

Seamons, Colleen

From: Stephanie Alexander's PA [info@stephaniealexander.com.au]
Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2008 11:41 AM
To: submissions
Subject: Proposal P10007 submission
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Re Proposal P 1007 primary production & processing Requirements for Raw Milk products (Australia only)

I would like to support an amendment or variation of the code that currently prohibits the production and sale of most products made from raw milk. I understand that the present investigation by FSANZ will be far-reaching and in depth and will assess microbiological risk, research into consumer behaviour, as well as how well control measures can be regulated.

I am not qualified to comment on the research into microbiological risk.

My interest is as a former chef, a well-known food writer, and an enthusiastic cheese lover. I should also state that I was the founding partner, together with cheese importer Will Studd, in the business Richmond Hill Café & Larder in Bridge Road Melbourne which pioneered the sale of farmhouse cheeses in Australia. I have no current involvement in that business but acknowledge that I have a special interest in the outcome of this investigation. There is no question in my mind, based on my 8 years in that business, that there exists a small but well-informed and growing market for the very best cheese, whether it be locally-produced or imported.

The production of small-scale farmhouse cheese production has been one of the most exciting developments in Australia. These cheesemakers deserve support and they also deserve to be permitted, if they so choose, to make their cheeses using raw milk, providing of course that they observe a strict code of hygiene in their dairies. Soft cheeses (Category 3) made from raw milk, such as I eat regularly when visiting France, and Italy, develop character and flavour that is infinitely superior to similar cheeses that are made from non-raw milk.

My wish to see an amendment or variation of the code is primarily based on this recognition of the superior quality that would be possible. Artisanal cheesemakers deserve to have the opportunity to develop a significant point of difference to enable their products to survive in a competitive market.

Secondly the existing situation where specific Swiss cheeses and hard grating cheeses such as Parmesan and French Roquefort are permitted to be imported and sold but local manufacturers are prohibited from making similar-style cheeses is highly discriminatory.

I take for granted that if the code is varied or amended, raw milk products would be identified in some way so that consumers can make a choice.

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Regards

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