30 January 2002

MEDIA STATEMENT

"MEAT INDUSTRY WELCOMES REFORM OF FOOD ADMINISTRATION"

The Government's announcement today that the ministries of Agriculture and Health would merge their responsibilities for food regulations into an integrated food agency based in MAF, and the appointment of Annette King as Minister for food safety, was welcomed by the Meat Industry Association.

MIA Executive Director, Brian Lynch, said "it's pleasing that action has at last been taken to overhaul New Zealand's outdated framework of food safety regulation. For more than three years food processors and exporters have been calling for reform. This decision means that after 1 July they will not have to cope with legislation that is poorly focussed and fragmented. The confusing and costly split of responsibilities between the ministries of Agriculture and Health will disappear".

Mr Lynch said meat companies had advocated a single regime of food administration and an authority based in MAF with sole responsibility for giving food safety advice and administering food-related regulations.

"Ministers have accepted that giving MAF the task of overseeing all food regulations will not risk having an export focus overshadow the concerns of domestic consumers in New Zealand. We have never seen the interests of processors and consumers being in conflict. Both stand to gain from the new arrangement".

Mr Lynch said the export meat sector welcomed the government's assurance that special care would be taken to protect the highly respected "MAF brand". "It is essential that importing countries continue to have confidence in the integrity of New Zealand's food safety programmes", he said.

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