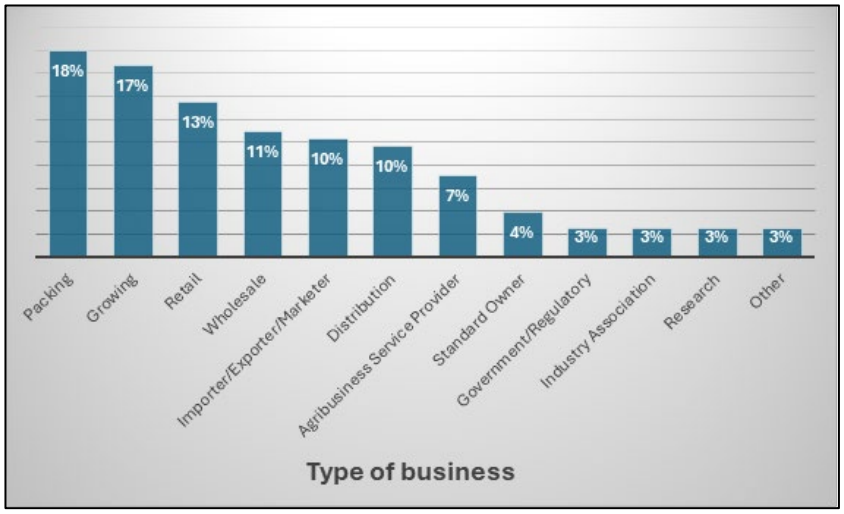

Figure 8. Fresh Insights Industry Research Survey Results (online): What part of the fresh produce industry do you operate in? (Percentage, n = 156)

The survey also captured representation from businesses of varying size and complexity. Approximately 36% of online survey respondents and 27% of phone interview participants were from micro or small-scale businesses with fewer than 20 employees (Figure 9). These businesses often identified additional challenges relating to access to training, resources and technical support.

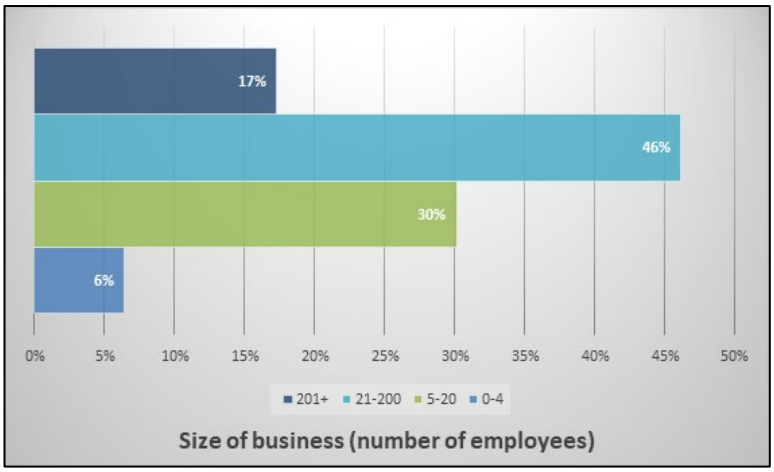

Figure 9. Fresh Insights Industry Research Survey Results (online): What is the approximate number of employees in the business you work (where applicable at peak of season)? (Percentage, n = 156)

Overall, the survey demonstrated strong industry awareness and engagement with food safety practices. Most online respondents (86%) reported feeling either very confident or extremely confident in their business's current food safety knowledge and practices, with growers reporting similarly high confidence levels. Phone interview responses provided additional context, with many respondents describing proactive approaches to food safety and strong leadership commitment within their businesses. One grower and packer respondent described their approach as *"very responsive, very swift, from senior management down they all put food safety as highest priority"*. Despite generally high confidence levels, the survey did identify several ongoing challenges impacting implementation of food safety practices. The most common challenge reported by online respondents was lack of resources (53%), rising to 81% amongst grower respondents. Limited access to training or information was identified by 47% of respondents overall, while resistance to change was reported by 32%. Phone interviews additionally highlighted challenges relating to people management, communication and language barriers, climate and environmental pressures, increasing certification and compliance costs and remaining up to date with evolving regulations and standards.

Communication preferences identified through the survey reinforced the importance of trusted and direct communication pathways. Respondents most commonly relied on professional training (62%), food safety standards (58%), conferences and workshops (49%), technical reference materials (48%) and government guidelines or regulations (45%) for fresh produce food safety knowledge. Direct communication with suppliers, industry associations, government agencies and technical networks was also identified as highly effective for sharing food safety information. Multilingual training sessions and practical one-on-one approaches were consistently identified as preferred engagement methods for ESL participants. Stakeholders also identified the need for simpler, visual and quick-reference style materials, particularly for operational teams and busy growers.

The survey demonstrated strong support for future extension and collaborative activities. Approximately 88% of online respondents expressed definite or possible interest in participating in outreach activities, while 83% expressed interest in collaborative food safety research opportunities. Respondents indicated that outreach activities needed to be practical, relevant, interactive and accessible, with consideration given to seasonal timing, online delivery options and alignment with Australian and New Zealand regulatory frameworks. One stakeholder noted that *"food safety: it's essential to our continuity and sustainability as an industry. We have to do it. We have to find a sensible way to do it, that is not too resource-heavy".*

The survey additionally supported identification of priority food safety topics and future knowledge gaps. Topics consistently rated as highly important included employee hygiene and training, microbiological contamination, water quality and irrigation practices, proper handling and storage, compliance and certifications and traceability. Areas identified for further focus included environmental monitoring, impact of climate and severe weather events, food safety culture, exclusion periods for untreated manure and maximum residue limits for pesticides. These findings directly informed subsequent review of the Guidelines and resource development.

Development of the fundamental guidelines and quick guides

The development and release of the Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety Version 5, 2025 was a major output of the Horticulture Food Safety Initiative and represented a significant refresh of existing fresh produce food safety guidance for Australia and New Zealand. The comprehensive review process was led by Dr Sharon Horton, supported by a technical review team comprising representatives from industry, research, regulatory agencies and food safety specialists across Australia and New Zealand. The review involved scientific assessment, technical review team (of 12 subject matter experts) and stakeholder engagement to ensure the updated guidelines reflected current evidence, practical application and alignment with emerging regulatory and industry requirements.

The updated Fundamental Guidelines provide a comprehensive science-based framework for managing fresh produce food safety risks across production, harvest and post-harvest handling. The guidelines were developed for use across the fresh produce supply chain regardless of business size, crop type or operational complexity and provide practical HACCP-based guidance to support businesses in identifying hazards, implementing good agricultural and handling practices and continuously improving food safety systems.

The review process was informed by findings from the HFSI stocktake and gap analysis, stakeholder consultation, COP discussions and evolving regulatory requirements, including implementation of the Horticulture PPP Standards. The updated Guidelines responded directly to gaps identified through the stocktake and stakeholder engagement, particularly the need for more practical, accessible and current food safety guidance for industry. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring the Guidelines remained practical and accessible for growers and packhouses while maintaining strong scientific and technical integrity.

Several significant updates were incorporated into the 2025 version. New chapters and appendices were developed to reflect emerging risks, evolving regulatory requirements and areas identified through stakeholder consultation and the HFSI stocktake and gap analysis. Key updates included:

- New Chapter on Managing Critical Incidents and Recalls
- New Chapter on Food Safety Culture
- New Appendix 02: Food Safety Regulation and Assurance Programmes
- New Appendix 04: The Use and Significance of Faecal Indicator Bacteria
- Enhanced guidance on water quality criteria and microbial testing protocols
- Updated content and layout to improve usability and accessibility
- Refreshed visuals including updated images, figures and decision trees

To complement the Fundamental Guidelines, a suite of Quick Guides for Fresh Produce Food Safety were developed. The accompanying Quick Guides were designed as practical, user-friendly summaries to support day-to-day use by growers and team members. Using the same structure as the full Guidelines, the Quick Guides enable rapid identification of key hazards, management practices and food safety considerations while directing users to more detailed information where required. This layered approach directly addressed one of the strongest findings from the stocktake: that industry required simpler, more practical guidance that could be readily applied on-farm and within packhouse operations, particularly for small to medium businesses. Quick Guides were also translated into multiple languages, initially Chinese, Vietnamese and Punjabi, to improve accessibility and support engagement with ESL participants across the fresh produce sector.

The release of the Fundamental Guidelines and Quick Guides was supported through a coordinated communication and extension campaign including a webinar, website updates, direct email promotion, social media, podcast content, stakeholder promotion packs and dissemination through partner networks and outreach activities. A public launch webinar attracted 71 registered online participants, providing an immediate extension pathway for the new resources and supporting early awareness and uptake across the sector. The Guidelines were also made available as a complete downloadable document or by individual chapter, improving accessibility and flexibility for industry users. Since launch, the Guidelines and supporting Quick Guides have continued to be promoted through industry conferences, outreach events, COP meetings and extension activities across Australia and New Zealand.

The Fundamental Guidelines recorded the highest rate of views and downloads out of all of the available resources during the project period, with an already notable increase year-on-year since the launch of the updated Fundamental Guidelines (year to date). Quick Guides and Grower Guides also showed consistent uptake, while Food Safety Essential Guides, launched early 2026, have achieved early engagement despite their recent release (Figure 10).

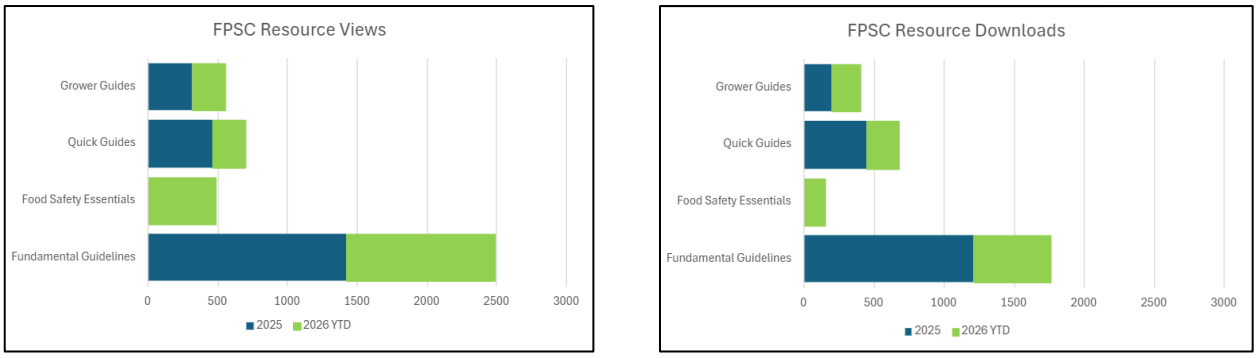

Figure 10. FPSC Website views (left) and downloads (right) of food safety resources during the project period. *Note: Food Safety Essential Guides were launched in 2026.*

Industry engagement and outreach

HFSI delivered a substantial programme of industry engagement, outreach, collaboration and resource development across Australia and New Zealand. Across the project period, a total of 203 activities were recorded, demonstrating a strong and sustained level of engagement with the fresh produce sector. Of these, 184 activities had been completed at the time of reporting, with the remaining 19 activities forming part of the ongoing extension and engagement model beyond the formal project period (Appendix 2). These activities included governance and project reference meetings, COP and sub-COP meetings, conferences, roadshows, webinars, technical working groups, grower-facing events, site visits, presentations, resource launches and publication activities.

Engagement was geographically broad, with approximately 57% of completed activities delivered in Australia, 23% in New Zealand and a further 20% spanning both countries, reflecting a genuinely trans-Tasman approach. This distribution reflects the original project focus on supporting Australian implementation of the Horticulture PPP Standards, while also recognising the project's broader ANZ scope and the strong role of New Zealand stakeholders in technical collaboration, guidance development and sector engagement.

A significant proportion of activity was designed to reach growers directly or create opportunities for grower engagement. Approximately 64% of completed activities were identified as providing direct opportunity to engage with growers. This is important, as growers were a key target audience for the initiative, particularly smaller and medium-sized businesses that may have limited access to specialist food safety support. Engagement occurred through targeted roadshows, commodity-specific events, regional development officer training, industry conferences, workshops and resource-based outreach.

The project also achieved considerable audience reach. Across the 184 completed activities, approximately 3,707 participants were directly engaged. In addition, 79 completed outreach activities totalling approximately 2,595 participants. This demonstrates that the initiative was not limited to formal meetings and conferences but also achieved strong participation through targeted extension and outreach delivery. Broader reach was further supported through indirect communication channels such as resource distribution, industry networks, webinars, newsletters and partner-supported communications.

The activity mix shows that the initiative adopted a multi-channel extension model rather than relying on a single engagement method. Outreach activities represented a substantial proportion of total activity, alongside meetings, conferences, presentations, webinars, site visits and extension activities. This spread demonstrates that the project worked across both formal and informal engagement settings, using opportunities where the target audience was already gathering rather than depending solely on project-led events.

The collaborative networks and stakeholder relationships established throughout the HFSI are expected to continue beyond the life of the project, supporting ongoing communication, knowledge sharing and future extension opportunities across the fresh produce supply chain.

Support for the Horticulture PPP Standards in Australia was a major focus, although delivery was constrained by the slower-than-expected implementation across all states and territories. Approximately 22% of completed activities were specifically aligned to PPP Standards. Approximately 64% of activities applied broadly across all crops, demonstrating a strong emphasis on cross-cutting food safety principles relevant to the entire fresh produce sector. A smaller proportion of activities focused specifically on priority commodities such as leafy vegetables, berries and melons, alongside targeted engagement with sectors such as kiwifruit and other horticultural crops.

However, the proportion of PPP-specific engagement also reflects a practical and adaptive response to implementation delays. As rollout progressed more slowly than anticipated, the project pivoted toward broader food safety engagement, foundational capability building and extension across additional commodities and sectors. This ensured continued momentum and relevance, while positioning industry to better respond as regulatory requirements come into effect. At the time of reporting, Victoria and Western Australia had implemented the Horticulture PPP Standards. NSW DPIRD has recently implemented the Standards with a 12-month educative approach through to 12 February 2027, further reinforcing the ongoing need for practical food safety extension, guidance and industry support as the remaining states and territories progress implementation activities.

Resource development was another important output of the engagement programme. A suite of materials was developed to support extension activities, including practical guidance, grower-facing resources, training and outreach materials and communication tools. These materials strengthened the impact of engagement activities by providing practical tools that could be applied beyond individual events and shared across industry networks.

The initiative also established and supported several governance, technical and collaborative groups (Table 2). The PRG provided oversight and strategic direction, while the COP created a platform for ongoing engagement and knowledge exchange. Sub-COPs, working groups and technical advisory groups enabled more focused collaboration on priority issues and ensured that engagement was supported by robust technical input and industry feedback. The sub-COPs remain ongoing and in active development, with workstreams continuing beyond the project to further progress identified opportunities and support development of practical tools and materials for industry.

Knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) outcomes were monitored across the HFSI through a combination of baseline, midline and endline evaluation activities, together with post-event surveys and qualitative feedback collected from selected outreach and engagement activities. Formal KASA monitoring was undertaken within the COP, where the proportion of participants reporting a high level of food safety knowledge increased from 30% at baseline, to 44% at midline and 60% at endline, demonstrating progressive improvement in participant confidence and capability over the project period. In addition to the COP, a selection of outreach and extension activities undertaken incorporated post-event evaluation questions relating to knowledge gain, relevance and intended application of learning. Results demonstrated that 100% of measured outreach activities showed an increase in food safety knowledge, awareness or understanding following participation. Qualitative feedback further identified increased awareness of food safety standards, improved understanding of practical food safety requirements and strengthened engagement with industry food safety practices across a range of stakeholder groups and outreach formats (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of food safety knowledge outcomes measured across selected HFSI outreach activities

Outreach activity	Food safety knowledge after outreach activity rating
COP Value Creation (Dec 2024 - Apr 2026)	The proportion of participants reporting a high level of knowledge increased from 30% at baseline, to 44% at midline and 60% at endline following ongoing COP participation
IDO Training Session (2024)	Relevance rating: 4.63/5; 100% reported gaining knowledge/resources and intent to apply learning
RDO Training Session (2024)	Relevance rating: 5/5; 100% reported gaining knowledge/resources and intent to apply learning
VegNET Leafy Vegetable Roadshows (2024)	Qualitative feedback indicated increased awareness of food safety standards and industry requirements

AgVic Horticulture Standards Webinar (2024)	Average knowledge rating after webinar increased from 7.1 to 8.2/10
VegNET Chinese Grower Association NSW Field Days (2025)	Qualitative feedback demonstrated improved awareness and engagement with food safety and industry practices, average knowledge rating increased from 3 to 3.9/5
Summerfruit Sundowner (Oct 2025)	Majority of participants rated the event as "Good" or "Excellent"; qualitative feedback indicated knowledge sharing and industry learning outcomes
Zespri Food Safety Symposium (Nov 2025)	Qualitative feedback identified increased knowledge in food safety culture, pathogen risks, food fraud, microbiology and compliance
Apata KASA Outreach (2025)	100% reported gaining knowledge/resources and intent to apply learning; 100% rated activity as very or extremely relevant

Overall, the IEP data demonstrates that HFSI achieved broad, sustained and adaptive engagement across the fresh produce sector. The programme successfully combined direct engagement, outreach, resource development and collaborative structures to increase awareness, strengthen networks and support practical food safety capability across Australia and New Zealand, despite external constraints such as the timing of regulatory implementation.

Community of Practice and Sub-COPs

The Fresh produce safety COP became one of the strongest legacy mechanisms established through the HFSI and evolved into an important platform for collaboration, engagement, knowledge sharing and extension across the fresh produce supply chain. The inaugural COP meeting held in November 2023 included 31 participants representing industry, growers, packhouses, peak industry bodies, regulatory agencies, research organisations, retailers, standard owners, training providers, consultants and wholesale sectors across Australia and New Zealand. By April 2026, membership had grown to 95 active members, demonstrating continued interest and engagement across the sector. Membership was predominantly Australian, with approximately 81% of members based in Australia and the remainder in New Zealand. Importantly, 36% of members were from industry, growers or packers, demonstrating increasing participation from the intended end-user and supply chain audience.

The COP met 11 times throughout the project period and maintained consistently high levels of participation and engagement (80-100%). Meetings were delivered primarily online, supported by annual in-person sessions aligned with the International fresh produce safety symposiums. The COP structure incorporated technical presentations, facilitated discussions, external guest speakers, live engagement polls, collaborative review activities and sharing of emerging industry issues and practical experiences. The format enabled members from geographically dispersed regions across Australia and New Zealand to participate while supporting ongoing collaboration between meetings.

Discussion topics and presentations reflected emerging industry priorities, stakeholder feedback and evolving regulatory requirements. Topics covered throughout the project included implementation of the Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards, environmental monitoring, water quality, traceability, food safety culture, incident management, climate and severe weather impacts, microbiological risks, rapid testing technologies, harmonisation of retailer requirements, extension approaches and development of practical food safety resources. The COP also provided a platform for review and feedback on key HFSI outputs including the Fundamental Guidelines, Quick Guides, symposium planning and outreach priorities.

The COP additionally supported monitoring and evaluation activities through incorporation of KASA assessments and value creation surveys based on the Wenger, Trayner and De Laat framework. Baseline, midline and endline assessments were undertaken to help monitor changes in awareness, knowledge, confidence, engagement and perceived value across the network. Live meeting polls and discussion activities were also used to identify emerging knowledge gaps, priority topics and future extension opportunities. Early KASA findings highlighted strong interest in practical food safety guidance, environmental monitoring, climate-related food safety risks, traceability and food safety culture, which subsequently informed development of resources, webinars, outreach activities and sub-COP focus areas.

As the project progressed, the COP expanded to include more targeted sub-COPs. The sub-COPs were formed around member-identified priorities and were designed to produce practical outputs. The pre- and post-harvest food safety and quality sub-COP agreed to develop decision trees for water use and supplier-input verification. The regulation and compliance sub-COP focused on simple practical materials, including ESL options for non-GFSI growers, with opportunity to develop training videos. The technology and innovation sub-COP focused on real-world use cases and credible resource hubs. The incident management sub-COP agreed to develop a fresh produce incident response guide, including escalation decision trees, key contacts, roles and responsibilities, training needs and mock-exercise templates. The sub-COPs are ongoing and remain in active development, with workstreams progressing beyond the life of the project to further explore identified opportunities and support the development of practical tools and materials for industry.

Communications and network extension

The project's communications approach was an important mechanism for extending reach beyond direct event attendees. The communications plan established key audiences, messaging and channels for each phase of the project. It identified growers, peak industry bodies, collaborators, IDOs, consumers, funding partners, the PRG, COP, standard owners and service providers as distinct audiences requiring different messages and channels.

A major strength of the project was that it leveraged existing industry communication networks rather than creating a parallel system. The communications plan mapped available platforms across partners including AUSVEG, Berries Australia, Melons Australia, HortNZ, Freshcare, HARPS, FSANZ, MPI, Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, regulators, retailers and others. This allowed the project to disseminate information through trusted pathways already used by growers and industry stakeholders.

Digital reach increased over the project period. The Fresh and Safe newsletter was delivered to more than 1,401 subscriber database (list) in each of its last two editions in September 2025 and February 2026, with an average open rate of 21.92% (compared to an industry average of 27-37%). Website traffic remained strong, with increasing views recorded during the period of the project (Year 2 = 23,076; Year 3 YTD = 20,789) and key pages including the home page, guidelines, grower guides and publications/resources (Figure 10). LinkedIn followers reached Year 3 = 2,695 at the time of reporting compared to the start of project baseline Year 1 = 1,052. In addition to this, the number of followers has progressively increased on other social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and whilst X has not been a focus of communication measure since introduced has gained followers (Figure 11).

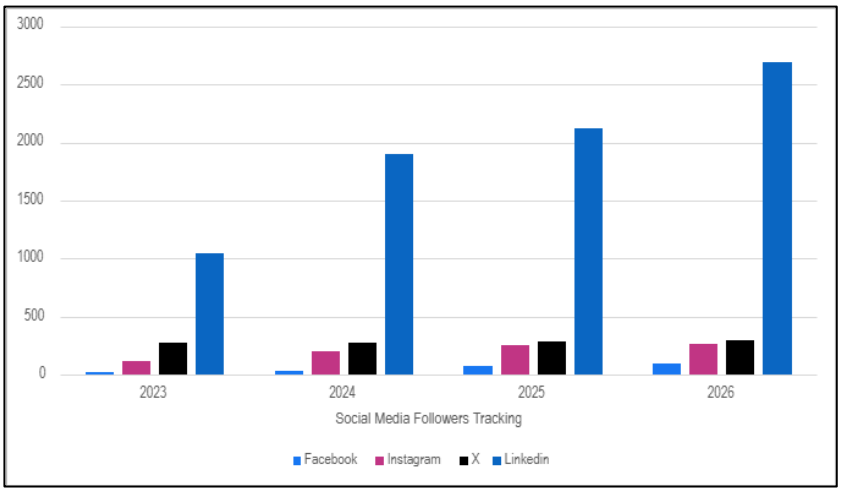

Figure 11. Growth in FPSC social media followers during the HFSI project period (n=4 platforms)

The project also developed the Fresh and Safe podcast, a six-episode series designed to communicate practical guidance, industry insights and emerging trends to growers, packers, auditors and other stakeholders with a total of 183 views across the 6 episodes at the time of reporting. Podcast engagement remained relatively consistent across the project period, demonstrating ongoing audience interest (albeit low to start) in the Fresh and Safe podcast series. The highest levels of engagement were recorded in July 2025 (29 streams/downloads), March 2026 (28 streams/downloads) and November 2025 (26 streams/downloads). Engagement remained moderate throughout August and September 2025 (23–24 streams/downloads), suggesting sustained interest following initial launch and promotional activities. Lower

engagement was recorded during December 2025 and April 2026, suggesting podcast engagement was strongest during periods of launch and active industry communication. It was also positive to see the strongest uptake Trans-Tasman with 56% of listeners in Australia and 16% in New Zealand.

This communications system helped convert project outputs into accessible extension products. For example, the Fundamental Guidelines and Quick Guides were promoted through newsletters, direct email, social media, website updates, launch webinar, podcast discussion and partner communication packs. Help desk promotion was similarly embedded into social media, newsletters, presentations, email signatures and partner networks. This network extension approach is a significant project outcome because it created the conditions for continued dissemination beyond the life of the project.

Fresh produce safety help desk

The Fresh produce safety help desk was launched in August 2024 to provide confidential, timely food safety advice and support to small and medium-sized growers and supply chain stakeholders across Australia and New Zealand. It was designed to provide practical guidance on standards, testing, risk management and regulatory interpretation.

At the time of reporting, the help desk received 28 validated enquiries. Of which, 78% came from Australia and 22% from New Zealand, indicating early trans-Tasman use. While the enquiry volume was lower than initially anticipated, the service demonstrated strong responsiveness, with 93% of enquiries addressed within 24 hours.

The method of enquiry showed that 46% of contacts were submitted through the online help desk, while email and mobile each represented 32% and 21%, respectively. This suggests that maintaining multiple access points is important, as users may choose different contact methods depending on urgency, complexity and preference. Geographically, enquiries came from both Australia (75%) and New Zealand (25%), with Victoria (25%) and Queensland (18%) majority of enquiries (Figure 12). No enquiries were received from the Northern Territory during the reporting period, indicating a need for continued promotion in underrepresented regions.

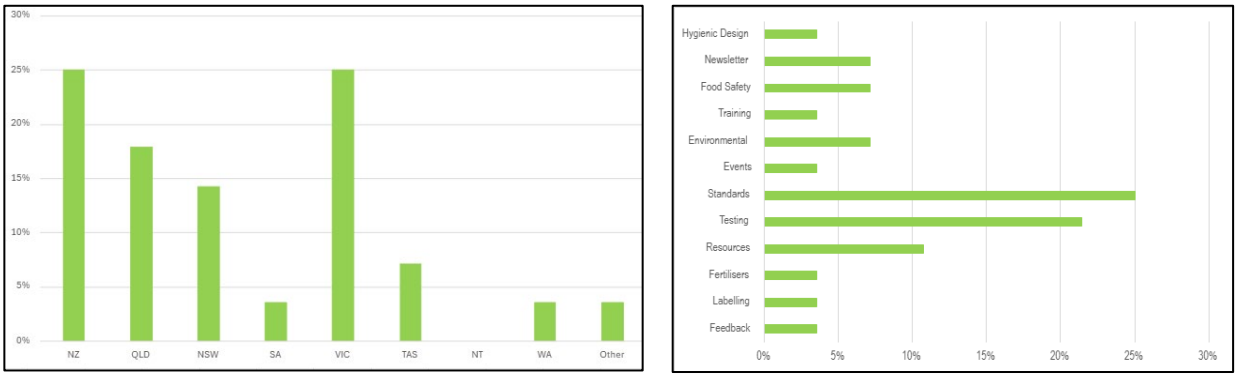

Figure 12. Geographic distribution of help desk enquiries (left) and food safety topics (right) (n=28)

The most common enquiry topics were food safety standards (25%) and testing (21%) requirements. Other topics included resources, environmental management, fertiliser use, labelling, training, events and general food safety. Leafy vegetables remained the largest crop-specific category at 25% of all enquiries, while the “other” category represented 39% and included kiwifruit, citrus, persimmons, avocados and root vegetables. No melon enquiries were received, likely reflecting the availability and visibility of the existing “Safe Melon Program” help desk.

The lower-than-expected uptake is an important finding rather than a failure of the service. It suggests that industry already has multiple support channels, including certification bodies, regulators, commodity programmes and existing help desks. It also indicates that awareness and trust in a new service take time to build. The help desk should be viewed as an emerging support mechanism with demonstrated service quality and insight-gathering value, rather than assessed solely by enquiry volume.

International fresh produce safety symposiums

The International fresh produce safety symposiums became flagship engagement activities under the HFSI, providing an important platform for cross-sector collaboration, knowledge exchange and discussion of emerging fresh produce food safety issues across Australia and New Zealand. The symposiums brought together growers, packhouses, retailers, researchers, regulators, auditors, certification bodies, technical service providers and industry representatives, supporting the project objective of strengthening collaboration and capability across the supply chain.

The 2024 symposium attracted 126 registrations and 121 attendees from across the fresh produce sector. The programme was designed to balance technical presentations, practical case studies, keynote speakers, panel discussions and networking opportunities, creating an engaging and accessible format for a broad audience. The 2024 symposium keynote speaker was Frank Yiannas, previously from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), internationally recognised for his leadership in food safety, traceability and food safety culture. The symposium was delivered under the theme “Connect, Collaborate, Cultivate” reflecting the symposium’s focus on strengthening relationships across the fresh produce supply chain, encouraging cross-sector collaboration and supporting growth in food safety capability and knowledge sharing across the industry. Topics covered included emerging food safety risks, regulatory developments, food safety culture, traceability, environmental monitoring, water management, lessons from foodborne illness incidents and practical approaches to implementing food safety systems within fresh produce operations. The symposium also provided opportunities for stakeholders to discuss implementation challenges associated with the Horticulture PPP Standards for berries, melons and leafy vegetables. Feedback from attendees was highly positive, with 92% of respondents indicating the symposium was highly informative or useful and 95% rating the balance of presentations, panels and networking opportunities as good or very good.

Building on the success of the inaugural event, the 2025 symposium adopted the theme “Innovate, Adapt and Secure”, reflecting the increasing importance of innovation, resilience and preparedness within fresh produce food safety systems. The symposium attracted 119 registrations and expanded the scope and diversity of programme content with keynote speaker Professor Jim Monaghan, from Harper Adams University in the United Kingdom, who presented on strengthening fresh produce systems, resilience and future capability within horticultural production and supply chains. Key topics for the symposium included artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, digital traceability systems, rapid pathogen detection methods, environmental monitoring, climate and severe weather impacts, crisis and incident management, workforce capability, assurance systems and practical implementation of food safety programmes. The programme included a blend of presentations, industry case studies, panel discussions and workshop, enabling attendees to explore both strategic and practical aspects of fresh produce food safety. The 2025 symposium also provided an important platform for promotion and discussion of the updated Fundamental Guidelines. Again, feedback from attendees was positive with 92% felt the sessions supported learning and connection across industry, and found examples and insights shared useful.

A notable addition to the 2025 programme was the inaugural *Farm-to-Lab Tour*, which sold out and provided participants with a practical end-to-end view of fresh produce production, food safety management and scientific testing processes. The tour included visits to commercial growing and postharvest operations as well as laboratory and research facilities, enabling attendees to observe practical implementation of food safety systems, environmental monitoring, traceability and testing processes within operational settings. The tour highlighted the integration of on-farm food safety practices with laboratory science and regulatory verification, reinforcing the importance of collaboration across the supply chain.

Collectively, the symposiums significantly strengthened engagement and collaboration across the fresh produce sector and established a strong foundation for ongoing annual industry forums focused on fresh produce food safety, innovation and capability development.

Hort food safety implementation model

A Hort food safety implementation model for continuing both existing and new opportunities has been developed, where some aspects are commercial in confidence and not for public release, however shared with Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited.

Outputs

Table 2. Output summary

Output	Description	Detail
Food safety resource stocktake	A structured stocktake identified more than 400 existing food safety resources and captured details including source, topic, commodity, language, complexity and accessibility.	Fresh produce food safety resources identified through stakeholder engagement and web-based resource stocktake, collated into a centralised resource register and made available through the FPSC website to support industry access to relevant food safety guidance and information. The stocktake also formed the foundation for gap analysis, resource prioritisation and future research recommendations.
Fresh Insights on Food Safety Survey	A 25-question survey was developed to gather food safety insights from the fresh produce industry across Australia and New Zealand. Results included 150 combined online and phone respondents.	Comprehensive mixed-methods industry survey and needs assessment undertaken across Australia and New Zealand identified food safety knowledge gaps, training needs, outreach priorities and future research opportunities across the fresh produce supply chain. Findings informed development of extension activities, guidance materials, webinars, COP focus areas and future project priorities.
Established a Community of Practice (COP)	A COP was established with representatives from industry, growers, regulators, researchers, retailers across Australia and New Zealand.	The COP grew from 31 inaugural participants to 95 members by April 2026. Eleven COP meetings were held by April 2026 (2 in-person), with strong engagement poll results (between 80-100%) and sustained participation, supporting collaboration, knowledge sharing and food safety capability development.
Established Sub-COPs	Four sub-COPs were established in Phase 4 and 5 to focus on practical outputs in priority food safety areas.	Focus areas included pre- and post-harvest food safety, regulation and compliance, technology and innovation and incident management. The sub-COPs remain ongoing and in active development, with workstreams continuing beyond the project to further progress identified opportunities and support development of practical tools and materials for industry.
Implementation of the Industry Engagement Plan	The project attended or delivered 184 engagement and outreach activities across Australia and New Zealand.	Activities included workshops, webinars, field days, conferences, roadshows, packhouse outreach, COP and sub-COP meetings, technical presentations and crop-specific engagement activities delivered across Australia and New Zealand to support practical food safety extension, awareness and capability building across the fresh produce supply chain. Remaining activities will continue to be delivered as part of the ongoing extension model beyond the formal project period.
Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety 2025	A comprehensive, science-based guideline document was developed through technical review and stakeholder consultation.	The updated guidelines provide industry with refreshed, science-based guidance for managing food safety risks across production and post-harvest handling to retail.

Output	Description	Detail
Quick Guides for Fresh Produce Food Safety	Practical one-page guides were developed to support implementation of the Fundamental Guidelines.	Quick guides translate key requirements from the Fundamental Guidelines into accessible, user-friendly formats to support day-to-day implementation across a range of operations and audiences, including small to medium enterprises and ESL users (incl. Chinese, Vietnamese and Punjabi)
Food Safety Essential Guides	A suite of concise, practical guides was developed to support core food safety practices for fresh produce businesses.	Food safety essential guides were developed focusing on priority incident-based scenarios, including flood and bushfire events, addressing specific food safety risks and practical response actions. These guides were designed as targeted, scenario-based resources to support industry preparedness.
Stakeholder Working groups, advisory groups and collaborative forums established or supported	FPSC actively participated in, established or supported a range of working groups, advisory forums, COPs and technical collaboration activities throughout the project.	These groups played an important role in strengthening sector collaboration, supporting knowledge exchange, informing resource development and providing technical input into emerging food safety priorities across the fresh produce supply chain (including but not limited to): RegTech COP; NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce; HARPS Stakeholder Working Group - Top 10 CARs and Harmonisation of testing; NZ GLOBALG.A.P National Technical Working Group; NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network; NZ Bagged Leafy Veg Working Group; NSWDPIRD Interim Plant Products Committee; Extension Community of Practice (A Lighter Touch)
Food Safety Information Packs including: Quick Guides booklet, PPP Toolkit and checklist for berries, leafy veg and melons	A set of compiled information packs was developed to support targeted extension and regulatory readiness activities.	These packs brought together key resources, including the Quick Guides booklet, PPP Toolkit and supporting checklists, providing structured and practical materials to assist industry in understanding and applying food safety requirements, particularly in preparation for PPP Standards implementation.
Fresh Produce Safety Help Desk	A confidential help desk was launched to support growers and supply chain stakeholders.	By April 2026, 28 validated enquiries had been received through the Fresh Produce Food Safety Help Desk, covering topics including water quality, environmental management, testing, traceability, regulatory interpretation and practical implementation of food safety requirements.
International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium 2024 and 2025	Two successful symposiums were delivered	Symposiums provided an important platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing and industry engagement across the fresh produce supply chain. Both symposiums included keynote presentations, panel discussions and technical sessions covering emerging risks, innovation, regulation and practical food safety challenges.
Communications and Digital extension	A multi-channel communications model was implemented.	Channels included the Fresh and Safe newsletter, social media, FPSC website, podcast, webinars, brochures, network partner communications and promotional packs.

Outcomes

Table 3. Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Improved access to practical food safety information	Supports improved food safety capability and risk management across the fresh produce sector.	The project moved industry from fragmented access to resources toward a more coordinated set of practical tools, including the Fundamental Guidelines, Quick Guides, website resources and help desk.	400+ resources reviewed; guidelines and Quick Guides developed; website and newsletter used for dissemination.
Improved food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations	Directly aligns with the project's KASA-based M&E framework.	The project delivered training, outreach, webinars, COP meetings and practical guidance to support improved awareness and capability. Refer to Table 1 for a summary of KASA measures across key activities and Table 4 M&E outcomes.	The KASA framework outcomes collectively demonstrate that the HFSI achieved its intended theory of change at the intermediary and institutional level. The shift in food safety professionals' orientations from compliance-driven to proactively risk-aware, evidenced across the COP focus group, case studies and key informant data, represents perhaps the most significant and enduring contribution the initiative has made.
Strengthened cross-sector collaboration	Supports whole-of-supply-chain approaches to food safety risk management.	The COP, PRG, symposiums and partner networks created regular mechanisms for collaboration across growers, regulators, researchers, retailers, standard owners and service providers.	COP grew to 95 members; eleven meetings held (2 in-person); four sub-COPs established; symposiums delivered in 2024 and 2025, Table 2 Stakeholder working groups.
Improved industry readiness for regulatory change	Supports implementation of PPP Standards and broader compliance capability. Reduced outreach opportunity with the delayed implementation of PPP standards across all states and Territories.	The project provided resources, outreach and technical support to help industry prepare new or evolving food safety requirements.	PPP-focused outreach, Quick Guides, toolkit, help desk enquiries and targeted activities for berries, leafy vegetables and other crops.

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Increased reach through trusted extension networks	Supports effective adoption by using existing industry pathways.	HFSI activated established communication and extension networks rather than relying only on direct project communications.	Communications plan mapped partner channels; newsletter reached 1401 subscribers; 184 engagement and outreach activities delivered; partner promotion used across industry.
Established legacy support mechanisms	Supports ongoing improvement beyond project completion.	The project created mechanisms that can continue beyond the funded period.	COP and sub-COPs active; help desk operational; annual symposium model demonstrated; guidelines publicly launched; NZ Fresh produce food safety network operational; hort food safety implementation model developed.

Monitoring and evaluation

The HFSI M&E framework was designed to assess whether the project improved food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations and whether it contributed to improved food safety risk management practices across the fresh produce industry. The framework included baseline, midline and endline KASA assessment, stakeholder feedback, COP value creation tracking, survey data, activity metrics, help desk analysis and communication analytics.

The overarching aim of the HFSI, to improve food safety outcomes across the fresh produce industry by building the capacity of producers, supply chain participants and allied professionals to understand, implement and sustain sound food safety practices, was **substantially achieved at the professional intermediary and institutional level**, with growing but not yet fully evidenced reach to producers directly.

Against the four components of the KASA framework:

- **Knowledge** gains were clearly evidenced among food safety practitioners, intermediaries and engaged industry professionals. The "ceiling effect" observed among highly experienced participants indicates the programme attracted disproportionately expert participants, while evidence of knowledge gains among lower-baseline growers, the intended primary beneficiary is less direct.
- **Attitudes** toward food safety shifted in a positive direction among COP participants and case study participants, with multiple data sources evidencing a move from compliance-oriented to risk-aware and proactive orientations. This attitudinal shift at the professional level is one of the project's most significant and potentially enduring contributions.
- **Skills** development was the weakest KASA category, consistent with the professional seniority of most engaged participants. Where skills development occurred, it tended to be in communication and facilitation capability rather than technical food safety skills.
- **Aspirations** for continued engagement, professional development and food safety improvement were the most consistently and strongly evidenced KASA outcome across all data sources, providing a positive indicator for sustained engagement beyond the project period.

At the level of the project's theory of change, the evaluation concludes that HFSI successfully generated the intended **outputs of** a strengthened COP, revised guidelines and a range of accessible resources and has produced evidenced **outcomes** in terms of KASA changes among those engaged. Progress toward **impact,** changes in on-farm and supply chain food safety practice attributable to the project, is credible and plausible at the institutional level, but not yet fully demonstrable at the farm level. This is consistent with the project's stage of implementation and the structural delays in PPP Standards rollout, rather than evidence that impact will not ultimately materialise.

The project's most significant and enduring achievements (Appendix 5), the FPSC Guidelines, the COP as a professional community, the elevation of FPSC's institutional profile and support for establishment of the NZ Food Safety Network, represent genuine and lasting contributions to the horticulture food safety sector in Australia and New Zealand. The full report can be found in Appendix 3.

Table 4. Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
Effectiveness: **To what extent did the project increase or improve industry participants' food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA)?** Changes in participant food safety KASA 75% of project participants self-rate increased or improved food safety knowledge and/or attitudes and/or skills and/or aspirations	HFSI made a credible and evidenced contribution to food safety KASA, with the strongest gains demonstrated at the professional practitioner and intermediary level. The 95 member COP had 70% of members reporting active application of information in their operations. Knowledge gains were confirmed among 71% of COP focus group participants and 86% of case study participants. Aspirational change was the most consistent positive finding and confirmed practice-level behaviour change was documented in 57% of case study participants. The revision and expansion of the horticulture food safety guidelines was universally regarded as the project's single most tangible and durable output. Multiple state regulatory agencies, including NSW Food Authority, Victoria and Western Australia, independently embedded the guidelines into their own regulatory tools and outreach materials.	Direct farm-level behavioural change was not systematically captured, due to the delayed implementation of the PPP. Effectiveness among small, ESL and less-engaged growers remains the largest unresolved gap against the project's original intent. A focus group is planned with NSWDPIRD including ESL to assess KASA
Relevance: **How relevant was the horticulture food safety initiative to the fresh produce industry?**	There was near-total agreement that the project addressed a genuine and urgent need. The choice of commodity priorities, alignment with the gazetting of the PPP Standards and focus on building accessible common knowledge across a fragmented sector were assessed as highly appropriate. The project's approach of positioning itself as the education phase that precedes enforcement, rather than as a regulatory tool itself, was valued by regulators and	The primary qualification is that content, while technically rigorous, did not always sufficiently address the fear, complexity and motivational barriers that prevent growers from engaging. This will be rectified with improved framing/presentation of subject matter.

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
	industry alike. The project filled a genuine structural gap in the NZ food safety landscape. <u>Participation in Community of Practice (COP)</u> Year 1 = 25 participants Year 2 = 50 participants Year 3 = 75 participants <u>% of English as a second language (ESL)-identifying food safety practitioners actively engaged in COP</u> No target <u>Participant satisfaction with COP</u> % of COP participants who self-report valuable food safety connections and/or increased food safety knowledge and/or new food safety skills and/or improved practice or performance, attributable to engagement in the COP <u>Target group participant engagement in project activities</u> Year 1 = baseline Year 2 = 20% increase on baseline Year 3 = 40% on baseline	Participation in the COP exceeded target with 31 inaugural members (Year 1, baseline 9/11/2023), 63 members (Year 2, midline 15/10/2024) and 95 members (Year 3 endline 10/03/2026) Percentage of ESL-identifying food safety practitioners actively engaged in the COP averaged 10% across 11 meetings. Consistent participant satisfaction with COP self-reporting overall value in the COP as 100% (baseline), 87% (midline) and 100% (endline), with reported high level of knowledge increasing from 30% (baseline), 44% (midline) and 60% (endline). Combining COP, sub-COP members (involved in informing and reviewing project activities and materials between Year 1 and 3, as well as the technical review team engaged in the comprehensive review of the guidelines): Year 1 = 31 participants Year 2 = 63 participants (+103%) Year 3 = 185 participants (+497%)	
<u>Process Appropriateness:</u> **To what extent were project engagement processes successful in engaging the target audience/s of the project?**	The breadth of engagement channels deployed was commendable for a project of this scale. The COP, sub-COPs and symposium were well-designed and effective mechanisms. The COP was flagged as a highly valued outcome due to the creation of a genuine community of identity among food safety professionals in horticulture. The project successfully attracted New Zealand co-funding and active NZ stakeholder engagement beyond initial expectations.	The consistent qualification across all stakeholder groups was that engagement largely reached those already motivated and engaged i.e. the *"already converted."* Extension officers engaged inconsistently, the melons sector remained largely disengaged (due to the existing support and framework in place with the 'Safe melon program') and the most vulnerable grower cohorts were reached only indirectly. The help desk model

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
Translation of project materials # of food safety materials produced by the project available in non-English languages Year 1 = 0 Year 2 = 4 Year 3 = 8 Project online materials # of downloads/page visits of food safety materials from FPSC and/or selected project partners' website Year 1 = baseline Year 2 = 20% increase on baseline Year 3 = 40% on baseline	Year 1 = 13 Food Safety Grower Guides published online in Arabic, Punjabi, Traditional Chinese, Chinese Simplified and Vietnamese. Year 2 = 6-episode Podcast series available on Spotify, iTunes and YouTube (with turn on captions/ auto-translate subtitle options for YouTube and Spotify, or transcript download for AI translation for Apple Podcasts) Year 3 = 20 Quick Guides published online in Chinese, Vietnamese, Punjabi Total # downloads of food safety materials from FPSC website measured for Year 2 (2025) and 3 (2026 YTD): Baseline = inaccurate due to 'bot traffic' 2025 = baseline 2,151/ year (ca. 179/ month) 2026 = 1,518/ YTD (ca. 304/ month) 69% increase YOY (YTD)	did not align with this sector's trust-based information-seeking behaviour.
How well was the produce industry engaged in the process? # of new unique participants who subscribe to FPSC project website and social media sites, compared to FPSC baseline Year 1 = 20% on baseline Year 2 = 50% increase on baseline Year 3 = 100% on baseline	The deployment of a wide range of engagement channels, i.e. the COP, sub-COPs, annual symposium, podcasts, newsletters, LinkedIn, roadshows, workshops, webinars and direct IDO engagement, maximised reach across different participant types, preferences and levels of prior engagement. The symposium in particular demonstrated latent demand for a dedicated horticulture food safety event that had not previously been tested. The number of unique participants increased YOY: Total combined followers across 4 social media platforms (refer to results and discussion section of report for individual platform tracking): Baseline = 1,474 followers Year 1 = 2,421 (64% >20% on baseline) Year 2 = 2,744 (86.2% >50% on baseline) Year 3 = 3,366 (128% >100% on baseline)	Geographic barriers limited the participation of New Zealand-based participants in in-person events. The non-applicability of PPP Standards to the New Zealand context effectively removed a significant strand of HFSI's work from relevance to NZ-based participants. The project's primary reach was to those already engaged in food safety; smaller, non-English-speaking and peri-urban growers were largely not reached directly. Develop a targeted outreach strategy for small and ESL growers in partnership with multicultural community organisations and grower associations.

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
# of helpdesk inquiries from industry participants Year 1 = baseline Year 2 = 20% increase on baseline Year 3 = 40% on baseline # of industry participants engaged in project activities Year 1 = baseline Year 2 = 20% increase on baseline Year 3 = 40% on baseline # of participants from micro, small, medium, large horticultural businesses engaged in project activities No target	The number of help desk inquiries was lower than anticipated, 17 (Year 1 baseline, August 2024-July 2025) and 11 (Year 2, August 2025 – to date tracking 14% lower month-to-date compared to previous year) Combining COP, sub-COP members (involved in informing and reviewing project activities and materials between Year 1 and 3, as well as the technical review team engaged in the comprehensive review of the guidelines): Year 1 = 31 participants Year 2 = 63 participants (+103%) Year 3 = 185 participants (+497%) Although the project aimed to engage businesses of all sizes, monitoring of participant business size was not consistently undertaken across all activities. Available evidence suggested that medium and large businesses represented the majority of engagement across webinars, working groups, symposiums and industry events.	
Coherence: **How compatible was the project among other interventions in the sector?** % of Project Reference Group (PRG) participants who rate the project as being compatible and gap filling, when considered among other industry food safety initiatives in Australia and NZ (Annual PRG reflection monitoring) No target	The project generally complemented rather than duplicated the sector landscape and actively worked to align with FSANZ, state regulatory bodies and other industry programmes. Initial friction with some established programmes and national peak bodies improved over the project's life. Coherence in New Zealand was particularly strong, with the project filling an identified structural gap and catalysing the establishment of a New Zealand Food Safety Network. PRG participants rated good levels of coherence during annual reflection: Annual Year 2 (30 April 2025) Very compatible, aligns and complements well 88.63% Annual Year 3 (17 April 2026) • Very compatible, aligns and complements well 40% • Somewhat compatible, some overlap 60%	Stronger alignment with existing Australian industry programmes, peak bodies and regulatory stakeholders to support clearer positioning, reduce perceived overlap and strengthen nationally coordinated delivery.

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
Efficiency: **Was the project delivered in an economic and timely way?** Costs against project budget and areas where overruns and underspends occurred Less than 10% variation between actual cost and budget	High-quality outputs were delivered on a modest budget (approximately A$1.4 million total investment over 3 years) and all contractual milestones were met. Well within the required 10% variation (actual <1%).	The principal efficiency limitation was sequential rather than parallel delivery, which compressed most outreach activities into Year 3. The guidelines review overran both budget and timeline, though the quality of the final product was universally considered to justify the additional investment. Three CEO transitions across the project created structural inefficiencies in stakeholder management.
Sustainability: **Will the benefits generated by the project be likely to continue?** Will the benefits generated by the project be likely to continue? Commitments to continue ongoing activities after project close. $ value of funding committed for the ongoing activities to continue after project close No target	The revised FPSC Fundamental Guidelines, associated grower resources, the COP community and FPSC's substantially elevated institutional profile provide a strong foundation for continued impact. State regulatory agency adoption of HFSI materials across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia and supporting the establishment of the NZ Food Safety Network, represent additional indicators of institutional sustainability.	Increase pledger funding via existing and new supporters to meet the demands of maintaining and growing HFSI activities. Establish and implement maintenance / review plan for resources to ensure continued benefit post-project

Recommendations

The following key recommendations were identified through the project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and Hort Food Safety Implementation Model and are intended to support continuous improvement and inform future food safety capability and extension initiatives.

1. **Adopt a train-the-trainer model as the core delivery architecture.** Rather than relying on centralised outreach from a single technical body, future initiatives should invest from inception in building a distributed network of trained facilitators embedded across states, territories and New Zealand. This model significantly extends reach, embeds knowledge within trusted local relationships and creates structural sustainability.

2. **Deliver engagement activities in parallel with resource development from Year 1.** Sequential delivery concentrated outreach in the final project year and limited cumulative impact. Future project designs should plan for simultaneous delivery of awareness, capacity-building and outreach activities throughout the project period.

3. **Invest in more multilingual, short-form, visually accessible content.** Videos of 30 seconds to two minutes, multilingual resources and pictorial guides should be planned as core project deliverables from inception. These reach non-English-speaking, low-literacy and non-digitally engaged audiences who are not served by text-based materials and are essential for achieving equity of reach across the grower population.

4. **Increase focus on non-technical barriers.** User-friendly resources are an essential component for successful outreach activities; however, it is also important to consider and address the non-technical barriers to behaviour change including motivational and emotional factors for each grower segment. This should form an integral part of future similar initiatives.

5. **Consider multi-year, renewable funding models that reduce strategic disruption.** Three-year project cycles with uncertain renewal prospects create structural challenges for relationship-building, workforce continuity and long-term investment. Funders should explore whether longer funding horizons or renewal frameworks can provide greater strategic stability for initiatives of this kind.

A list of all recommendations is available within the full M&E and Hort Food Safety Implementation Model Reports.

Refereed scientific publications

Journal article

None to report

Whole book

None to report

Chapter in a book or paper in conference proceedings

None to report

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Intellectual property

The food safety resource stocktake was previously identified as project intellectual property in earlier milestone reporting. However, this has since been made publicly available on the FPSC website. All other resources developed during the HFSI are also available on the FPSC website.

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The project gives thanks to all Stakeholders and Participants, including Community of Practice Members, engaged throughout the project.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Horticulture Food Safety Initiative Project Reference Group (PRG) Member List (as of May 2026)

Role	Member	Organisation	Reason
CEO	Damien Farrelly	FPSC	Chair
Chair	Andreas Klieber	FPSC	Funder
Emeritus Professor	Robyn McConchie	University of Sydney	Funder
R&D Manager	Bianca Cairns	Hort Innovation	Funder
Principal Food Safety Scientist	Craig Shadbolt	NSW DPIRD	Funder
Head of Own Brand -Technical & Development in Produce, Floral and Value-Added products	Mihaela Tamas	Coles	Funder
Engagement Officer Horticulture Standards	Emily Scott	Victoria Agriculture	Funder
Manager Food Standards Surveillance	Alessia Centofanti	South Australia Health	Funder
Innovation Leader - Food Safety	Agam Nangul	Zespri International	Funder
Manager - VR&I Board	Sally Anderson	VR&I	Funder
Distinguished Professor	Phil Bremer	NZFSSRC	Funder
Senior Food Safety Risk Manager	Mark Phythian	FSANZ	Technical Collaboration
Senior Risk Policy Manager	Felicity Lawlor	HortNZ	Nominated
Peak Industry Body	Zarmeen Hassan	AUSVEG	Nominated
Peak Industry Body	Johnathon Davey	Melons Australia	Back-up PIB

Appendix 2

Horticulture Food Safety Initiative Industry Engagement Plan and activity summary (n=184 completed and 19 planned for completion following final reporting as part of ongoing outreach and extension)

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
FPSC Conference	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Marguerite Delbet	Outreach		100+			X	X	100+		9/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
Horticulture Food Initiative Briefing	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Marguerite Delbet	Meeting		10+	X	X					24/08/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC Workshop #1 Digital Traceability	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Webinar		34				X	34		9/07/2023	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce Meeting	AUS	NZ	All		On-line	Marguerite Delbet	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				9/12/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC/Safe Food QLD Meeting	AUS	AUS	All		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		5+	X	X	X				13/09/2023	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #1	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				28/09/2023	Confirmed	100%
AIFST Food Safety Symposium - Day 1	AUS	NSW	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		40+	X						17/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC Workshop #2 Bureau of Meteorology 'My Climate View'	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Webinar		18				X	18		17/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
AIFST Food Safety Symposium - Day 2	AUS	NSW	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		40+	X						19/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
RegTech Horticulture COP	AUS	NSW	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		20+	X	X	X				25/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
Murray Bros Site & Brisbane Market	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach		20+	X	X		X	20+		26/10/2023	Confirmed	100%
M&E Theory of Change PRG	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X						1/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #1	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	31	X	X	X	X	31		1/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
Freshcare Assurance Summit	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		100+	X	X	X				13-15/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
Perfection Fresh	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Jody Sharpe	Visit		5+	X	X	X				16/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
NSVDPIRD	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Jody Sharpe	Meeting		5+	X	X	X				16/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
Family Fresh Farm	AUS	NSW	Cucumbers		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Jody Sharpe	Visit		5+	X	X	X				17/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
NSVDPIRD Lab	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Jody Sharpe	Visit		5+	X	X	X				17/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
PMAC Fresh Produce Working Group	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				22/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC Workshop #3 Unwrapping the future of Food packaging: risks, compliance and innovation	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Webinar		22		X	X	X	22		28/11/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC Workshop #4 - A Healthy Summer Feast - Fresh Produce & Food Safety at your BBQ	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Webinar		56		X	X	X	56		12/05/2023	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #2	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				12/06/2023	Confirmed	100%
ISFR Meeting (Slot 8)	AUS	All	All		On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				14/12/2023	Confirmed	100%
QLD Horticulture Industry Technical Advisory Group Meeting #1	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Brisbane	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				15/12/2023	Confirmed	100%
FPSC/PIB Collaboration Meeting	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons		On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		5	X	X	X				19/12/2023	Confirmed	100%
HITAG Working Group - Workshop One	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				25/01/2024	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #2	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach		41	X	X	X	X	41		30/01/2024	Confirmed	100%
IDO's Berries - FPSC Engagement	AUS	All	Berries	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach		6	X	X	X	X	6		23/02/2024	Confirmed	100%
VegNET/ RDO's - HFSI Overview	AUS	All	Leafy Veg	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach		3	X	X	X	X	2		3/07/2024	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #3	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	37	X	X	X	X	37		20/03/2024	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
HFSI COP Meeting #3	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	37	X	X	X	X	37		20/03/2024	Confirmed	100%
QLD Horticulture Industry Technical Advisory Group Meeting #2	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				22/03/2024	Confirmed	100%
ISFR Horticulture Working Group	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				22/03/2024	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #3	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				19/04/2024	Confirmed	100%
QLD Horticulture Industry Technical Advisory Group Meeting #3	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				29/04/2024	Confirmed	100%
Safe Food Steering Committee & Industry Technical Working Group Workshop	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				17/05/2024	Confirmed	100%
Hort Connections 2024	AUS	VIC	All		Melbourne	Susannah Roelofsz	Present HFSI		500+		X	X				5-6/6/2024	Confirmed	100%
RegTech Horticulture COP	AUS	VIC	All		Melbourne	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				6/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
Coles DC and retail visit	AUS	VIC	All		Melbourne	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Visit		5+	X	X	X				6/07/2024	Confirmed	100%
Australia Food Safety Council Members Meeting	AUS	AUS	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				17/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
Horticulture Peak Industry Bodies (PIBs) and food regulators	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				18/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
Collaboration in food regulation: Working together for impact	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				20/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #4	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	42	X	X	X	X	42		27/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
AIFST24 Convention	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		100+		X	X				6-7/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
ISFR Horticulture Working Group	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				8/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
NSV Roadshows [pre IFPSS]	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Sydney Markets	Farzana Adams	Present	NSW Roadshows, PPP/ Food Safety	<50		X		X	50		12-16/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium 2024	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz	Present HFSI		127		X	X	X	100		20-21/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #5	ANZ	All	All		In-person	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	16	X	X	X	X	16		22/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
RSE and Horticulture Conference	NZ	North Island	All		Tauranga	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		500+			X				28-30/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
Zespri HFSI Meeting	NZ	North Island	Kiwifruit		Tauranga	Susannah Roelofsz	Present HFSI		10-20	X	X	X	X	20		26-27/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
VegesWA	AUS	WA	Leafy Veg	Y	WA	Farzana Adams	Meeting		0-10	X	X	X				29/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
WA DPIRD	AUS	WA	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	WA	Farzana Adams	Meeting		0-10	X	X	X				29/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
Food Innovation Precinct WA	AUS	WA	All		WA	Farzana Adams	Meeting		0-10	X	X	X				30/08/2024	Confirmed	100%
Melville Farm	AUS	WA	Leafy Veg/ Melon	Y	WA	Farzana Adams	Meeting/ Outreach		0-10		X	X	X	10		9/03/2024	Confirmed	100%
Berries IDO	AUS	WA	Berries	Y	WA	Farzana Adams	Meeting	1/1 Face to Face Meeting	0-10		X	X				9/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
2025 Leafy Veg Standards Roadshow	NZ	VIC	Leafy Veg		Mallra	Susannah Roelofsz, AUSVEG, AgVic, Fresh Produce	Outreach	Vic Roadshows, PPP/ Food Safety	20+		X		X	20		18/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
2025 Leafy Veg Standards Roadshow	AUS	VIC	Leafy Veg	Y	Mornington Peninsula	Susannah Roelofsz, AUSVEG, AgVic, Fresh Produce	Outreach	Vic Roadshows, PPP/ Food Safety	20+		X		X	20		19/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
2025 Leafy Veg Standards Roadshow	AUS	VIC	Leafy Veg	Y	Werribee	Susannah Roelofsz, AUSVEG, AgVic, Fresh Produce	Outreach	Vic Roadshows, PPP/ Food Safety	20+		X		X	20		20/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
AUSVEG RDO Meeting	AUS	AUS	Leafy Veg	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	RDO Extension		0-10		X		X	10		26/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
Zespri FSQ Meeting	NZ	NZ	Kiwifruit		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Present HFSI		0-10							26/09/2024	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
HFSI COP Meeting #6	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	37	X	X	X	X	37		15/10/2024	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #4	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				22/10/2024	Confirmed	100%
Freshmark IAC presentation - National Food Safety Standards Freshmark	AUS	AUS	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Present HFSI		0-10		X		X	10		23/10/2024	Confirmed	100%
Pinata Farms	AUS	QLD	All		QLD	Susannah Roelofsz	Visit		5+	X		X				28/10/2024	Confirmed	100%
ISFR Horticulture Working Group	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+	X	X	X				19/06/2024	Confirmed	100%
VegNET RDO's Training	AUS	AUS	Leafy Veg	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Extension	HFSI/PPP	0-10		X	X	X	10	X	19/11/2024	Confirmed	100%
Berries RDO's Training	AUS	AUS	Berries	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Extension	HFSI/PPP	0-10		X	X	X	10	X	13/11/2024	Confirmed	100%
Postharvest Conference	NZ	North Island	All		Rotorua	Farzana Adams	Attend		100+			X				15/11/2024	Confirmed	100%
Chinese Growers at Sydney Produce Markets	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Chinese Growers at Sydney	Farzana Adams	Outreach	NSW Roadshows, PPP/ Food Safety	<50		X		X	50		12/02/2024	Confirmed	100%
Horticulture Standards - Freshmark Meeting	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Farzana Adams/ Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		3	X	X	X				12/04/2024	Confirmed	100%
Hort Standards Webinar	AUS	VIC	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line (VIC)	Susannah Roelofsz, SP Singh, AgVIC	Outreach	HFSI/PPP	<50		X		X	50		12/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #7	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	100+	X	X	X	X	100+		12/09/2024	Confirmed	100%
NFF Market Day	AUS	QLD	Melons		Brisbane Market	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		<50			X				12/12/2024	Confirmed	100%
VegNET NSW Vegetable Innovation Day	AUS	NSW	Sweet Corn and Zucchini		The Produce Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Jody Sharpe	Promo FPSC/ Outreac	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	<50		X	X	X	50		13/12/2024	Confirmed	100%
NSW Biosecurity COP	AUS	NSW	Melons, Berries	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz/ SP Singh	Promo FPSC/ Outreac	HFSI/PPP	50-100		X	X	X	100		29/01/2025	Confirmed	100%
Farmers Market Toolkit (Online resource)	AUS	All	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Website	Susannah Roelofsz	Extension	PPP/ Food Safety	100+				X	100+	X	21/02/2025	Launched	100%
BerryQuest International	AUS	TAS	Berries	Y	Hobart	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Present	Food Safety in fresh produce	100+		X	X	X	100+		24/02/2025	Confirmed	100%
PPP Standards for Victoria Webinar (Berries Australia)	AUS	VIC	Berries	Y	On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Present	FPSC/PPP/Best practice food safety	<50		X	X	X	50		13/02/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Sprout Resource	NZ	NZ	Sprouts		Extension	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Extension	Food Safety	TBA				X	TBA	X	31/04/2025	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #8	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	41	X	X	X	X	41		19/03/2025	Confirmed	100%
FlegTech Horticulture COP	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+							20/03/2025	Confirmed	100%
Mangoes Australia	AUS	QLD	Mangoes		Meeting	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		2	X	X	X				21/03/2025	Confirmed	100%
VFBI (Veg Sector Roadshows)	NZ	NZ	Veg		Pukekohe	Farzana Adams	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	90+		X	X	X	90+		8/04/2025	Confirmed	100%
VFBI (Veg Sector Roadshows)	NZ	NZ	Veg		Ashburton	Sharon Horton	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	50+		X	X	X	50+		30/04/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Bagged Leafy Veg Working Group	NZ	NZ	Leafy Veg		All	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Extension	Food Safety	10+				X	10+	X	Initiated 30/04/2025	Confirmed	100%
FlegTech Horticulture COP	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Meeting		20+							5/02/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Farzana Adams	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X				Initiated 14/05/2025	Confirmed	100%
Woolworths Brisbane RDC	AUS	QLD	All		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Visit	Food Safety in fresh produce	5+	X	X	X				29/05/2025	Confirmed	100%
Symbio Labs	AUS	QLD	All		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Visit		5+	X	X	X				30/05/2025	Confirmed	100%
Leading NZ Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		All	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Extension	Food Safety	TBA							Initiated 29/05/2025	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
Hort Innovation: SIAP Across-sector workshop	AUS	QLD	Veg		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Attend/ Workshop		10+			X				3/06/2025	Confirmed	100%
Food Industries Association of Queensland	AUS	QLD	All		QLD	Susannah Roelofsz	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	200+		X	X				4/06/2025	Confirmed	100%
Hort Connections 2025	AUS	QLD	All		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Attend	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	500+			X				4-6/06/2025	Confirmed	100%
FlegTech Horticulture COP	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Meeting		20+							6/06/2026	Confirmed	100%
VegNET NSW Asian Vegetable Field Day	AUS	NSW	All		NSW	Susannah Roelofsz, SP Singh, Craig Dudley, Qi Li	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	50+ (AUS-Chinese vegetable growers)		X	X	X	50+		17/06/2025	Confirmed	100%
Industry Roadmap: Microbial (E. coli - STEC) contamination in spinach products	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg	Y	NSW	Andreas Kleber	Attend	Food Safety	10+	X						25/06/2025	Confirmed	100%
Fresh & Safe Podcast: How we got started, how we're going, where we're headed	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	75		X		X	75	X	7/01/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 1 #1 Pre- and Post-Harvest Food Safety & Quality	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	17	X	X	X	X	17		7/01/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 4 #1 Incident Management	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	11	X	X	X	X	11		7/01/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 2 #1 Food Safety Regulation & Compliance	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	14	X	X	X	X	14		7/04/2025	Confirmed	100%
Exploring Greenlink	AUS	AUS	All		On-line	Joelle Mosso	Webinar	Exploring Greenlink (Closed Session)	10+			X				9/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
HARPS Top 10 CARS	AUS	AUS	All		AUS	Sharon Horton/ Susannah Roelofsz	Extension	Food Safety	10+						X	11/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
HARPS Harmonisation of Testing	AUS	AUS	All		AUS	Susannah Roelofsz	Extension	Food Safety	10+						X	Initiated 11/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
Fresh & Safe Podcast: The Fresh produce food safety guidelines unpacked	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	130		X		X	130	X	14/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 3 #1 Technology & Innovation in Food Safety	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	14	X	X	X	X	14		22/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium 2025	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	123				X	123		29-30/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
AUSVEG Growers Meeting at IFPSS25	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg	Y	Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Meeting	Food Safety	10+	X		X				30/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #9	ANZ	All	All		In-person	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	33	X	X	X	X	33		31/07/2025	Confirmed	100%
AIFST Convention 2025	AUS	NSW	All		Melbourne	Susannah Roelofsz	Attend		100+		X	X				12-13/08/2025	Confirmed	100%
HARPS Stakeholder Working Group - Harmonisation of testing	AUS	VIC	All		On-line	Attend	Present		10+	X	X	X				14/08/2025	Confirmed	100%
Fresh & Safe Podcast: Beyond the audit	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Roelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	122		X		X	120	X	26/08/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Hort Conference 2025	NZ	NZ	All		Wellington	Damien Farrelly	Present/ Attend	NZ Food Safety Framework	100+		X	X				26-27/08/2025	Confirmed	100%
GlobalG.A.P. Working Group	NZ	NZ	All		On-line	Damien Farrelly	Attend	Food Safety in fresh produce	TBA	X						29/08/2025	Confirmed	100%
Freshmark - PPP Standards and the changes to the Food Regulation	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	NSW	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend		4	X						2/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Consultation on the implementation of the Primary Production & Processing Standards (PPP) for Berries, Leafy vegetables and Melons	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	QLD	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend		10+	X						4/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				9/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Veg industry showcase	NZ	NZ	All		Wellington	Damien Farrelly	Attend		100+	X						9/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Bagged Leafy Veg Working Group	NZ	NZ	All		On-line	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend		4	X						10/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Lewis Farms	NZ	North Island	Berries, Asparagus		Manawatu	Damien Farrelly	Visit		3	X	X					12/09/2025	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
Woodhaven	NZ	North Island	Leafy Veg, Melons		Manawatu	Damien Farrelly	Visit		3	X	X					12/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Genoese	NZ	North Island	Basil		Manawatu	Damien Farrelly	Visit		2	X	X					12/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
SafeFood QLD	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	QLD	Susannah Ricelofsz	Meeting		4	X						15/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZGAP EMS Review Planning Workshop	NZ	North Island	All		North Island	Damien Farrelly	Meeting		TBA	X						16/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Rugby Farms Gatton	AUS	QLD	Leafy Veg	Y	QLD	Susannah Ricelofsz	Present/ Visit	FPSC/PPP/Food Safety	20+		X	X	X	20		18/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
The future of hort science roadshow	AUS	QLD	All		QLD	Susannah Ricelofsz	Attend		50+ (TBC)			X	X	50		19/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
AHAP future extension needs workshop	NZ	NZ	All		Wellington	Damien Farrelly	Attend		12	X						22/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 4 #2 Incident Management	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	14	X	X	X	X	14		30/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 1 #2 Pre- and Post-Harvest Food Safety & Quality	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	16	X	X	X	X	16		10/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Food Incident Response Discussion	AUS	All	Leafy veg	Y	On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend	ident response (learnings post STEC rec	10+	X						2/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #5	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				10/09/2025	Confirmed	100%
Fresh & Safe Podcast: Insights from the 2025 IFPSS	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	64		X		X	64	X	13/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
Gatton AgTech Showcase 2025	AUS	QLD	Veg		Gatton	Susannah Ricelofsz	Attend		1200			X				15-16/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
WA Stonefruit growers	AUS	WA	Stonefruit		WA	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	FPSC/PPP/Food Safety	1		X	X	X	1		21/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
WA Stonefruit event Q&A panelist	AUS	WA	Stonefruit		WA	Susannah Ricelofsz	Present	Food Safety	40		X	X	X	40		21/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
WA Horticulture Update (WAHU)	AUS	WA	All		WA	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	FPSC/PPP/Food Safety	200+			X				22/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				22/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
Meeting Henry Tan WA DPIRD/ WA Health	AUS	WA	All		WA	Susannah Ricelofsz	Meeting	FPSC/PPP/Food Safety	1	X						23/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 3 #2 Technology & Innovation in Food Safety	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	15	X	X	X	X	15		28/10/2025	Confirmed	100%
Kiwifruit Food Safety Meeting SOUTHERN PRODUCE/ NZAVO	NZ	North Island	Kiwifruit/ Avo		Tauranga	Susannah Ricelofsz	Present	FPSC/HFSII/Food Safety	5	X	X	X				04/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Kiwifruit Food Safety Outreach APATA	NZ	North Island	Kiwifruit		Tauranga	Susannah Ricelofsz	Present	FPSC/HFSII/Food Safety	40		X	X	X	40		05/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Launch 2025 Guidelines for Fresh Produce Safety	ANZ	ANZ	All		ANZ	Damien Farrelly/ Jody [redacted]	Webinar	Food Safety	N/A				X	N/A	X	05/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Launch Quick Guides	ANZ	ANZ	All		ANZ	[redacted] Damien Farrelly/ Jody [redacted]	Extension	Food Safety	N/A				X	N/A	X	05/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Zespri Food Safety Symposium	NZ	North Island	Kiwifruit		Tauranga	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly (MC)	Present	FPSC/HFSII/Food Safety	140		X	X	X	140		06/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Kiwifruit Food Safety DMS Meeting	NZ	North Island	Kiwifruit		Tauranga	Susannah Ricelofsz	Present	FPSC/HFSII/Food Safety	2	X						07/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Webinar: Launch of the 2025 Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety	ANZ	All	All		On-line	[redacted] Damien Farrelly/ [redacted]	Present	Food Safety	71		X	X	X	71	X	12/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #10	ANZ	All	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	27	X	X	X	X	27		13/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Food Safety Network	NZ	All	All		On-line	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	NZ Food Safety Network	4	X						14/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				14/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Australia New Zealand Food Regulation System Stakeholder Forum	AUS	VIC	All		Melbourne	Damien Farrelly	Attend	Regulations	118	X						13/11/2025	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
Industry Future's Forum	NZ	NI	All		Wellington/ On-line	[redacted] (on-line)/ Damien [redacted]	Attend	Food Safety	60		X	X				18/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Fresh & Safe Podcast: Insights on the fresh produce from the independent sector	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Farzana Adams	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	58		X		X	58	X	19/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
HARPS Stakeholder Working Group - Harmonisation of testing	AUS	VIC	All		On-line	Attend	Present		10+	X	X	X				19/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Cyclone Gabrielle Land Management Symposium	NZ	North Island	All		Havelock North	Damien Farrelly	Present	Food Safety	40	X		X	X	40		19-20/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
NSW DPIRD Inaugural meeting to discuss implementation	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend	PPP/ Food Safety	10+	X						24/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	NZ	All		On-line	Damien Farrelly	Attend/ Present	Food Safety	11	X		X				26/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
Webinar: Safe Produce: Agroecology explained. How NZ growers are working with nature to reduce agrichemical	ANZ	ANZ	All		Podcast	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	66		X		X	66	X	21/01/2026	Confirmed	100%
NSW DPIRD Interim Plant Products Committee 2nd meeting	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend	PPP/ Food Safety	10+	X						29/01/2026	Confirmed	100%
A lighter touch (ALT) Extension COP	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting		25	X	X	X				Initiated 22/01/2026	Confirmed	100%
Food Safety Essentials Guide: Flood Incidents	ANZ	ANZ	All		Outreach	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Outreach	Food Safety	N/A				X	N/A	X	2/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X				04/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
Veggies big day out	NZ	NI	All		Pukekohe	Damien Farrelly	Attend	Indoor and outdoor vegetable cropping	200+			X				5/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
AIFST Engage	AUS	QLD	All		Brisbane	Susannah Ricelofsz	Attend/ Present	FPSC	50+		X	X				5/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
HFSI COP Meeting #11	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety	31	X	X	X	X	31		3/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				18/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 2 #2 Food Safety Regulation & Compliance	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	16	X	X	X	X	15		3/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
HARPS Stakeholder Working Group - Harmonisation of testing	AUS	VIC	All		On-line	Attend	Present		10+	X	X	X				19/11/2025	Confirmed	100%
A lighter touch (ALT) Extension COP	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting		25	X	X	X				26/02/2026	Confirmed	100%
NSW DPIRD Interim Plant Products Committee 3rd meeting	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Attend	PPP/ Food Safety	10+	X						16/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
VEGETABLES WA 2026 ROADSHOWS	AUS	WA	All		Carnarvon	N/A	N/A	FPSC Pamphlets (Joel Dinsdale)	50+		X		X	50+		17/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				18/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 3 #3 Technology & Innovation in Food Safety	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	14	X	X	X	X	14		19/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Bagged Leafy Veg Working Group	NZ	NZ	Leafy Veg		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Chair/ Attend/ Present	Food Safety	10+	X	X	X			X	20/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 1 #3 Pre- and Post-Harvest Food Safety & Quality	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	13	X	X	X	X	13		25/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Taskforce - March 2026	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Chair/Present	Research, NZ Network, Guidelines	12	X	X	X				4/03/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X				15/04/2026	Confirmed	100%
PRG Meeting #6	AUS	All	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Meeting		10+	X	X	X				17/04/2026	Confirmed	100%
United Fresh Members' Meeting	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Danica Furcolly	Present /Attend	NZ Network / HFSII / Guidelines	80	X	X	X	X	80		24/04/2026	Confirmed	100%
Costa Coffs Harbour Site Visit	AUS	NSW	Berries	Y	NSW	Danica Furcolly	Outreach	FPSC/HFSII/Food Safety	1	X	X	X	X	1		29/04/2026	Confirmed	100%
Sub-COP 4 #3 Incident Management	ANZ	ANZ	All		On-line	Susannah Ricelofsz	Outreach	Food Safety in fresh produce	14	X	X	X	X	14		17/04/2026	Confirmed	100%

Outreach description	Country	State	Crop	PPP	Region	Assigned to	Activity	Grower Focus	Approx. attendees	Meeting	Awareness	Network	Outreach	Outreach numbers	Extension Materials	Date	Status	Progress
Food Safety Essentials Guide: Bushfire Incidents	ANZ	ANZ	All		Outreach	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Outreach	Food Safety	N/A				X	N/A	X	1/11/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X				05/05/2026	Confirmed	100%
VICWD 2026	AUS	VIC	All		Outreach	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	FPSC Pamphlets (Emily@AgVIC)	50+		X		X	50+		7-8/05/2026	Confirmed	100%
WV Produce Supplier Technical Update	AUS	VIC	All		Melbourne	Andreas Klieber	Outreach	FPSC/ Food Safety	65		X		X	65		12/05/2026	Confirmed	100%
WV Produce Supplier Technical Update	AUS	QLD	All		Brisbane	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	FPSC/ Food Safety	50		X		X	50		14/05/2026	Confirmed	100%
NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network	NZ	NZ	All		NZ	Damien Farrelly	Facilitate/Present	Collaboration	8	X	X	X	x	50		14/05/2026	Confirmed	100%
WV Produce Supplier Technical Update	AUS	NSW	All		Sydney	Damien Farrelly	Outreach	FPSC/ Food Safety	50		X		X	50		19/05/2026	Confirmed	0%
WV Produce Supplier Technical Update	AUS	WA	All		Perth	Elizabeth Frankish	Outreach	FPSC/ Food Safety	50		X		X	50		26/05/2026	Confirmed	0%
Mulgowie Farming Company Site Visit/ Team Meeting	AUS	QLD	All		Gatton	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	FPSC/PPP/Food Safety	TBC	X			X	TBA		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	In progress	0%
Freshmark/ Sydney Markets(Micro Surveillance and FS event)	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	Sydney Markets	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Present	PPP/ Food Safety	50+		X	X	X	50+		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	Pending	0%
NSW DPIRD Outreach/ Focus Group - ESL	AUS	NSW	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	NSW - North/ South	Susannah Roelofsz	Present	PPP/ Food Safety	100+		X	X	X	100+		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	Pending	0%
Costa Group small growers	AUS	All	All		All	Susannah Roelofsz/ Damien Farrelly	Outreach	PPP/ Food Safety	100+		X		X	TBA		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	Pending	0%
Webinar Series (Incl. IFPA, NZFSSRC, AIFST)	AUS	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Outreach	Food Safety	TBA		X		X	TBA		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	Pending	0%
AgVIC outreach	AUS	VIC	Leafy Veg, Berries, Melons	Y	VIC	Susannah Roelofsz	Outreach	PPP/ Food Safety	TBA				X	TBA		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	In progress	0%
VegNZ Roadshows	NZ	All	Veg		All	Damien Farrelly	Outreach	FPSC/ Food Safety	TBA		X		X	20+		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	In progress	0%
SAGE Farmers Markets	AUS	NSW	All		NSW	Susannah Roelofsz, Craig Shadbolt	Present	FPSC/HFSI/Food Safety	20+		X		X	TBA		TBC Q3/Q4 2026	In progress	0%
Hort Connections 2026	AUS	NT	All		Adelaide	Damien Farrelly	Present/ Attend	FPSC/Food Safety	TBA			X		TBA		2-4/06/2026	Confirmed	0%
International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium 2026	AUS	Sydney	All		Sydney	Susannah Roelofsz, Damien Farrelly, Jody Shipton	Present/ Attend	FPSC/Food Safety	TBA			X	X	TBA		21-22/07/2026	Confirmed	0%
NZ Horticulture Conference	NZ	Nil	All		Wellington	Damien Farrelly	Present/ Attend	FPSC/Food Safety	TBA		X	X	X	TBA		28-29/07/2026	Confirmed	0%
AIFST Convention 2026	AUS	Melbourne	All		Melbourne	Susannah Roelofsz	Present/ Attend	FPSC/Food Safety	TBA			X	X	TBA		27-28/07/2026	Confirmed	0%
ISHS Congress 2026	Asia	Japan	All		Kyoto	Robyn McConchie	Present/ Attend	HFSI	TBA		X	X	X	TBA		August 2026	Confirmed	0%
Berry Practical 2026	AUS	VIC	Berries	Y	VIC	Damien Farrelly	Outreach	Various Topics	TBA				X	TBA		17-19/08/2026	In progress	0%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X		TBA		01/09/2026	Confirmed	0%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X		TBA		17/11/2026	Confirmed	0%
NZFSSRC Horticulture Taskforce	NZ	All	All		All	Damien Farrelly	Meeting	Various Topics	20	X	X	X		TBA		26/11/2026	Confirmed	0%

Appendix 3

Horticulture Food Safety Initiative Final Monitoring & Evaluation Report

Monitoring and Evaluation Report

HN21000 Horticulture Food Safety Initiative (HFSI)

Fresh Produce Safety Centre (FPSC)

Prepared by

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University of Sydney

May 15, 2026

Executive Summary

(i) Project overview

The Horticulture Food Safety Initiative (HFSI) was a three-year capacity-building project designed to improve food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) among participants in Australia and New Zealand's fresh produce industry. The project was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited and managed by the Fresh Produce Safety Centre (FPSC), a trans-Tasman not-for-profit organisation supporting the fresh produce sector to achieve best-practice food safety outcomes.

The HFSI was established in response to persistent gaps in food safety awareness and practice across fresh produce supply chains, particularly among smaller producers, growers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and those operating in peri-urban areas. Activities were delivered across three years and included an annual International Fresh produce safety symposium, a Community of Practice (COP) and sub-COPs, a Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Toolkit, revised Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety and tailored workshops, webinars, field days and a help desk service. The project targeted the berry, leafy vegetable and melon commodity areas, identified by Food Safety Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) as presenting the highest food safety risk to consumers, as well as kiwifruit and other fresh produce.

A Project Reference Group (PRG) comprising key industry, government, regulatory and research stakeholders provided strategic oversight throughout the project.

(ii) Evaluation purpose and methods

This summative evaluation was commissioned to provide a credible, evidence-based assessment of the HFSI's performance across seven evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, process appropriateness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability and impact. It covers the full project period with a particular focus on Year 3 outcomes.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design integrating quantitative monitoring data with qualitative evidence from three primary sources:

- **Focus group** with seven COP members (October 2025), analysed using the Value Creation Framework
- **Seven in-depth case studies** (April 2026) drawing on elements of the success case method and most significant change methodology
- **Twelve key informant interviews** (April 2026) across four stakeholder groups: Project Management Team, PRG, Regulators and government representatives and Funders and partners

Qualitative analysis employed a general inductive approach, with thematic coding supported by Claude AI (Anthropic, 2025) under the direction and review of the evaluator. Findings were triangulated across all methods and sources. Key limitations include reliance on self-reported data, purposive sampling and the absence of berry, melon and leafy vegetable growers from the case study sample due to concurrent PPP standard implementation by the States.

(iii) Key findings by evaluation question

EQ1 – Effectiveness: Broadly positive (~77% of key informants)

The HFSI made a credible and evidenced contribution to food safety KASA, with the strongest gains demonstrated at the professional practitioner and intermediary level. The COP grew to 95 members against a target of 40 (by Year 3), with approximately 70% of members reporting active application of information in their operations. Knowledge gains were confirmed among 71% of COP focus group participants and 86% of case study

participants. Aspirational change was the most consistent positive finding and confirmed practice-level behaviour change was documented in 57% of case study participants. Direct farm-level behavioural change was not systematically captured and effectiveness among small, ESL and less-engaged growers remains the largest unresolved gap against the project's original intent.

EQ2 – Relevance: Strongest criterion (~91% positive)

Near-total agreement that the project addressed a genuine and urgent need. The choice of commodity priorities, alignment with the gazetting of the PPP Standards and focus on building accessible common knowledge across a fragmented sector were assessed as highly appropriate. The primary qualification is that content, while technically rigorous, did not always sufficiently address the fear, complexity and motivational barriers that prevent growers from engaging.

EQ3 – Process Appropriateness: Moderately positive (~68% positive)

The breadth of engagement channels deployed was commendable for a project of this scale. The COP, sub-COPs and symposium were well-designed and effective mechanisms. The consistent qualification across all stakeholder groups was that engagement largely reached those already motivated and engaged — the "already converted." Extension officers engaged inconsistently, with the melons sector less connected with the initiative, due to the existing support and framework in place with the 'Safe melon program'. The most vulnerable grower cohorts were reached only indirectly. The help desk model did not align with this sector's trust-based information-seeking behaviour.

EQ4 – Coherence: Broadly positive (~73% positive)

The project generally complemented rather than duplicated the sector landscape and actively worked to align with FSANZ, state regulatory bodies and other industry programmes. Initial friction with some established programmes and national peak bodies improved over the project's life. Coherence in New Zealand was particularly strong, with the project filling an identified structural gap and catalysing the establishment of a New Zealand Food Safety Network.

EQ5 – Efficiency: Broadly positive (~77% positive)

High-quality outputs were delivered on a modest budget (approximately AUD$1.4 million total investment), and all contractual milestones were met. A principal efficiency limitation was that the programme was delivered sequentially rather than in parallel, which compressed outreach activities into Year 3. The guidelines review over-ran both budget and timeline, though the quality of the final product was universally considered to justify the additional investment. Three CEO transitions across the project created structural inefficiencies in stakeholder management.

EQ6 – Sustainability: Conditionally positive (~64% positive)

The revised FPSC Fundamental Guidelines, associated grower resources, the COP community and FPSC's substantially elevated institutional profile provide a strong foundation for continued impact. State regulatory agency adoption of HFSI materials across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia and the establishment of the NZ Food Safety Network, represent additional indicators of institutional sustainability. The primary risk is the securing of adequate ongoing funding for next steps.

EQ7 – Impact: Most contested criterion (~59% positive)

The project made a credible institutional-level impact: HFSI guidance has been embedded in state regulatory

tools across multiple jurisdictions; cross-sector dialogue has been facilitated at unprecedented scale; and FPSC has been transformed from a relatively unknown body into a recognised "go-to" institution for horticulture food safety information. Attributable farm-level behaviour change was not directly captured within the project period, in part due to the delayed PPP rollout across most Australian states and territories. Impact evidence is likely to strengthen as PPP implementation gathers pace.

(iv) Main conclusions

The HFSI's overarching aim, to improve food safety outcomes across the fresh produce industry by building the capacity of producers, supply chain participants and allied professionals was **substantially achieved at the professional intermediary and institutional level**, with growing but not yet fully evidenced reach to producers directly.

The project's most significant and enduring achievements are:

- **The revised FPSC Fundamental Guidelines**, universally regarded as the project's single most tangible and durable output, adopted by multiple state regulatory agencies at no additional project cost
- **The Community of Practice**, which grew substantially beyond its original target and created a genuine professional community of identity where none previously existed
- **FPSC's elevated institutional profile**, transformed from a little-known body to a recognised, trusted and independent sector institution
- **Support for the establishment of the New Zealand Food Safety Network**, a structural and lasting contribution to the NZ food safety landscape
- **Exemplary project team performance**, consistently praised across all stakeholder groups and credited as a critical factor in achieving all contractual milestones despite three CEO transitions and delayed regulatory rollout

The project's most significant limitations were its concentration of reach among already-engaged professionals, a help desk model that did not fit grower information-seeking behaviour, sequential delivery that restricted the timeframe for outreach and the absence of hard outcome KPIs to demonstrate farm-level change. These are structural and design considerations rather than implementation failures and they provide clear guidance for future initiatives.

(v) Top recommendations *(see Section 6 for full list)*

For future similar initiatives

- **R1.** Adopt a train-the-trainer model as the core delivery architecture, investing from inception in a distributed network of facilitators embedded across states, territories and New Zealand
- **R2.** Design hard outcome KPIs (food recalls, regulatory non-compliances, audit results) into the project from the design stage
- **R3.** Deliver engagement activities in parallel with resource development from Year 1, rather than sequentially
- **R5.** Invest in multilingual, short-form, visually accessible content, including videos of 30 seconds to two minutes, as core project deliverables from inception

For sustaining HFSI benefits

- **R9.** Secure dedicated funding for ongoing outreach and COP maintenance beyond June 2026 as an immediate priority
- **R10.** Transition the COP to a self-sustaining model with formal governance and a member-managed

leadership structure
- **R11.** Adopt an annual rolling guidelines review cycle (2-3 chapters per year) with remuneration or cost-recovery mechanisms for expert contributors
- **R13.** Continue the annual symposium as a sector-owned event with co-investment from industry bodies and state partners

For FPSC

- **R14.** Develop an IDO (Industry Development Officer) toolkit as a priority legacy resource to extend reach through trusted existing channels
- **R16.** Reconsider and redesign the help desk model, exploring integration into IDO networks or a moderated online community format
- **R17.** Develop a targeted outreach strategy for small and ESL growers in partnership with multicultural community organisations and grower associations

For Funders

- **R18.** Require hard outcome KPIs as a condition of funding for future initiatives
- **R20.** Support the continuation of the COP and symposium as high-value legacy investments, rather than allowing them to lapse with the formal project end

For Industry

- **R21.** Increase grower representation, particularly smaller operators, in the COP and development of outreach materials
- **R23.** Develop a programme of auditor development to improve auditors' capability as food safety communicators, leveraging their regular, trusted access to growers

1. Introduction

1.1 HFSI Background and Context

The Horticulture Food Safety Initiative (HFSI) was a three-year capacity-building project designed to improve food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) among participants in Australia and New Zealand's fresh produce industry. The project was funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia and managed by the Fresh Produce Safety Centre (FPSC), a trans-Tasman body which supports the fresh produce sector to achieve best-practice food safety outcomes.

The HFSI was established in recognition of persistent gaps in food safety awareness and practice across fresh produce supply chains, particularly among smaller producers, growers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those operating in peri-urban areas. The fresh produce sector encompasses a wide range of commodity types and business sizes, from large commercial operations through to small family-run enterprises. This diversity presents significant challenges for food safety education and capacity building, as the needs, resources and risk profiles of participants vary considerably.

A Food Safety Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) review of foodborne illness incidents linked to fresh produce, identified melons, berries and leafy vegetables as having a higher risk to consumers. Following industry consultation, FSANZ introduced mandatory Horticulture Primary Production and Processing (PPP) Standards for these products in February 2025. In addition to other commodities, the HFSI project was aimed at providing suitable resources, guidance and information to these three key commodity areas. However, all of but two of the States, who were tasked with the implementation of the standards, were delayed in meeting the deadline.

At the time of this report, only three State Departments of Agriculture have implemented the standards, namely Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales.

A central feature of the project has been the establishment of a Community of Practice (COP), bringing together growers, food safety scientists, allied industry professionals, researchers and educators to share knowledge, exchange experience and develop a common language and culture around food safety. The COP has sought to normalise food safety as an everyday professional concern rather than a response to incidents or regulatory pressure.

HFSI activities were delivered across three years, with Year 3 representing the final implementation phase and the subject of this summative evaluation. Activities included an annual International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium, initiating a COP and sub-COPs, a PPP Toolkit, revised Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety and tailored workshops, webinars, field days and a help desk service for producers in berries, kiwifruit, vegetables and other produce. A Project Reference Group (PRG), comprising key industry, government, regulatory and research stakeholders, provided strategic oversight and guidance throughout the project.

1.2 Project objectives and theory of change

The overarching aim of the HFSI is to improve food safety outcomes across the fresh produce industry by building the capacity of producers, supply chain participants and allied professionals to understand, implement and sustain sound food safety practices.

The project's theory of change holds that:

- **Inputs** — targeted, accessible and contextually appropriate food safety education and support, delivered through diverse channels and engagement modes — will lead to
- **Outputs** — meaningful increases in participants' food safety KASA, as well as the development of a connected industry COP, which will, in turn, support
- **Outcomes** — changes in on-farm and supply chain food safety behaviours and practices — ultimately contributing to
- **Impact** — a safer and more resilient fresh produce industry with reduced risk of food safety incidents, improved market access and stronger consumer confidence in New Zealand and Australian fresh produce.

A critical element of the theory of change is the recognition that KASA improvements are necessary but not sufficient for practice change. Structural, economic and contextual factors, including scale of operations, access to resources, regulatory environment and market demands, also shape whether and how producers translate improved KASA into changed behaviours. The evaluation therefore addresses both KASA outcomes and the broader conditions that enable or constrain practice change.

1.3 Evaluation purpose and audiences

This summative evaluation was based on the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan prepared for the FPSC as part of the HFSI. (Walters, 2023). It was commissioned to provide a credible, evidence-based assessment of the HFSI across seven evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, process appropriateness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The evaluation covers the full project period with particular focus on Year 3 outcomes and draws on data collected between October 2025 and April 2026.

The evaluation aims were:

- To assess the extent to which HFSI achieved its intended objectives and outcomes
- To document the contribution of HFSI to food safety practice changes in the fresh produce industry
- To identify what worked well, what worked less well and why
- To generate lessons and recommendations to inform future food safety capacity-building initiatives
- To provide FPSC and Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited with accountability evidence regarding project performance

Primary audiences for this report include:

- FPSC Board and Project Director
- The Project Reference Group (PRG)
- Horticulture Innovation Australia Pty Ltd (Project funder)
- COP members and project partners
- Participants in the evaluation

Secondary audiences include:

- Broader fresh produce industry stakeholders
- State and territory government and regulatory bodies
- Researchers and evaluators working in agricultural extension and food safety
- Other funders and industry bodies considering similar capacity-building investments

2. Evaluation methodology

2.1 Evaluation framework and questions

The evaluation is framed around seven evaluation criteria adapted from internationally recognised evaluation standards, including those of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (OECD Evaluation Criteria) and the Australasian Evaluation Society (2010). These criteria were selected to provide a comprehensive picture of project performance across its design, delivery and outcomes.

The seven evaluation questions are as follows:

EQ1 – Effectiveness: To what extent did HFSI improve the food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA) of industry participants?

EQ2 – Relevance: How well did HFSI address the food safety needs of the fresh produce industry and were the right audiences, topics and approaches targeted?

EQ3 – Process appropriateness: How appropriate and effective were HFSI's engagement strategies in reaching and meaningfully involving the intended target groups, including diverse and hard-to-reach participants?

EQ4 – Coherence: How well did HFSI complement and align with other food safety initiatives, regulatory frameworks and industry efforts and how effectively did it collaborate with other organisations?

EQ5 – Efficiency: Was HFSI delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner and were resources used to best effect?

EQ6 – Sustainability: How likely are the benefits of HFSI to continue beyond the project period and what mechanisms are needed to sustain them?

EQ7 – Impact: What changes in food safety practices and behaviours are attributable to HFSI and what contribution did the project make to improved food safety outcomes in the fresh produce industry?

These questions guided all aspects of data collection, analysis and reporting.

2.2 Data collection methods

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative monitoring data with qualitative evidence from Focus Group, Key Informant Interviews and Case Study sources. Qualitative data were collected sequentially over a six-month period from October 2025 to April 2026. All evaluation participants signed a consent form which assured them of confidentiality and anonymity in the reporting.

Focus groups

Several focus groups were proposed, however, only one focus group was conducted as below:

- *Community of Practice (COP) focus group (October 2025):* One focus group was held with seven COP members, including food safety practitioners, researchers and industry representatives. This session used the Value Creation Framework (Wenger, E., Trayner, B. and de Laat, M. 2011; Wenger-Trayner, E. and Wenger-Trayner, B. 2020) to explore the realised and strategic value of the COP for participants and the broader industry.
- *ESL (English as a Second Language) focus groups (May 2026):* This focus group will be conducted when the ESL group meets in late May 2026, after the submission of this report.
- *Non-participant focus group (April 2026):* This focus group was proposed with industry members who had not participated in HFSI, to explore barriers to engagement and assess the relevance of HFSI to those outside the project. Insufficient participants responded to enable this activity to occur before the due date for report submission.

The questions guiding the Focus Group discussion can be found in **Appendix 1**

Case studies

Seven in-depth case studies were conducted in April 2026 using a methodology drawing on elements of the Success Case Method (Brinkerhoff, 2003) and Most Significant Change (Davies & Dart, 2005). Case studies involved semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour. The questions guiding the group discussion can be found in **Appendix 2**. Case studies focused on documenting individual pathways of KASA change and food safety practice change and explored the contribution of HFSI relative to other influencing factors.

Key informant interviews

Twelve semi-structured key informant (KI) interviews were conducted in April 2026, drawing from four stakeholder groups: the Project Management Team (n=3), the Project Reference Group (n=11, noting that several PRG members also held roles as funders, regulators, or project team members), Regulators and government representatives (n=4) and Funders and partners (n=4). Each interview ran for approximately one hour and addressed all seven evaluation criteria, with questions tailored to the knowledge and perspective of each stakeholder type. The questions guiding the interviews can be found in **Appendix 3**.

Monitoring data

FPSC's project monitoring data provided quantitative evidence across the project period, including attendance records for COP workshops, webinars, field days and help desk interactions; KASA survey data collected at baseline (Year 1) and endline (Year 3); and records of participant demographics, commodity area and business size. This data is presented in the body of the report under each engagement activity (Refer to Results and discussion).

2.3 Sampling and participant numbers

Sampling was purposive throughout the evaluation to maximise the diversity of perspectives captured and ensure evidence was collected across all seven evaluation questions.

Focus group participants were randomly selected from COP attendance lists and invited to attend an on-line focus group discussion.

Key informant interviewees were selected to represent the full range of stakeholder perspectives, including project implementers, governance representatives, regulatory bodies and funding organisations.

Case study participants were drawn from project monitoring records to represent a range of business sizes (small: fewer than 20 employees; medium: 20–199 employees; large: 200 or more employees) and commodity areas, with priority given to participants who had attended multiple HFSI activities. It should be noted that berry, melon and leafy vegetable growers were not available to be interviewed as originally planned, due to the concurrent implementation of the PPP by the States and Territories. This represents a gap relative to the original Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

2.4 Analysis approaches

Quantitative analysis of monitoring data involved descriptive statistics to summarise participant numbers, engagement levels and KASA survey results. Pre and post comparisons were conducted where baseline and endline data were available, disaggregated by sub-group (business size, commodity, participant type and ESL status where applicable).

Qualitative analysis of focus groups, case studies and key informant interviews employed a general inductive approach. All sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded by evaluation question using a framework grounded in the theory of change. Themes were developed inductively within each evaluation question and perspectives were compared across stakeholder types to identify areas of consensus and divergence.

Thematic coding of focus group and key informant interview transcripts was supported by Claude AI (Anthropic, 2025) under the direction and continuous review of the evaluator. All codes, interpretive judgements, percentage estimates and contextual framing were determined by the evaluator. A Modified Contribution Analysis approach (Mayne, 2011, 2012; Wimbush, Montague, & Mulherin, 2012) was applied to manage attribution challenges.

Case study analysis followed a structured cross-case comparison process, using a matrix comparing all seven cases across key dimensions including KASA changes reported, practice changes implemented, attribution levels, benefits achieved, barriers faced and sustainability indicators. Claude AI (Anthropic, 2025) was used to analyse the transcripts and generate structured evaluation reports aligned with the HFSI KASA framework. The cross-case comparison and synthesis document was similarly produced using Claude (Anthropic, 2025). Human evaluation review and oversight was applied throughout.

Data triangulation was conducted throughout synthesis to cross-check findings across methods and sources, strengthen conclusions and identify any gaps or inconsistencies in the evidence base.

2.5 Limitations

Attribution challenges: Isolating the contribution of HFSI from other concurrent influences on food safety practice is inherently difficult. During the project period, the fresh produce industry was subject to evolving regulatory requirements (e.g. delayed PPP implementation), shifting market demands and the influence of other food safety programmes and information sources. A Modified Contribution Analysis approach (Mayne 2011, 2012; Wimbush, Montague & Mulherin, 2012) was used to address this challenge; however, attribution remains probabilistic rather than definitive.

Self-report bias: Data on KASA changes and practice changes were predominantly collected through self-report. Participants may overstate improvements or underreport challenges, particularly in the context of an evaluation associated with the project they participated in.

Purposive sampling: Case study and key informant participants were selected purposively rather than randomly, partly on the basis of evidence of engagement and change. Case studies therefore provide illustrative depth on what is possible but do not represent the full distribution of outcomes across all project participants.

Case study sample gap: The absence of berry, melon and leafy vegetable growers from the case study sample, due to the concurrent implementation of PPP by States, represents a material gap relative to the original Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Walters, 2023). Findings from case studies should be interpreted as indicative of outcomes among engaged and experienced participants, not the full target population.

Endline survey data: KASA survey comparisons are limited by challenges in tracking individual participants longitudinally. Some attrition and variation in survey respondents between baseline and endline may affect the precision of pre or post comparisons.

Evaluator role: The evaluation was conducted by the project's external evaluator. This limitation has been managed through transparency in reporting, documentation of both positive and negative evidence and provision of draft findings to the Project Manager for review.

Despite these limitations, the multi-method, multi-source design of this evaluation provides a strong and credible evidence base from which to draw conclusions and recommendations.

3. Findings

3.1 Focus group findings: Community of practice

3.1.1 Overview and methodology

The focus group was held with seven COP participants (eight were confirmed however one dropped out due to an unavoidable clash), drawn from across the food safety sector, including consultants, scheme managers, researchers and regulators from both Australia and New Zealand. The focus group was facilitated by the external evaluator using the Value Creation Framework (Wenger-Trayner, E. and Wenger-Trayner, B. 2020), which explores the immediate, applied, realised and strategic value generated through COP participation. The session was recorded, transcribed and subjected to systematic thematic coding across eight analytical domains: Knowledge, Skills, Aspirations, Practice Changes, Attribution, Barriers to Change, Engagement and Benefits and Sustainability.

It should be noted that participants in this focus group were food safety professionals who engaged with the COP at a practitioner level, rather than growers or producers. As such, outcomes described below reflect changes and value experienced by industry professionals and not direct on-farm food safety improvements.

3.1.2 Outcomes by category

Knowledge

Five of seven participants (71%) described some form of knowledge improvement attributable to COP participation. Two participants demonstrated specific, named topic learning, including water quality research, antimicrobial resistance, water testing, PPP regulatory standards and a food safety incident involving leafy vegetables. Three described more general improvements in how they think about and approach food safety in their roles.

The cross-sectoral diversity of the COP was consistently cited as a key driver of knowledge gain. Hearing different professional perspectives on the same food safety challenge was described as enabling participants to "think about how we might do our job or advise a little differently".

The group noted that exposure to different professional perspectives was something they could not access elsewhere.

"Antimicrobial resistance, I know who to talk to now. Water testing, who to talk to now?" — Focus Group Participant

"The COP is a one-stop shop for staying current globally and locally." — Focus Group Participant

Skills

Explicit skill development was the least reported category, with five of seven (71%) participants not describing new procedural skills acquired through COP participation. Where skills development language did appear, it tended to describe operational or organisational capability rather than individual competency development. This finding is consistent with the professional seniority of the COP participants in the Focus Group, who generally possess well-developed food safety expertise and engaged in the COP primarily for strategic knowledge exchange and networking, rather than skills training.

Aspirations

Four of seven participants (57%) expressed clear forward-looking aspirations connected to COP engagement. Three described a desire for continued learning and engagement, explicitly stating they would continue participating to stay current with food safety research, policy and cross-sector perspectives. One participant articulated a concrete strategic plan, describing how COP knowledge of Australia's PPP regulatory standards was informing their approach to preparing growers in their jurisdiction for possible future regulatory alignment.

"That's what keeps me coming, continuing to participate in it, because I would like to know and I would like to hear a bit more." — Focus Group Participant

Practice changes

Two of seven participants (29%) described confirmed, implemented practice changes directly attributable to COP participation. Both changes involved moving away from independently creating food safety content toward actively leveraging and sharing FPSC guidelines and resources. One participant described redirecting their

organisation's communications approach to eliminate duplication and refer industry contacts to FPSC materials. Another described formally incorporating COP resources into presentations delivered through their organisation's national task force networks.

Three participants explicitly stated that no practice changes had yet occurred, while two did not address this question.

"Prior to the COP I was developing everything I was doing, putting out comms, whereas in the last three months we've switched over now... I'm actually now liaising directly with FPSC and working on some projects so that we can have less duplication. Let's all use the guidelines. Let's use what the FPSC resources already have available." — Focus Group Participant

One observation is that practice changes among COP participants, have concentrated at the professional intermediary level, rather than at production level i.e. how practitioners engage with and disseminate FPSC resources. This mirrors a concern raised by several participants themselves, that the value created by the COP has not yet sufficiently cascaded to the growers and producers who ultimately need to change food safety practice on the ground.

Attribution

Four of seven participants (57%) attributed changes in their professional practice or approach primarily or solely to their participation in the HFSI COP.

"I think it's probably drawn my attention to listening more to growers." — Focus Group Participant

Notably, no participant attributed changes to any competing factor or alternative source, which strengthens the contribution story for the COP. The remaining three participants either stated that no practice changes had occurred (and therefore attribution was not applicable) or did not address this theme.

Barriers to change

Participants identified a range of barriers to food safety improvement, reflecting both personal and systemic challenges. The most prominent were:

- **Culture and attitudes** (two participants): Industry perception that food safety is a cost burden rather than a value driver was identified as a fundamental barrier. Quality management roles were described as isolating, with practitioners working against a widespread perception that food safety compliance reduces business profitability.
- **Competing priorities and time** (two participants): The time commitment required was identified as unsustainable for self-employed consultants. Competing work demands also prevented some participants from attending all COP sessions consistently.
- **Knowledge translation** (one participant): The gap between research findings and practical application at production level was identified as a structural barrier, with research described as *"getting there in terms of application, but not quite."*
- **Infrastructure** (one participant): Inadequate physical facilities at farm sites including poor hygiene infrastructure, were identified as enabling barriers to on-farm food safety practice change.

"Quality can be quite an isolating area in itself... you're trying to implement change... it increases costs and the perception is that it's losing value for the business." — Focus Group Participant

Engagement and benefits

Four of seven participants (57%) expressed clearly positive evaluations of their COP experience, including cross-sector networking, the multi-stakeholder composition of the group, guest speaker presentations, the guidelines collaborative process and access to a confidential, trusted professional space. Three participants offered mixed evaluations, combining positive assessments with specific concerns, particularly around administrative load, agenda management and the degree to which COP value was reaching those who need it most.

Unintended positive benefits were reported by two participants, including a reduction in professional isolation and an unexpected shift in operational practice toward collaborative use of shared FPSC resources, an outcome that also reduced duplication across the sector.

"It's been fantastic — connecting with a passionate group of like-minded people... people care deeply and think critically." — Focus Group Participant

"There is a high level of trust … this little group today has been good." — Focus Group Participant

"I know now if I need to talk to someone in WA... the sub-COPs have been fantastic." — Focus Group Participant

"It's the sharing of the culture … growers in Queensland are isolated from growers in NSW and Victoria and WA and when you get them all in a room together and they all go — 'you're having that problem too' — and it's a weight lifted." — Focus Group Participant

Sustainability

Six of seven participants (86%) expressed intentions to continue engaging with or disseminating COP knowledge beyond the current project period. The sustainability picture emerging from the focus group is cautiously optimistic. Three participants described active and ongoing knowledge-sharing behaviours such as relaying COP learning through their own institutional networks, newsletters and professional communications. This suggests that COP value is being multiplied through their roles. A further three described motivation to continue engaging with the COP for ongoing learning and professional connection. The prospect of the HFSI project concluding in May 2026 was a concern shared by the group. Participants were clear that the momentum built through the COP should not be lost and there was genuine enthusiasm for the COP to continue in some form beyond the formal project end.

"We would lose that sense of connection … we can spur each other on and actually feel more encouraged to say the same things and really persist on things we know are important." — Focus Group Participant

3.1.3 Limitations identified by COP participants

The following limitations of the COP were identified by participants during the focus group:

- The initial COP meeting format was described as overly ambitious in agenda content, with discussions often cut off before substantive issues could be explored fully.
- Administrative load, particularly the volume of emails and meeting minutes distributed, was identified as burdensome by some participants.
- The COP's value is not yet demonstrably reaching growers and producers at the production level, which several participants considered the intended primary beneficiary of the COP's multiplier effect.
- The Friday meeting time was identified as problematic for some members, contributing to inconsistent attendance.
- The project timeline (concluding May 2026) was perceived as too short by some participants, who felt

the COP's impact was still growing and the timeframe insufficient to fully realise value.
- The gap between research findings generated through sub-COPs and their practical application at farm level remains wide, with no clear mechanism for bridging it.

3.1.4 Participant suggestions for improvement

Participants offered the following constructive suggestions for strengthening the COP:

- **Field days:** Site visits where participants could observe food safety practices implemented at a farm or facility level were proposed as a powerful tool for cascading knowledge beyond the professional community.
- **More guest speaker sessions:** Short, focused expert presentations were consistently valued and participants called for more of these.
- **Central resource repository:** A searchable, centralised repository of meeting minutes, guidelines and resources was recommended to improve access and reduce administrative overhead.
- **Behavioural and safety culture focus:** Participants called for a stronger focus on translating food safety knowledge into lasting behavioural change at the grower and worker level, including practical, live examples relevant to farm settings.
- **Engaging processors and growers together:** Bringing processors and growers into conversations together was suggested as a means of reinforcing safety culture through shared accountability.
- **Continuation of the COP beyond May 2026:** Strong support was expressed for maintaining the COP structure after the formal project close, with participants emphasising that its value as a trusted professional community would be lost if the group disbanded.

3.2 Key informant interview findings

3.2.1 Overview

A total of 12 Key Informant (KI) interviews were conducted across four stakeholder categories: Project Reference Group members (PRG, n=11), Funders (n=4), Regulators (n=4) and Project Team members (n=3). Interviews were semi-structured and analysed using a general inductive approach, with findings organised against seven evaluation criteria drawn from the OECD (2023) DAC framework and Hort Innovation's Organisational Evaluation Framework (Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, 2021): Effectiveness, Relevance, Process Appropriateness, Coherence, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact. The following synthesises outcomes across these criteria, drawing on participant evidence and supporting quotations.

3.2.2 EQ1 – Effectiveness

To what extent did the project increase or improve industry participants' food safety knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations (KASA)?

Approximately 75% of KI participants (9 of 12) offered a broadly positive assessment of effectiveness, primarily attributing gains to the COP, the revised guidelines and the annual symposium. Evidence of change was strongest among food safety practitioners and industry professionals directly engaged with project activities. The COP quickly grew from zero to 95 members against an original target of 40 (by Year 3).

A member survey indicated that approximately 70% of COP participants had actively used information from the community within their business operations. Multiple large commercial producers confirmed that project resources had been adopted as workplace training materials. Before-and-after knowledge assessments conducted at training activities showed measurable participant knowledge gains.

All positive assessments were qualified. The evidence base for effectiveness was largely self-reported and survey based. Concrete farm-level behavioural change was not captured and the project's reach beyond those already engaged in food safety was limited. It was suggested that the average grower was likely unaware of the HFSI initiative.

"The ideology about this project helping to assist and make sure everyone has a common, accessible set of knowledge around food safety is still vitally important" — KI Participant.

The evidence base for impact was reported as "verbal and surveys only." Effectiveness among small and English-as-a-second-language growers was particularly difficult to assess, with on-farm engagement only just commencing at the time of Case Study interviews.

3.2.3 EQ2 – Relevance

How relevant was the project to the fresh produce industry?

Relevance was rated positively by an estimated 91% of KI participants (11 of 12), making it the strongest-performing criterion across all groups. All four Funders, all four Regulators and the majority of PRG and Project Team members described the project as addressing a genuine and urgent need. The three target commodities, berries, leafy vegetables and melons, were correctly identified as Australia and New Zealand's highest-risk fresh produce sectors, aligning directly with the gazetting of the PPP Standards by FSANZ.

"The timing of this project was really perfect…. Looking at raising industry awareness within horticulture in general on food safety, just tied in neatly to when these standards were initially gazetted." — KI Participant

The project's focus on creating a level playing field and providing accessible food safety guidance for smaller growers not already served by established programmes such as Freshcare or Safe Melons Program, was cited by multiple PRG members and Regulators as particularly relevant. The New Zealand context was also positively rated, with a NZ Funder noting that the project *"filled a genuine gap"* in a landscape that had a *"dearth of resource."*

Melons Australia was difficult to engage because the industry already had an advanced food safety framework and a dedicated specialist, making generalist advice from the HFSI project feel redundant to them.

A primary qualification on relevance concerned mode of delivery. Several KIs noted that technical content, while accurate, may not have been appropriately calibrated to address the fear and complexity that prevents growers from engaging in the first place.

3.2.4 EQ3 – Process appropriateness

To what extent were engagement processes appropriate for the target audiences?

An estimated 66% of KI participants (8 of 12) rated process appropriateness as broadly positive, with strong praise for the COP, sub-COPs, revised guidelines and the symposium as well-designed mechanisms. However, this was the criterion attracting the most substantive and consistent qualification across all stakeholder groups.

The range of engagement channels deployed was notable for a project of this scale: the COP, sub-COPs, annual symposium, podcasts, newsletters, LinkedIn, roadshows, workshops, webinars and direct industry development officer (IDO) engagement. The sub-COPs were rated as highly effective, with their smaller format encouraging deeper engagement. The COP's broad supply-chain reach and working through IDOs, was likely the most effective channel for reaching small growers given the project's bandwidth constraints.

A unique aspect of the HFSI was that it is the only food safety initiative that had been communicated and engaged at a retailer level. No comparable project has reached that stakeholder tier.

"In terms of stakeholder management and taking end to end on the journey, this is the only project that interacted at a higher level." — KI Participant

The consistent critique, shared across all four stakeholder groups, was that engagement largely reached those already inside the food safety tent. Extension officers engaged inconsistently or not at all. The Melons sector appeared to be self-sufficient and not seeking additional support; and the Freshcare newsletter, identified in hindsight as a high-reach channel for growers, was underutilised. The help desk attracted very low inquiry volumes.

"The symposium worked really well, but that was probably preaching to the converted to some degree because they're very interested and that's why they came." — KI Participant

3.2.5 EQ4 – Coherence

How compatible was the project with other interventions in the sector?

Approximately 66% of KI participants (8 of 12) gave a positive or mixed-positive assessment of coherence. The project was generally assessed as complementing rather than duplicating the sector landscape, actively working to cross-reference and align with FSANZ, state regulatory bodies and other industry programmes. The project team's deliberate avoidance of overlap and the organic emergence of mutual cross-referencing between FPSC's website, FSANZ's website and other sector sites, was noted as an unintended but valuable outcome.

"They seemed to go out of their way to try and make sure they complement what's out there already." — KI Participant.

The FPSC's non-affiliated, not-for-profit status was identified as a key structural advantage in a sector where other bodies carry vested interests and are viewed with suspicion by growers. In particular, the HFSI's lack of alignment with any certification scheme was an advantage specifically for smaller growers. However, for larger players the project needed to find niche areas of complementarity to existing programmes.

The most significant coherence friction came from established programmes that perceived the HFSI as competitive. One KI noted that some programmes "almost felt threatened" by the project and that duplication of help desk services was a minor source of tension. National peak industry bodies were cited by more than one KI as having initially acted as gatekeepers, a dynamic that improved over the project's life.

In New Zealand, coherence was more clearly positive. The project filled an identified structural gap and attracted NZ co-funding, resulting in the establishment of a New Zealand Food Safety Network as a direct outcome.

3.2.6 EQ5 – Efficiency

Was the project delivered in an economic and timely way?

Approximately 77% of KI participants (9 of 12) assessed the project as having been delivered efficiently, with the co-funding model, milestone completion record and the quality of the technical output cited as key positive factors. The project was projected to conclude close to budget on a total investment of approximately A$1.4 million, described as "pretty darn good" given the scope and complexity of deliverables. All required milestones were met. The technical lead was praised consistently across all stakeholder groups for technical competence, professionalism and stakeholder management.

Several efficiency concerns were raised, primarily by the Project Team and Funders. The guidelines review was the principal source of cost overrun in both time and money but acknowledged as a deliberate decision to achieve high quality. It constrained what else could be delivered in the project to some degree. Three CEO transitions across the project life created challenges in continuity in stakeholder engagement. Also, delivery had been structured sequentially rather than in parallel, resulting in cross sector outreach only commencing in Year 3. Travel costs were high relative to event scale. One KI raised the absence of hard outcome KPIs, such as tracking food recalls or non-compliances, as a missed design opportunity.

3.2.7 EQ6 – Sustainability

Will the benefits generated by the project be likely to continue?

An estimated 64% of KI participants (8 of 12) assessed sustainability as likely, primarily on the strength of the enduring resource outputs and the elevated profile of FPSC as a sector institution. The revised guidelines, grower fact sheets and disaster-specific resources (bushfire, flooding) were consistently identified as durable assets. The COP and sub-COPs were expected to continue in modified form. The FPSC's substantially improved brand recognition — described as moving from a little-known body to a recognised "go-to" — was cited as a key structural sustainability asset.

The primary condition for sustainability, raised by all four Funders and the Project Team, is ongoing funding. While FPSC has secured increased funding through pledges, development of a self-sustaining funding model is a project requirement that has not yet been fulfilled.

"I don't see a business model." — KI Participant

"I am concerned about the next six months where we go and find some pennies." — KI Participant

The HFSI support in establishment of a New Zealand Food Safety Network and the continued commitment of state bodies (notably NSW) to embedding FPSC materials in regulatory outreach, were cited as positive indicators.

"All of the resources that have been developed are going to be beneficial for years to come and hopefully will be easier to update now that we've done this really comprehensive review." — KI Participant

The absence of an overarching horticulture peak body was identified as a structural challenge to industry-wide ownership of sustained activities. The help desk was flagged as likely to require reconsideration or integration with other services rather than continuation in its current standalone form.

3.2.8 EQ7 – Impact

What changes in industry food safety practice and behaviour have occurred, which could be reasonably attributed to the project?

Approximately 59% of KI participants (7 of 12) identified observable positive changes plausibly attributable in part to the HFSI, though virtually all interviewees acknowledged the attribution challenge explicitly. No single interviewee was able to provide direct, independently verified evidence of changed farm-level practice.

The most credible impact evidence came at an institutional level. HFSI guidance materials have been adopted and embedded by NSW Food Authority, Victoria and Western Australian regulatory bodies into their own operational tools. FSANZ indicated it consults the guidelines regularly for horticulture food safety issues. COP survey data suggested approximately 70% of members had applied information within their business operations.

One KI observed that water testing and traceability had become more prominent priorities for some smaller growers during the project period. Cross-sector dialogue between regulators, growers, packers, and retailers was identified as a process-level impact that went beyond the project's formal objectives.

The most significant limitation on impact attribution was the delayed rollout of PPP Standards across most Australian states and territories, which substantially narrowed the window for growers to have regulatory drivers for practice change. One Regulator representative captured the project's contribution:

"The guidelines — they are a pivotal piece, I think. I know we consult them regularly and we'll keep going back to them when we get issues raised about horticulture food safety."

PPP registration numbers across states where standards had been implemented remained very low at the time of evaluation (approximately 12 registered in NSW; approximately 140 in Victoria), suggesting that the project's full impact on practice change is likely to materialise as regulatory implementation gathers pace.

3.2.9 Limitations identified by key informants

The following limitations were identified across the KI interview cohort and are documented for future project design purposes:

- **Help desk model:** Very low inquiry volumes suggest the current standalone format does not meet demonstrated demand in this sector; growers typically contact trusted individuals rather than unfamiliar services.
- **Reach to small and ESL growers:** The project's primary reach was to those already engaged in food safety; smaller, non-English-speaking and peri-urban growers were largely not reached directly.
- **Sequential delivery structure:** Outreach activities did not begin until Year 3, limiting cumulative impact within the project timeframe.
- **Three CEO transitions:** Leadership discontinuity was a significant challenge to strategic coherence and stakeholder relationship management.
- **Guidelines cost and timeline overrun:** While quality was high, the overrun constrained other deliverable areas.
- **PRG governance:** The PRG functioned primarily as a progress monitor rather than an active strategic guide; it did not formally pivot project emphasis when the PPP delay became apparent in the second year.
- **Absence of hard outcome KPIs:** No metrics tied to measurable industry outcomes (food recalls, regulatory non-compliances) were built into the project design.
- **Extension officer engagement:** Inconsistent participation by extension officers, a critical multiplier group, significantly limited knowledge distribution to growers.
- **Melons sector disengagement:** One of the three target commodity groups opted for minimal outreach engagement, despite being a project priority.
- **Peak industry body gatekeeping:** National-level bodies initially acted as gatekeepers, restricting grower access to project resources or collaborative development.
- **Organisational design:** Roles across board, management, COP, technical advisory groups and PRG were insufficiently distinct, creating overlap and uneven workloads.
- **Content calibration:** Materials were technically strong and highly praised but did not sufficiently address the fear, complexity and resistance that prevents growers from engaging.

3.2.10 Participant suggestions for improvement

Participants expressed strong appetite for a future iteration of the HFSI and offered the following constructive suggestions:

- Adopt a **train-the-trainers / extension officer model** as the primary mechanism for reaching small growers, with a practical extension officer toolkit developed upfront.
- Develop **hard-copy and laminated materials** for distribution at grower events, field days and packhouses, particularly for non-digitally engaged operators.
- Embed the project more directly with **Freshcare, peak industry bodies and retailers** as distribution channels from the outset.
- Deliver **standalone FPSC events earlier** in the project timeline, rather than tagging onto others' events.
- Produce **short, accessible videos** that demystify food safety tasks (e.g., water sampling) to reduce the fear and complexity that deters growers.
- Develop further **translated materials** to reach CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) growers, including ESL communities in peri-urban areas.
- Establish a **formal annual review cycle** for guidelines to keep content current.
- Build in **more frequent and frank strategic reviews** within the PRG asking probing questions about what is not working and adjusting accordingly.
- Run **targeted, topic-specific webinars** on water quality, traceability and regulatory compliance as standalone assets.
- Explore **embedding food safety components** into other organisations' projects as a cost-effective reach and sustainability mechanism.
- A **comparative analysis of help desk usage** across FPSC, Freshcare and HARPS was conducted to understand where growers seek help, but only limited data was available. Enquiry spikes appear to be event-driven e.g. updates, weather, biosecurity and could be leveraged to support greater use.

3.2.11 Identified positives of the HFSI by key informants

The following ten achievements were among the most consistently and enthusiastically cited strengths of the project across the full KI interview cohort. They represent the aspects of the HFSI most likely to endure as legacy contributions to the horticulture food safety sector in Australia and New Zealand.

- **Comprehensive, high-quality revised guidelines.** The revision and expansion of the horticulture food safety guidelines was universally regarded as the project's single most tangible and durable output. Multiple state regulatory agencies, including NSW Food Authority, Victoria and Western Australia, independently embedded the guidelines into their own regulatory tools and outreach materials. FSANZ confirmed it consults the guidelines regularly as a reference for horticulture food safety matters. One PRG/Funder representative described the quality of the final product as having "multiplied many fold" what FPSC could have achieved without project investment.
- **Exceptional Community of Practice growth.** The COP grew from zero to 95 members against an original target of 40 — a 138% overachievement. It drew a genuine cross-section of the supply chain, including growers, packhouses, researchers, standard owners, certification bodies and regulators. Approximately 70% of members reported actively using COP information within their own business or organisation. The COP's evolution into thematic sub-COPs was cited as particularly effective in generating deeper, demand-driven engagement.
- **Establishment of a new professional community and sense of belonging.** One of the most valued outcomes was the creation of a genuine community of identity among food safety professionals in horticulture. For example, people who had previously worked in isolation now had peers, networks and a sense of belonging to a recognised field. One PRG/Funder representative described this as elevating the profile of food safety as a professional discipline within horticulture in a way that had not previously existed.
- **Exemplary project team performance.** Across all four stakeholder groups and without exception, the project's technical lead was praised in the strongest terms; described variously as "brilliant," "a wonderful powerhouse," and "a very amiable and really, really good professional person," with credibility extending to stakeholders who were initially sceptical of the project. One PRG member rated

project value for money at "100%" largely on the strength of the quality of the team's work. The broader team was also consistently praised for genuine passion for food safety and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

- **Highly effective Trans-Tasman co-funding and collaboration.** The project successfully attracted New Zealand co-funding and active NZ stakeholder engagement beyond initial expectations. The co-funding model was praised as an efficient mechanism. A modest individual contribution from each funder yielded a collective programme that no single funder could have produced alone. A NZ PRG/Funder representative described the project as filling a genuine structural gap in the New Zealand food safety landscape. The establishment of a formal New Zealand Food Safety Network as a direct project outcome was cited as a significant milestone.
- **Strong regulatory alignment and timing.** The project's alignment with the gazetting of the PPP Standards was described as near perfect. The project's approach of positioning itself as the education phase that precedes enforcement, rather than as a regulatory tool itself, was valued by regulators and industry alike. FSANZ's active contribution to grower guides and the mutual cross-referencing of FSANZ and FPSC websites were concrete indicators of a productive regulatory partnership.
- **FPSC's substantially elevated brand and institutional profile.** Over the three years of the project, FPSC was transformed from a relatively unknown body into a recognised, trusted and independent "go-to" institution for horticulture food safety in Australia and New Zealand. This reputational gain, built through consistent quality, independence from certifiers and regulators and genuine responsiveness to growers, is considered one of the project's most durable and significant achievements.
- **Successful annual symposium, proving latent demand.** The annual horticulture food safety symposium, introduced through the project, demonstrated that genuine demand existed for a dedicated sector-wide food safety event and was something that had not been tested before. The symposium attracted strong engagement from food safety professionals, facilitated genuine cross-sector connection and was rated highly by all KIs who attended. Its continuation beyond the project's formal funding cycle was supported by every KI participant who commented on it.
- **Effective state regulatory agency adoption and resource multiplication.** An unplanned but highly significant outcome was the adoption of HFSI materials by multiple state regulatory agencies for use in their own grower outreach, at no additional cost to the project. One Regulator/Funder noted that the NSW Food Authority had embedded HFSI resources directly into its regulatory tools, describing this as resource multiplication that substantially extended the project's reach. Similar adoption was confirmed in Victoria and Western Australia.
- **Delivering on milestones within a challenging environment.** Despite three CEO transitions, delayed PPP regulatory implementation across most Australian states, constrained human resources and a co-funding structure requiring careful management across multiple jurisdictions, the project met all contractual milestones. One exception is the articulation of an ongoing financially sustainable model. Every funder interviewed stated they would fund a similar initiative again.

3.3 Case study findings

3.3.1 Overview and methodology

Seven case study interviews were conducted as part of the HFSI final evaluation. Participants were selected to represent a range of commodities, business sizes and HFSI engagement types across Australia and New Zealand. Participants included large and medium produce businesses, a group scheme compliance manager, an industry extension officer and a certification body manager.

It should be noted that, as originally planned, berry, melon and leaf vegetable growers were not available to be interviewed due to the concurrent implementation of the Produce Primary Production Processing Standard (PPP). This substantially constrained grower capacity to participate in evaluation activities and represents a gap in the case study sample relative to the original Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

A significant characteristic of the sample overall was a high pre-existing knowledge baseline across most participants which was important for interpreting outcomes.

Findings are presented below across ten evaluation categories.

3.3.2 Knowledge

Six of the seven case study participants (approximately 86%) described some positive change in food safety knowledge that could be linked, directly or indirectly, to their HFSI engagement. However, the nature and depth of knowledge gain varied considerably. For participants entering with a high existing knowledge baseline, HFSI's primary contribution was consolidation and validation of existing knowledge rather than substantive new learning, a pattern the evaluation characterises as a "ceiling effect." For participants with sector-specific knowledge gaps, gains were more tangible.

The strongest knowledge gains for one participant were described as horticulture-specific food safety knowledge that extended prior expertise, particularly in relation to weather event response protocols, food fraud and food defence and microbial contamination in fresh produce contexts. FPSC's guidelines covering flood and extreme weather events were explicitly highlighted as filling a gap not addressed by the national food safety authority. Substantive knowledge gains were noted for another participant in water management risk, micro-testing interpretation and risk probability, attributing these to cross-sector exposure through the COP. Another gained valuable understanding of how food safety standards and policy are made, which were a significant pre-HFSI gap. Another described three specific knowledge gains: allergen risks in inter-season cropping, the persistence of *Salmonella* in droppings from wildlife and the hazard of using compressed air cleaning on packing lines. One described no new food safety knowledge gains attributable to HFSI, possibly a reflection of very mature pre-existing knowledge, rather than any shortcoming in delivery.

"The COPs have just been a revelation — really, really powerful... if I've got a water problem, I've got three or four people from the COP that I know I can just go to now." — Case Study Participant

"They put out some new knowledge I was unaware of, and I'm a food safety practitioner." — Case Study Participant

3.3.3 Skills

The skills dimension showed the weakest evidence of HFSI contribution across the case study cohort, with approximately four of seven participants (57%) describing any skills-related development connected to HFSI. In several cases, participants explicitly distinguished between knowledge gains (which they acknowledged) and skills development (which they assessed as minimal or independent of HFSI). This distinction is addressed directly in this quote.

"No, it's the knowledge — but that's helped me go and do stuff." — Case Study Participant

Where skills development was described, it tended to be in communication and facilitation capabilities rather than technical food safety skills. One participant described developing skills in translating complex food safety content into accessible language for non-specialist packhouse audiences, which was then applied in designing a supplier symposium. Another adapted the format of HFSI's bite-sized one-page guides to produce in-house training toolboxes suited to the multilingual workforce. Another described building general research skills and the confidence to seek authoritative information, rather than relying on industry rumour. For two participants, the skills dimension was assessed as not applicable or unchanged.

3.3.4 Aspirations

Aspirational change was among the most consistent positive findings across the case study sample, with approximately six of seven participants (86%) describing forward-oriented goals connected at least in part to their HFSI engagement.

One participant's aspirations were the most clearly HFSI-attributed. The participant described commencing a higher degree focused on food safety culture and preparedness for novel events, directly crediting HFSI with stimulating this change. They also articulated a multi-year aspiration to shift industry food safety culture toward preparedness for non-business-as-usual events. Another described clear ambitions to embed food safety as a central element of the organisation's brand identity and to expand World Food Safety Day activities. One also expressed strong aspirations to participate in ongoing industry standard-setting conversations and to invest in compliance and record-keeping technology. Another HFSI-attributed aspiration was to encourage auditors to be more effective communicators of food safety resources. Also described was the aspiration to develop short staff training videos, inspired by discussions within the COP, though this remained unimplemented at the time of interview.

"As I said, it helps stimulate the masters, so it's good." — Case Study Participant

"I want to think about how, within the limited purview of a certification body, adoption of good food safety practice can be promoted and supported." — Case Study Participant

3.3.5 Practice behaviour changes

Confirmed, implemented practice changes attributable to HFSI were documented in four of the seven case studies (57%), with two participants describing no practice changes connected to HFSI and one describing planned but not yet implemented changes.

The most substantive evidence of practice change was one participant reshaping the design and audience focus of the organisation's supplier food safety symposium based on COP learnings; actively promoting FPSC guidelines to supplier quality managers; using FPSC weather event guidelines to prepare internal quality teams during a regional cyclone event; and facilitating a shift toward greater openness about food safety issues among the supplier network. One participant also reported a significant reduction in food safety "instances" year-on-year, though this could not directly be attributed to HFSI. Another used HFSI training materials with new growers in the business and distributed resources to export customers. One participant also contributed substantially to a sub-COP reframing of "adverse weather" to "crisis management." One grower participant adapted the format of HFSI's one-page guides into in-house training toolboxes and fact sheets, describing it as a genuine change in training format, though modest in content terms. Another created an internal knowledge hub article directing auditors to FPSC guidelines and submitted detailed feedback on the Guidelines. Another applied knowledge gains, particularly around allergens and compressed air hazards, directly in grower extension work, correcting practices at grower sites. One described no practice changes attributable to HFSI.

"Those bite-sized one-pagers gave us, gave the team some brilliant ideas. And once we showed them that, they went — oh yeah, we can do that for all the in-house things." — Case Study Participant

In contrast one participant said:

"They've developed stuff, but I don't find them helpful at all." — Case Study Participant

"I did tell them, this is your audience... this might be too technical, if you can break it down to a bit simpler language." — Case Study Participant

3.3.6 Attribution and contribution

Attribution of change to HFSI specifically, as distinct from broader industry drivers, regulatory requirements, or participants' own professional development, was complex across all seven cases. Consistent with the Modified Contribution Analysis framework, HFSI is best understood as a contributing factor operating within a rich environment of parallel influences.

Strong plausible attribution to HFSI was established in two cases. One participant explicitly credited HFSI COP engagement and the guidelines development process with substantive knowledge gains, attitudinal shifts and enrolment in a higher degree. The other attributed the redesign of an organisation's supplier symposium directly to COP learnings and explicitly credited FPSC guidelines for the cyclone preparedness response. Moderate attribution was cited in format adaptation of training materials, knowledge hub article and guidelines feedback and applied knowledge gains in extension work. Weak attribution was appropriate for another participant, whose primary engagement driver was regulatory change and whose engagement with HFSI was largely passive. No meaningful attribution was possible for one participant, whose participation was motivated by advocacy rather than learning and who described no KASA changes attributable to HFSI.

A notable cross-case finding was confusion among some participants between HFSI as a programme and FPSC as an institution. One participant directly asked the interviewer whether the guidelines were an HFSI output or an FPSC activity and this attribution ambiguity was present to varying degrees in other cases. This suggests HFSI's programme brand visibility may be lower than intended and that much of the value participants ascribe to HFSI may be attributed to FPSC as the delivering organisation.

3.3.7 Benefits and impacts

Across the seven case studies, the most consistently and strongly reported benefit of HFSI was the networking and peer connection function of the COP. Five of seven participants (71%) identified the COP as a source of meaningful professional connection, validation, or access to specialist expertise. The sense of being part of a community addressing shared challenges and of having access to peers and experts who could respond to specific operational questions, was valued by participants across a range of experience levels.

The Guidelines and associated one-page resources were noted positively by four of seven participants (57%), though with important caveats about their fit for different audiences. At a broader level, HFSI appears to have contributed to a gradual shift in food safety culture among participants who engaged with the COP, moving from a purely compliance orientation toward a more proactive, risk-aware stance, most clearly articulated by one participant's description of moving the industry away from "low risk equals no risk."

"The networking has been outstanding, and it's been really good to listen to other people talking because the common themes are coming through the industry. I'm not one of talking to empty space." — Case Study Participant

"The shift in attitude is like, yes, there's low risk, but we can't term it as no risk." — Case Study Participant

3.3.8 Barriers

Several consistent barriers to HFSI's effectiveness and reach emerged across the case study sample.

The most structurally significant barrier was the high pre-existing knowledge baseline of several participants. For five participants, the KASA gap that HFSI's theory of change assumes to be present was substantially absent. This "ceiling effect" substantially limited the observable KASA and practice change outcomes in these cases and suggests the programme may have attracted disproportionately experienced participants while reaching fewer

early-stage or lower-baseline operators.

The absence of regulatory enforcement of PPP standards where introduced was identified as the single most important barrier to food safety improvement among the smaller growers and by extension, a fundamental limitation of HFSI's reach at the bottom of the knowledge and practice spectrum. This finding — that voluntary capacity-building cannot substitute for regulatory scaffolding — is a critical contextual constraint on HFSI's impact.

Geographic barriers limited the participation of New Zealand-based participants in in-person events. The non-applicability of PPP Standards to the New Zealand context effectively removed a significant strand of HFSI's work from relevance to NZ-based participants. Time and workload constraints also emerged as real barriers. One participant was operating beyond the contracted hours and described this as preventing COP participation despite being signed up. Another participant's primarily passive engagement, reading COP minutes rather than attending, appears to have limited the depth of the experience and the practice changes that might have followed.

3.3.9 Sustainability

Sustainability was strongest where individual commitment was high and where changes had begun to be embedded organisationally. Integration of food safety priorities into the organisation's brand strategy and ongoing supplier engagement activities suggests institutional sustainability is developing. The enrolment in a higher degree represents a multi-year commitment with HFSI as a catalytic input. Another described continuous self-directed professional development as inherent to their role and volunteered the business operation as a test site for future AI-enabled training tools. Another expressed strong intent to remain involved in industry conversations.

Significant fragility was noted in two cases. For one participant, the sustainability of knowledge transfer to growers was entirely dependent on continued employment. The aspiration to develop auditors as food safety communicators remained unimplemented and sustainability beyond personal commitment was not demonstrated.

Approximately five of seven case study participants (71%) expressed clear intent to continue engaging with food safety information and with FPSC or HFSI-related networks, suggesting that the relationships and orientations fostered through HFSI have enduring value beyond the project period.

"I really hope it keeps going and I'm just sorry they didn't get that funding. That's a bit of a disappointment, I think, for the whole of the industry." — Case Study Participant

3.3.10 Case study participant suggestions for improvement

- Better-quality, visually oriented, multilingual resources suitable for low-literacy growers and diverse, rotating workforces.
- A living, rolling guidelines document reviewed regularly by topic area, rather than a static publication.
- Stronger integration between HFSI resources and on-the-ground extension delivery, including dedicated support for industry development officers.
- Dedicated engagement pathways for certification bodies and auditors to extend HFSI's reach through existing audit infrastructure.
- Continued investment in AI-assisted training tools to address multilingual and workforce turnover challenges.
- FPSC presence and active participation at industry-run events to build ongoing engagement beyond the structured programme period.

- Greater regulatory enforcement to underpin and give credibility to HFSI's education activities among resistant smaller growers.
- A simpler, more accessible food safety framework for smaller producers — less compliance burden, more practical and actionable guidance.

3.3.11 Identified positives of HFSI by case study participants

The following aspects of HFSI were highlighted positively by multiple participants across the case study interviews:

- The **Community of Practice** was described by the majority of participants as the single most valuable component of HFSI, for its networking function, peer validation, cross-sector learning and growing culture of openness among members.
- The **FPSC Guidelines**, especially the **bite-sized one-page guide format**, were valued for their practical, accessible design.
- **Case studies presented within COP sessions** were strongly praised as providing direct, industry-relevant learning.
- The **International Fresh Produce Safety Symposium** was valued as a high-quality knowledge-sharing and networking forum.
- The **sub-COP model**, enabling deeper, focused work on specific topics such as crisis management, was valued particularly by those engaged in sub-group activities.
- The **weather event and extreme weather guidelines** were praised for filling a gap not addressed by national regulators, particularly in New Zealand.
- The **growing openness of COP participants** over time was noted positively as a reflection of increasing trust and cultural maturity within the COP community.

4. Discussion

4.1 Success factors

Several factors, evident across all three data sources, appear to have been critical to the HFSI's achievements.

Quality and credibility of resources. The decision to invest substantially in high-quality, evidence-based guidelines, even at the cost of other deliverables, proved to be well-founded. The Fundamental Guidelines were adopted by multiple state regulatory agencies without any additional project cost, representing a significant multiplier effect. Their credibility rested on the independence of FPSC from certifiers and regulators, the multi-stakeholder review process and the technical rigour of the underlying content. The accessible one-page guide format extended reach beyond specialist audiences.

Community of Practice design and evolution. The COP's growth from zero to 95 members against a target of 40 reflects the genuine unmet need it addressed. Several design features contributed to this success: the multi-stakeholder composition that brought together regulators, researchers, practitioners and industry professionals; the evolution into themed sub-COPs that enabled deeper, demand-driven engagement on specific topics; and the creation of a confidential, trusted professional space in which participants could raise concerns and share knowledge without competitive pressure. The COP addressed what multiple participants identified as professional isolation in the food safety field.

Strategic alignment with the regulatory environment. The project's timing relative to the gazetting of PPP Standards positioned HFSI as the logical education and awareness companion to emerging regulatory requirements. The project's deliberate positioning as an enabling resource, rather than a regulatory or

compliance tool, was valued by both industry and regulators and resulted in a productive partnership with FSANZ that extended the project's reach and credibility.

Trans-Tasman co-funding model. The collaborative funding structure across multiple Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions enabled the delivery of a programme no single funder could have sustained alone. It also produced durable outcomes specific to the New Zealand context, particularly the New Zealand Food Safety Network, which represented genuine added value for NZ co-funders.

Project team capability and commitment. Across all stakeholder groups and without exception, the project's technical lead was praised for exceptional competence, professionalism and genuine passion for food safety. The stability and quality of the technical team provided continuity through three CEO transitions and was identified as a critical factor in the project's ability to deliver on all milestones. The team's credibility extended to stakeholders who were initially sceptical of the project.

Breadth and flexibility of engagement channels. The deployment of a wide range of engagement channels — i.e. the COP, sub-COPs, annual symposium, podcasts, newsletters, LinkedIn, roadshows, workshops, webinars and direct IDO engagement — maximised reach across different participant types, preferences and levels of prior engagement. The symposium in particular demonstrated latent demand for a dedicated horticulture food safety event that had not previously been tested.

Institutional independence of FPSC. FPSC's independence from certifiers and regulators was consistently cited as a source of trust and credibility, enabling it to serve as a neutral convener in a sector with complex competitive and regulatory dynamics.

4.2 Challenges and how they were addressed

Three CEO transitions. Leadership changes created significant continuity challenges, requiring the team to rebuild stakeholder relationships on multiple occasions and contributing to a sequential rather than parallel delivery structure. The stability and continuity provided by the project's technical lead was the principal mitigation; strong documentation practices and consistent communication with the PRG also helped maintain strategic coherence. Despite these disruptions, all contractual milestones were met.

Guidelines cost and timeline overrun. The guidelines review exceeded both budget and timeline projections, constraining what else could be delivered within the project period. The project team addressed this by treating quality as the non-negotiable priority and negotiating accommodations with funders where necessary. All interviewees considered the final product to justify the additional investment.

Delayed PPP regulatory implementation. The rollout of PPP standards across most Australian states and territories was substantially slower than anticipated at project design, which significantly narrowed growers' regulatory drivers for practice change during the project period. The project team responded by emphasising voluntary adoption, positioning resources as preparation for future compliance requirements and strengthening relationships with state bodies to ensure materials would be embedded in regulatory outreach as implementation gathered pace.

Reaching small, ESL and peri-urban growers. Direct engagement with the most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach operators proved consistently challenging. The project adapted by developing IDO engagement as the primary strategy for reaching smaller operators, leveraging the trusted relationships between growers and their established contacts and by conducting ESL-specific focus groups to better understand this cohort's needs. These adaptations had limited time to generate impact within the project period.

Peak industry body gatekeeping. National peak bodies initially acted as gatekeepers, restricting grower

engagement and access to project resources. The project team addressed this by building relationships directly with those bodies over time, framing HFSI as a complementary rather than competing resource. The dynamic improved across the project's life, though progress was slower than desired.

Melons sector disengagement. Despite being one of three priority commodity groups, the melons sector opted not to fully engage with the project. This may have been because the industry already had an advanced food safety framework and a dedicated specialist, making generalist advice from the HFSI project feel redundant to them. The project team continued to offer resources and engagement opportunities; however, sector-level reluctance was not overcome within the project timeframe and this remains an acknowledged gap.

Sequential delivery structure. Cross-sector outreach did not commence until Year 3, limiting the cumulative impact achievable within the project period. This was a structural design decision that the project team partially mitigated through acceleration of outreach activities in the final year, though the compressed timeframe remained a constraint.

4.3 Lessons learned

The following lessons emerge from evidence across all data collection methods and are offered to inform future food safety capacity-building initiatives.

1. Design for regulatory leverage from the outset. Programmes aligned with regulatory drivers achieve substantially greater reach and uptake. Future initiatives should be explicitly designed to complement and reinforce regulatory implementation timelines, with contingency plans for delays in regulatory rollout.

2. Invest in distributed delivery models early. Centralised outreach cannot reach the breadth of the target population. A train-the-trainer model building a distributed network of embedded facilitators across states, territories and New Zealand, should be planned from project inception, not adapted in the final year.

3. Build hard outcome KPIs into project design. Metrics tied to measurable industry outcomes such as food recalls, regulatory non-compliances, audit results, should be incorporated at design stage. These provide more robust evidence of impact and enable more confident attribution.

4. Deliver in parallel, not in sequence. Future projects should plan for concurrent delivery of awareness, capacity-building and outreach activities from Year 1. Sequential delivery concentrates activity in the final year and limits cumulative impact.

5. Calibrate content to the audience's barriers, not just the technical subject matter. Technically accurate materials are insufficient if they do not address the fear, complexity and perceived burden that prevent growers from engaging. Content development should explicitly engage with growers' emotional and motivational barriers to food safety compliance.

6. Integrate with existing high-reach channels rather than creating new ones. HFSI's experience demonstrates that established channels, particularly high-readership industry newsletters, retailer grower networks and peak body platform, offer far greater reach than FPSC-branded events created from scratch. Future programmes should prioritise integration with existing trusted channels.

7. Give PRGs formal authority to redirect project emphasis. Project Reference Groups should be empowered and resourced to conduct mid-project reviews and formally redirect activity where circumstances change, such as delayed regulatory rollout, rather than functioning primarily as progress monitors.

8. Short-form, multilingual content significantly extends reach. Short videos (30 seconds to two minutes), multilingual resources and pictorial guides reach non-English-speaking and low-literacy audiences who are not served by text-based materials. This investment should be planned from the outset, not added as an afterthought.

9. Actively manage programme brand visibility. When participants attribute value to the delivering organisation rather than the programme itself, the programme's accountability and future funding case are weakened. Future initiatives should actively differentiate and communicate the programme identity alongside the delivering organisation's brand.

10. Clarify and separate governance roles. Distinct, clearly defined roles for board, management, COP leadership, technical advisory groups and PRG members prevent role overlap, uneven workloads and governance confusion.

4.4 Unintended outcomes

The HFSI generated some significant outcomes that were not anticipated in the original project design. These are documented here as evidence of the project's broader systemic contribution.

Positive unintended outcomes:

- **Supporting development of a New Zealand Food Safety Network.** The organic development of a formal NZ Food Safety Network was an indirect project outcome and was not planned at project inception. It represents a structural, enduring contribution to the NZ food safety sector that extends well beyond the project's formal objectives.
- **State regulatory agency adoption of HFSI materials.** The adoption and integration of HFSI materials by the NSW Food Authority, Victoria and Western Australian regulatory bodies into their own operational tools and grower outreach, at no additional project cost, was not anticipated. This represents a powerful form of resource multiplication that substantially extended the project's reach and legitimacy.
- **Reduction of professional isolation in food safety.** Multiple participants across all data collection methods described a reduction in the professional isolation they had experienced prior to COP involvement. Food safety roles in horticulture are frequently solitary and the creation of a connected professional community was experienced as a significant personal and professional benefit and one that was not explicitly designed into the project.
- **Creation of a professional community of identity.** The COP evolved beyond a knowledge-exchange mechanism into a genuine community of identity, a peer group in which food safety professionals in horticulture recognised shared values, developed shared language and experienced a sense of belonging to a recognised professional field. This outcome has implications for the long-term culture of food safety in the sector.
- **Reduction of duplication across the sector.** Some COP participants shifted from independently producing food safety content to actively sharing and leveraging FPSC resources, reducing duplication of effort across the sector. This was an unplanned but directly beneficial outcome for both the participants and the industry.
- **Organic mutual cross-referencing between FSANZ and FPSC websites.** The organic emergence of two-way cross-referencing between FSANZ's and FPSC's websites, not planned or formally agreed, extended the reach of both organisations' materials and established a public indicator of regulatory alignment.

Negative unintended outcomes:

- **Perception of competition from established programmes.** Some established programmes perceived HFSI as competitive rather than complementary, creating friction that required active management by

the project team. While largely resolved over the project's life, this dynamic absorbed time and stakeholder management capacity that could have been directed elsewhere.

- **Help desk underutilisation.** The help desk generated very low inquiry volumes despite significant investment, suggesting a mismatch between the service model and growers' information-seeking behaviour. This represented an inefficiency that was not identified until well into the project period.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Overall assessment against each evaluation question

EQ1 – Effectiveness: Broadly positive (~77% of KI participants)

The HFSI made a credible and evidenced contribution to food safety KASA among industry participants, with the strongest gains demonstrated at the professional practitioner and intermediary level. COP membership substantially exceeded its target with many COP members reported actively applying information in their operations. Significant knowledge gains were confirmed in the COP focus group and case study participants. Aspirational change was the most consistent positive finding, with practice-level behaviour change confirmed in case study participants. Direct farm-level behavioural change was not systematically captured within the project period. Effectiveness among small, ESL and less-engaged growers remains difficult to assess and represents an unresolved gap against the project's original intent.

EQ2 – Relevance: Strongest criterion (~91% positive)

The project addressed a genuine, urgent and widely acknowledged need. The choice of commodity priorities, alignment with PPP regulatory timelines and focus on building accessible, common knowledge across a fragmented sector were all assessed as highly appropriate. The primary qualification is that content calibration, while technically rigorous, did not always adequately reach those most in need, nor address the fear, complexity and motivational barriers that prevent growers from engaging. This was a relevance gap in mode and framing rather than in subject matter.

EQ3 – Process appropriateness: Moderately positive (~68% positive)

The breadth and creativity of engagement channels deployed was commendable for a project of this scale and the COP, sub-COPs and symposium were assessed as well-designed and effective mechanisms. A significant qualification across all stakeholder groups was that engagement largely reached those already motivated and engaged in food safety i.e. the "already converted." Extension officers engaged inconsistently, the melons sector was less engaged and the most vulnerable grower cohorts (small, ESL, peri-urban) were reached only indirectly and at the margins of the project period. The help desk model did not fit this sector's trust-based information-seeking behaviour.

EQ4 – Coherence: Broadly positive (~73% positive)

The project complemented rather than duplicated the sector landscape and actively worked to align with FSANZ, state regulatory bodies and other industry programmes. Initial friction with some established programmes and with national peak body gatekeeping was real but improved over the project's life. Coherence in New Zealand was stronger than in the Australian context, with the project filling an identified structural gap and assisting in the establishment of a New Zealand Food Safety Network as a direct outcome.

EQ5 – Efficiency: Broadly positive (~77% positive)

The project delivered high-quality outputs on a modest budget and met all contractual milestones. The principal

efficiency limitation was the sequential rather than parallel delivery structure, which compressed outreach activity into the final year and limited cumulative impact. The guidelines overrun, while justified by quality considerations, constrained other deliverable areas. Three CEO transitions created some structural interruptions in stakeholder management and strategic coherence.

EQ6 – Sustainability: Conditionally positive (~64% positive)

The project's most durable assets — the revised FPSC Fundamental Guidelines, grower fact sheets, tailored disaster-specific resources, the COP community and the substantially elevated profile of FPSC as a sector institution — provide a strong foundation for continued impact beyond the formal project end. State regulatory agency adoption of HFSI materials and the establishment of the NZ Food Safety Network, represent additional indicators of institutional sustainability. The primary and non-trivial risk to sustainability is adequate ongoing funding for next steps.

EQ7 – Impact: Most contested criterion (~59% positive)

The project made a credible institutional-level impact: HFSI guidance has been embedded in state regulatory tools across multiple jurisdictions; the COP is actively used by most of its members. Cross-sector dialogue has been facilitated at a scale and depth not previously achieved. Attributable farm-level behaviour change was not directly captured and the delayed PPP rollout substantially narrowed the window for growers to have regulatory drivers for practice change during the project period. Attribution is most credible at the intermediary and institutional level; direct grower-level impact is plausible but not directly evidenced within the project timeframe. Impact evidence is likely to strengthen as PPP implementation gathers pace across Australian jurisdictions.

5.2 Achievement of project aim

The overarching aim of the HFSI, to improve food safety outcomes across the fresh produce industry by building the capacity of producers, supply chain participants and allied professionals to understand, implement and sustain sound food safety practices, was substantially achieved at the professional intermediary and institutional level, with growing but not yet fully evidenced reach to producers directly.

Against the four components of the KASA framework:

- **Knowledge** gains were clearly evidenced among food safety practitioners, intermediaries and engaged industry professionals. The "ceiling effect" observed among highly experienced participants indicates the programme attracted disproportionately expert participants, while evidence of knowledge gains among lower-baseline growers, the intended primary beneficiary, is less direct.
- **Attitudes** toward food safety shifted in a positive direction among COP participants and case study participants, with multiple data sources evidencing a move from compliance-oriented to risk-aware and proactive orientations. This attitudinal shift at the professional level is one of the project's most significant and potentially enduring contributions.
- **Skills** development was the weakest KASA category, consistent with the professional seniority of most engaged participants. Where skills development occurred, it tended to be in communication and facilitation capability rather than technical food safety skills.
- **Aspirations** for continued engagement, professional development and food safety improvement were the most consistently and strongly evidenced KASA outcome across all data sources, providing a positive indicator for sustained engagement beyond the project period.

At the level of the project's theory of change, the evaluation concludes that HFSI successfully generated the intended **outputs** of a strengthened COP, revised guidelines and a range of accessible resources and has

produced evidenced **outcomes** in terms of KASA changes among those engaged. Progress toward **impact**, changes in on-farm and supply chain food safety practice attributable to the project, is credible and plausible at the institutional level, but not yet fully demonstrable at the farm level. This is consistent with the project's stage of implementation and the structural delays in PPP Standards rollout, rather than evidence that impact will not ultimately materialise.

The project's most significant and enduring achievements — the FPSC Guidelines, the COP as a professional community, the elevation of FPSC's institutional profile and support for establishment of the NZ Food Safety Network — represent genuine and lasting contributions to the horticulture food safety sector in Australia and New Zealand.

6. Recommendations

6.1 For future similar initiatives

R1. Adopt a train-the-trainer model as the core delivery architecture. Rather than relying on centralised outreach from a single technical body, future initiatives should invest from inception in building a distributed network of trained facilitators embedded across states, territories and New Zealand. This model significantly extends reach, embeds knowledge within trusted local relationships and creates structural sustainability.

R2. Design hard outcome KPIs into the project from the start. Future initiatives should incorporate measurable outcome metrics, including data on food recalls, regulatory non-compliances, audit outcomes, or other agreed proxies, at the design stage. This enables more confident attribution and provides stronger accountability evidence for funders.

R3. Deliver engagement activities in parallel with resource development from Year 1. Sequential delivery concentrates outreach in the final project year and limits cumulative impact. Future project designs should plan for simultaneous delivery of awareness, capacity-building and outreach activities throughout the project period.

R4. Build explicit mid-project review points with authority to redirect. Future projects should incorporate structured mid-project reviews at which the Project Reference Group has responsibility, rather than advisory capacity, to redirect project emphasis in response to changed circumstances, such as regulatory delays.

R5. Invest in multilingual, short-form, visually accessible content. Videos of 30 seconds to two minutes, multilingual resources and pictorial guides should be planned as core project deliverables from inception. These reach non-English-speaking, low-literacy and non-digitally engaged audiences who are not served by text-based materials and are essential for achieving equity of reach across the grower population.

R6. Prioritise integration with existing high-reach channels over creating new FPSC-branded channels. Future initiatives should systematically identify and leverage high-readership industry newsletters, retailer grower networks and peak body platforms as primary distribution channels, rather than investing primarily in FPSC-originated events and communications.

R7. Address growers' emotional and motivational barriers explicitly. Content and communications should be designed to directly demystify regulatory compliance, normalise food safety as an enabling rather than punitive discipline and address the specific fears and perceived complexity that prevent growers, particularly smaller and less-experienced operators, from engaging.

R8. Expand commodity scope beyond three priority areas. Limiting programme scope to three commodities concentrates resources but risks creating industry-wide gaps. Future iterations should explore a broader commodity scope with differentiated engagement models for high-priority and lower-priority commodities.

6.2 For sustaining HFSI benefits

R9. Secure dedicated funding for FPSC's core functions and COP maintenance beyond June 2026. The COP, guidelines currency and FPSC's institutional capacity require sustained funding to preserve the gains made through the HFSI. A clear funding plan including exploration of co-investment from state bodies, industry levies and NZ partners should be developed and pursued as an immediate priority.

R10. Transition the COP to a self-sustaining model with clear governance. The COP should be supported through the development of a formal governance structure, a member-managed leadership group and a sustainable operating model that reduces dependence on project funding while maintaining FPSC's coordinating role.

R11. Adopt annual guidelines review cycle. The Fundamental Guidelines and associated resources should be maintained through a structured annual review process (2-3 Chapters per year), with remuneration or cost-recovery mechanisms for expert contributors to ensure equity and sustainability. Updating on a rolling topic-by-topic basis rather than periodic full editions is recommended by case study participants as a more sustainable model.

R12. Ensure sub-COP outputs are completed and publicly accessible. Sub-COPs that have commenced work on specific deliverables (decision trees, crisis networks, regulatory explainer videos) should be supported through a structured completion process before the project formally concludes, to prevent loss of near-complete outputs.

R13. Continue the annual symposium as a sector-owned event. Given the demonstrated latent demand and high satisfaction ratings, the annual horticulture food safety symposium should be maintained as a sector-wide event beyond the formal HFSI project period, with co-investment from industry bodies and state partners to reduce dependence on FPSC-only funding.

6.3 For FPSC

R14. Develop an IDO toolkit as a priority legacy resource. A practical, ready-to-use toolkit for Industry Development Officers covering the top grower questions, quick-access references and key FPSC resources would significantly extend FPSC's reach through trusted existing channels and reduce the barrier to food safety information sharing at the point of grower contact.

R15. Actively manage FPSC's programme brand visibility alongside its institutional brand. When programme participants attribute the value of HFSI activities to FPSC as an institution rather than to the programme itself, the programme's accountability is weakened. FPSC should develop practices for clearly communicating the HFSI programme identity and in future programmes, any successor initiative, to ensure programme-level contributions are captured in evaluation evidence and funding cases.

R16. Reconsider and redesign the help desk model. The current help desk attracted very low inquiry volumes and does not fit growers' trust-based information-seeking behaviour. FPSC should explore integration of help desk functions into IDO networks, existing industry services, or a moderated online community model, rather than continuation of a standalone FPSC-branded inquiry service.

R17. Develop a targeted outreach strategy for small and ESL growers. FPSC should work with IDOs, multicultural community organisations and grower associations to develop and test outreach models specifically designed for small, non-English-speaking and peri-urban growers, including culturally appropriate content, peer-to-peer learning approaches and hard-copy distribution through trusted in-person channels.

6.4 For Funders

R18. Require hard outcome KPIs as a condition of funding. Future funding agreements should include measurable outcome metrics agreed at design stage, with data collection responsibilities and reporting requirements built into project plans from inception.

R19. Consider multi-year, renewable funding models that reduce strategic disruption. Three-year project cycles with uncertain renewal prospects create structural challenges for relationship-building, workforce continuity and long-term investment. Funders should explore whether longer funding horizons or renewal frameworks can provide greater strategic stability for initiatives of this kind.

R20. Support the continuation of the COP and symposium as high-value legacy investments. Given the evidence of the COP's and symposium's contribution to professional community, knowledge exchange and sector culture change, funders should treat their continuation as a high-return legacy investment, rather than allowing them to lapse with the formal project end.

6.5 For Industry

R21. Increase grower representation in the COP and development of outreach materials. Future iterations of the COP should actively recruit and support participation from growers, particularly smaller operators, to ensure the professional community's knowledge exchange is informed by direct production experience and to accelerate the cascade of knowledge from intermediaries to producers.

R22. Engage processors and growers together to reinforce safety culture. Bringing processors and growers into shared food safety learning environments creates shared accountability and reinforces the supply chain dimensions of food safety culture in a way that sector-siloed engagement cannot achieve.

R23. Develop a programme of auditor development to improve auditors' capability as food safety communicators. Auditors occupy a privileged position of regular, trusted access to growers. Investing in auditors' capability to effectively communicate food safety resources and guidance — rather than purely applying compliance standards — would significantly extend the reach of food safety capacity-building into grower communities.

R24. Explore hard-copy resource distribution through IDOs and packhouse networks. For growers who are not digitally engaged, laminated guides, fact sheets and resource cards distributed through IDOs at grower events, field days and packhouses represent an underutilised and potentially high-impact distribution channel.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Value creation framework focus group questions

Purpose
Assess value generated through COP participation and inform sustainability planning for Year 3.
Framework overview
This framework examines **five value cycles** relevant to the HFSI COP:

- **Immediate value** - Connections and interactions during COP activities
- **Potential value** - Knowledge, resources and relationships gained
- **Applied value** - Changes in practice and behaviour
- **Realised value** - Performance improvements and outcomes
- **Strategic value** - Contribution to industry food safety goals

90-Minute session structure
Part 1: Introduction (10 mins)

- Welcome and context setting
- Explain value cycles concept
- Confirm confidentiality and use of data

Part 2: Immediate & potential value (20 mins)
Guiding Questions:

- What connections have you made through the COP that you value?
- What knowledge or resources have you gained?
- How does the COP format (quarterly online + face-to-face) work for you?
- What makes you continue participating?

Part 3: Applied value (25 mins)
Guiding Questions:

- Have you changed any practices based on COP discussions? (Probe: microbial management, food safety protocols)
- Can you share an example of applying something learned?
- What COP activities were most useful? (Knowledge sharing/problem-solving/case studies/subgroups)
- What barriers prevented you applying new knowledge?

Part 4: Realised & strategic value (20 mins)
Guiding Questions:

- What improvements have you seen? (Business performance, compliance, risk management)
- How has the COP contributed to raising food safety standards in your sector?
- What would be different without the COP?
- How does the COP complement other food safety initiatives you're involved in?

Part 5: Future value & sustainability (10 mins)
Guiding Questions:

- What value would you lose if the COP ended?
- What activities should continue beyond June 2026?
- What would make the COP more valuable?

Part 6: Close (5 mins)

- Summary of key themes
- Next steps
- Thank participants

Appendix 2. Case study evaluation questions to guide discussion

A. Background and context

- Tell me about your operation (size, commodity, employees, markets)
- What was your approach to food safety before HFSI? (practices, knowledge level, challenges)
- What motivated you to participate in HFSI?

B. Project engagement

- Which HFSI activities did you participate in? (List each: workshops, webinars, field days, help desk, other)
- What did you find most valuable? Why?
- What was less valuable? Why?

C. Knowledge changes

- What specific food safety knowledge did you gain from HFSI?
- Can you give me examples of things you didn't know before but understand now?
- How confident do you feel about food safety now compared to before? (1-10 scale, then and now)
- What food safety topics do you still want to learn more about?

D. Attitude changes

- Has your attitude toward food safety changed? How?
- Do you view food safety differently now (e.g., as more important, more achievable)?
- Has HFSI changed how you think about food safety in relation to your business success?

E. Skills changes

- What new food safety skills have you developed?
- Can you demonstrate or describe a specific skill you gained?
- How have these skills made your work easier or more effective?

F. Aspirations changes

- What are your food safety goals now?
- Have your goals changed as a result of HFSI?

- What do you want to achieve in the next 1-2 years regarding food safety?

G. Practice and behaviour changes (CRITICAL for impact)

- Have you made any changes to your food safety practices as a result of HFSI?
- **If YES:**
    - What specific changes have you made? (Probe for details)
    - When did you make each change?
    - What prompted each change? (Was it directly from HFSI information/advice?)
    - What percentage of your operation is affected by these changes?
    - Describe the change in detail
    - Did you need to invest in equipment, training, or other resources?
    - What challenges did you face implementing the changes?
    - How did you overcome those challenges?
- **Benefits/Impacts of changes:**
    - How have these changes benefited your business? (Probe: reduced contamination risk, reduced waste, improved product quality, better compliance, improved market access, cost savings, staff confidence, customer confidence)
    - Can you quantify any benefits? (e.g., X% reduction in waste, $X savings, access to new market)
    - Have there been any unintended benefits or consequences?

- **Attribution:**
    - What percentage of these changes do you attribute to HFSI? (0-100%)
    - What other factors or information sources influenced your changes?
    - If you hadn't participated in HFSI, would you have made these changes anyway? Why or why not?
- **If NO changes:**
    - Why haven't you made changes yet?
    - What barriers prevent you? (Cost, time, lack of knowledge, lack of skills, not convinced of need, farm size too small, other priorities)
    - Do you plan to make changes in future?
    - What would help you make changes?

H. Sustainability

- Will you continue these practices long-term? Why or why not?
- Do you share what you learned with others? (Staff, other growers, industry groups)
- How likely are you to seek out more food safety information in future? (1-10 scale)

I. Rival explanations (for Contribution analysis)

- What other food safety information or support did you receive during the project period?
- Were you implementing new food safety standards or requirements? (New primary production standards)
- Did market demands change your food safety practices?
- Did you have food safety incidents that prompted changes?
- What else was happening in your business that might have influenced your food safety practices?

J. Reflections

- What was the most significant change or outcome for you from HFSI?
- If you were to tell another grower about HFSI, what would you say?

Appendix 3. Key informant evaluation questions to guide discussion

A. Background

- What is your role and organisation?

- What has been your involvement with HFSI?

B. Effectiveness

- To what extent do you think HFSI has improved industry participants' food safety KASA?
- What evidence have you seen of changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, or aspirations?
- What has worked well in improving KASA? What hasn't?

C. Relevance

- How relevant was HFSI to the fresh produce industry's needs?
- Were the right target audiences identified?
- Were the right food safety topics addressed?
- What gaps remain?

D. Process appropriateness

- How well did HFSI engage the fresh produce industry?
- What engagement strategies worked well? What didn't?
- Were the engagement processes appropriate for target audiences?
- How well did HFSI reach diverse participants (small growers, ESL growers)?
- What barriers to engagement did you observe?

E. Coherence

- How well did HFSI fit with other food safety initiatives in the sector?
- Were there overlaps or gaps?
- Did HFSI complement or duplicate other efforts?
- How well did HFSI collaborate with other organisations?

F. Efficiency

- Was HFSI delivered in an economic and timely way?
- Were resources used effectively?
- Were there any significant delays or cost overruns? If so, why?
- What could have been done more efficiently?

G. Sustainability

- Are the benefits of HFSI likely to continue after the project ends?
- What elements should be sustained?
- What would be needed to sustain them?
- Is there ongoing commitment from stakeholders/funders?

H. Impact (for those with relevant perspective)

- Have you observed any changes in food safety practices in the industry?
- What evidence is there of practice change?
- To what extent can changes be attributed to HFSI vs other factors?
- What rival explanations exist for observed changes?

I. Overall assessment

- What were HFSI's greatest achievements?
- What were its main limitations or missed opportunities?
- What lessons should be taken forward?
- Would you recommend continuing/scaling this model?

J. Specific questions by Stakeholder type:

For Project Team:

- What implementation challenges did you face? How did you address them?
- What worked better than expected? What didn't work as planned?
- How well did the team work together?
- What would you do differently?

For PRG Members:

- How effective was the PRG in guiding the project?

- Were you satisfied with your engagement in the project?
- Did the project meet the needs of your organisation/sector?

For Regulators:

- Have you observed any changes in compliance or food safety incidents?
- How well did HFSI align with regulatory requirements?
- How did HFSI complement your organisation's work?

For Funders:

- Did HFSI provide value for money?
- Were milestones and reporting adequate?
- Would you fund similar initiatives in future?
- What would need to change to secure future funding?

Appendix 4

Hort Food Safety Implementation Model Report

(Confidential submitted to Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited)

Appendix 5

Horticulture Food Safety Initiative (HSFI) Project Achievements

The HFSI project has helped lift capability, build knowledge and bring the fresh produce industry together across Australia and New Zealand. Since commencing in June 2023, we have set a strong foundation, aligned priorities and delivered outreach and resources that are supporting food safety outcomes. We have partnered with Stakeholders to deliver:

1. **Resources**
   - Completed a comprehensive review then launched the new **Fundamental Guidelines for Fresh Produce Food Safety 2025**, along with **Quick Guides** for easy adoption and application.
   - Developed a **toolkit of resources** for Primary Production and Processing Standards for Berries, Melons and Leafy Vegetables in Australia
   - Completed and published a full **food safety stocktake of 400+ technical resources**, paired with a gap analysis to guide future research and industry needs.
   - Launched **Food Safety Essential Guides** with Flood & Bushfire Incidents the first of the series.
2. **Outreach**
   - Supported the rollout of **Primary production and processing (PPP) regulatory standards** for melons, berries and leafy vegetables in Australia.
   - Developed and delivered **extension training packages** for Berry IDOs and AUSVEG RDOs, supporting frontline support capacity.
   - Delivered, attended or participated in 184 activities including **79 outreach activities across ANZ**, with 19+ more planned as part of the ongoing **Hort Food Safety Implementation Model**, strengthening regional capability and supporting practice on the ground.
   - Launched the **Fresh Produce Food Safety Help Desk**, providing direct, expert support to growers and industry.
   - Increased visibility and knowledge transfer through **newsletters, social media, webinars and website content**, reaching the broader fresh produce industry more consistently than ever.
3. **Engagement & Collaboration**
   - Launched an **industry-wide food safety insights survey** to shape priority extension activities and deliver evidence-based support where it matters most.
   - Built strong **stakeholder engagement across the entire supply chain**, accelerating trust, adoption and awareness.
   - Established a thriving **Community of Practice (COP) with 95+ members**, expanded with **specialist sub-CoPs** for targeted topics and resource development.
   - Successfully delivered the **International Fresh Produce Safety Symposiums in 2024 and 2025**, with **planning underway for 2026.**
   - Participated in **collaborative forums** including HARPS working group, NZFSSRC taskforce, NZ Fresh Produce Food Safety Network, NZ Bagged Leafy Veg Working Group, A Lighter Touch NZ Extension Community of Practice
   - Launched the **Fresh & Safe Podcast Series**, 6 episodes live, bringing practical food safety insights directly to growers, auditors and supply chain partners.