
INFORMATION NOTE

Food Safety Regulatory Authorities in Selected Places

1. Introduction

1.1 This information note provides information on the following issues arising from the joint meeting of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene and the Panel on Environmental Affairs held on 17 January 2006 with respect to the overseas food safety regulatory authorities mentioned in the information note entitled "Authorities Responsible for Food Safety Regulation and Agricultural/Fisheries Promotion in Selected Places"¹:

- (a) the professional qualifications/working experiences, duties and appointment procedures of heads of the authorities;
- (b) the organizational structure of the authorities;
- (c) the number and duties of veterinarians of the authorities; and
- (d) the key food safety measures implemented by the authorities.

1.2 This information note covers the relevant authorities in Australia, Singapore, Taiwan and the United Kingdom only, and does not include those in Canada and the Republic of Korea, as they have not provided the required information as of the publication of this note.

1.3 The Table on page 13 highlights some features of the food safety regulatory authorities in the selected places.

2. Australia

Food safety regulatory authorities

2.1 The relevant food safety regulatory authorities in Australia are the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

¹ Legislative Council Secretariat (2006b).

Heads of the food safety regulatory authorities

Professional qualifications/working experiences

2.2 In Australia, there is no requirement for the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Secretary of DAFF to have any professional qualifications/working experiences relating to agriculture or food safety.

2.3 The current Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is a lawyer. From October 2004 to June 2005, he was the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs. The current Secretary of DAFF holds a Bachelor of Economics degree and a Master of Science degree in Economics. Before her appointment in October 2004, she was the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

2.4 There is also no requirement for the Chief Executive Officer of FSANZ to have any professional qualifications relating to agriculture or food safety. However, at any time during the period of two years ending immediately before the proposed period of appointment, the person appointed as the Chief Executive Officer must not be employed by, or has a pecuniary interest in, a body corporate whose primary commercial activity relates directly to the production or manufacture of food.

Duties

2.5 The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is responsible for increasing the competitiveness, profitability and sustainability of Australia's agricultural, fisheries, forestry and food industries. The Minister's portfolio responsibilities include animal and plant health, biosecurity, farm support, agricultural trade issues, agricultural market access, food policies and programmes, and natural resource management.

2.6 The Secretary of DAFF is responsible for administering laws relating to agricultural, fisheries, forestry and food industries, such as the Quarantine Act 1908.

2.7 The Chief Executive Officer of FSANZ is mainly responsible for the day-to-day administration of FSANZ and the control of its operation, and is to act according to policies determined, and any directions given, by the Board of FSANZ (the management and decision-making body of FSANZ).

Appointment procedures

2.8 The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Secretary of DAFF are appointed by the Prime Minister of the Australian government.

2.9 The Chief Executive Officer of FSANZ is appointed by the Board of FSANZ formed under the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991.

Organizational structure of the food safety regulatory authorities

2.10 DAFF comprises two bureaux, eight divisions and the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). AQIS has two sections, namely Quarantine and Exports. The organizational structure of DAFF is in **Appendix I**.

2.11 FSANZ is an independent statutory agency which has four branches, namely Food Standards (Canberra), Food Standards (Wellington), Scientific Risk Assessment and Evaluation and Food Safety and Services. The organizational structure of FSANZ is in **Appendix II**.

Number and duties of veterinarians in the food safety regulatory authorities

Number of veterinarians

2.12 AQIS has 135 veterinarians, accounting for 4.8% of its total staff (2 800). FSANZ has not provided the relevant information.

Duties

2.13 The duties of AQIS veterinarians include:

- (a) ensuring that the health of imported live animals meets Australia's import conditions;
- (b) certifying that export live animals meet the importing country's requirements;
- (c) certifying and supporting export markets for meat products, such as performing inspections at export slaughtering establishments to ensure adequate maintenance and hygiene control being in line with AQIS requirements; and

- (d) monitoring the health of cattle herds and pigs and checking traps for insects at key sites in northern Australia.

Key food safety measures implemented

2.14 Key food safety measures implemented by AQIS include:

- (a) co-operating with FSANZ to run the Imported Food Inspection Scheme under which authorized AQIS inspectors are responsible for inspecting and testing imported food against the national and uniform standards of the Australian Food Standards Code developed and maintained by FSANZ. In 2004-05, about 35 000 product lines were referred to the Scheme for inspection and testing; and
- (b) launching the "Quarantine Matters!" campaign to raise quarantine awareness of people such as international travellers to Australia, cargo importers, the travel industry and the rural industries, and the "Top Watch" campaign to encourage the reporting of unusual pest and disease occurrences (notably Avian influenza) to quarantine officers by local communities, industry groups and visitors in northern Australia.

2.15 In addition, in July 2004, the Australian government established Biosecurity Australia as a separate division outside DAFF to provide science-based assessment and policy advice on quarantine, so as to protect Australia from the entry, establishment and spread of pests and diseases that are not in Australia.

2.16 Since 2002, FSANZ has been developing the Primary Production and Processing Standards which lay down mandatory hygiene requirements for all parts of the food supply chain, covering the production, manufacturing, retail and food services sectors.

3. Singapore

Food safety regulatory authority

3.1 The food safety regulatory authority in Singapore is the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA).

Head of the food safety regulatory authority

Professional qualifications/working experiences

3.2 There is no requirement for the Chief Executive Officer of AVA to have any professional qualifications/working experiences relating to agriculture or food safety.

3.3 According to AVA, the criteria for selecting the Chief Executive Officer include:

- (a) proven ability to lead an organization; and
- (b) working experiences in the government.

3.4 The Chief Executive Officer does not need to have any specialist skills, as he is assisted by the Director-General of Agri-food and Veterinary Services, who is required to possess relevant technical skills. The position of the Director-General is usually taken up by a senior veterinarian.

3.5 Currently, the position of the Chief Executive Officer is held by a senior veterinarian who also serves as the Director-General of Agri-food and Veterinary Services.

Duties

3.6 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing the food safety policies laid down by the Board of Directors (the management and decision-making body of AVA).

Appointment procedures

3.7 AVA has not provided the required information.

Organizational structure of the food safety regulatory authority

3.8 AVA has four divisions, namely Food and Veterinary Administration, Food Supply and Technology Department, Policy and Corporate Communications Department and Corporate Services Department. In particular, the Food and Veterinary Administration is responsible for regulating food safety and providing laboratory testing services. The organizational structure of AVA is in **Appendix III**.

Number and duties of veterinarians in the food safety regulatory authority

Number of veterinarians

3.9 AVA has 25 veterinarians, accounting for 3.1 % of its total staff (794).

Duties

3.10 The duties of veterinarians include:

- (a) ensuring a resilient supply of safe food through an integrated system of accreditation, inspection and testing of imported food;
- (b) administering comprehensive animal health programmes to prevent and control diseases of economic and public health importance;
- (c) enforcing welfare standards and investigating animal cruelty cases; and
- (d) developing leading technologies in agriculture.

Key food safety measures implemented

3.11 Import control is an important dimension of the food safety regulatory system in Singapore, as more than 90% of the country's food is imported. Sources supplying food products to Singapore must meet the importing requirements for food safety. Key food safety measures implemented by AVA include:

- (a) implementing a trade licence system to ensure that all food products imported by traders comply with food safety requirements;
- (b) inspecting food products, slaughterhouses, farms, and food processing establishments;
- (c) accrediting foreign farms and food processing plants. In the fiscal year of 2004-05, AVA paid a total of 385 overseas inspection visits;
- (d) undertaking laboratory testing of food products. In the fiscal year of 2004-05, a total of 1 006 605 tests were conducted on 57 478 samples of locally-produced and imported food products;

- (e) enforcing the food safety laws. In the fiscal year of 2004-05, there were 464 cases involving illegal imports of meat, fish and related products; and
- (f) recalling food products which are unfit for human consumption.

4. Taiwan

Food safety regulatory authority

4.1 The food safety regulatory authority in Taiwan is the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine (BAPHIQ) under the Council of Agriculture headed by the Minister for Agriculture of the government of Taiwan.

Heads of the food safety regulatory authorities

Professional qualifications/working experiences

4.2 In Taiwan, there is no requirement for the Minister for Agriculture and the Director General of BAPHIQ to have any professional qualifications/working experiences relating to agriculture or food safety.

4.3 The current Minister for Agriculture holds a Bachelor of Food Science degree and a Master of Public Affairs Management degree. The current Director General of BAPHIQ has a Ph.D in Veterinary Epidemiology and Veterinary Economics. From 2004 to 2005, he was the Director General of the Animal Health Research Institute under the Council of Agriculture.

Duties

4.4 The Minister for Agriculture *"takes charge of the Council [of Agriculture]'s affairs and superintends its personnel"*.² The responsibilities of the Council include guiding and supervising its provincial and municipal offices in agricultural, fishery, animal husbandry and food affairs. The duties of the Director General of BAPHIQ are *"to oversee the affairs of the Bureau [BAPHIQ] and superintend the subordinates."*³

² Article 14, Organizational Act of the Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan.

³ Article 5, Organizational Act of the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine.

Appointment procedures

4.5 The Minister for Agriculture is appointed by the President of the government of Taiwan, while the Director General of BAPHIQ is appointed by the Minister for Agriculture.

Organizational structure of the food safety regulatory authority

4.6 BAPHIQ has six divisions, namely Animal Health Inspection, Animal Quarantine, Plant Protection, Plant Quarantine, Planning and Meat Inspection. The organizational structure of BAPHIQ is in **Appendix IV**.

Number and duties of veterinarians in the food safety regulatory authority*Number of veterinarians*

4.7 BAPHIQ has 48 veterinarians, accounting for 9% of its total staff (533).

Duties

4.8 The duties of veterinarians include:

- (a) administering animal health inspection, disease prevention, veterinarian registration, veterinary drug management, and reviewing related laws, regulations and measures;
- (b) performing inspections and quarantine for the import and export of animals and animal products;
- (c) conducting disease diagnosis for imported and exported animals and animal products; and
- (d) enforcing the requirements for animal health and animal welfare in slaughterhouses.

Key food safety measures implemented

4.9 Key food safety measures implemented by BAPHIQ include:

- (a) conducting overseas on-site inspections of animal and plant diseases;

- (b) tightening up control and quarantine procedures at international ports. In 2004, 85 520 incoming checks and 85 635 outgoing checks were performed;
- (c) running detector dog teams since 2002 to help detect illegal items in passengers' luggage at the international airports and the local harbour in Kinmen;
- (d) conducting inspections of chemical residues on animal and poultry products before they are marketed. In 2004, random checks on 74 732 meat pig serum samples were performed;
- (e) organizing joint operations with local governments to check on veterinary drugs;
- (f) working with feed manufacturers to establish the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system to improve animal feed and control the use of additives. In 2004, 2 277 inspections were performed; and
- (g) working with local inspection squads to check illegal slaughtering to ensure safety of meat consumption. In 2004, 569 inspections were performed.

5. United Kingdom

Food safety regulatory authority

5.1 The food safety regulatory authority in the United Kingdom is the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Head of the food safety regulatory authority

Professional qualifications/working experiences

5.2 There is no requirement for the Chief Executive Officer of FSA to have any professional qualifications/working experiences relating to agriculture or food safety. However, FSA has required that the Chief Executive Officer should possess the following skills and experiences:

- (a) strong leadership qualities and experience of working with high calibre scientific organization(s);

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- (b) a track record of strategic innovation, preferably in a high profile organization operating in a sensitive and complex area of public policies;
 - (c) abilities to meet the challenges of FSA's commitment to openness under demanding parliamentary, professional and media scrutiny; and
 - (d) knowledge of the principles of parliamentary control, government accounting rules and the role of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

5.3 The current Chief Executive Officer of FSA has the following professional qualifications: Bachelor of Science, Ph.D in chemistry and FRSC (Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry).

5.4 As regards the working experiences, before joining FSA, the Chief Executive Officer held a senior management position relating to food safety under the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Duties

5.5 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for performing the following duties:

- (a) managing the day-to-day operations of FSA within the policies set by the Board (the management and decision-making body of FSA);
- (b) advising the Board as appropriate on the possible consequences of policy options and ensuring that Board members take into account all relevant financial and legal considerations;
- (c) leading, motivating and developing FSA staff; and
- (d) maintaining effective relations with food traders/companies while preserving FSA's independence.

Appointment procedures

5.6 The appointment procedures of the Chief Executive Officer are:

- (a) placing recruitment advertisements in major newspapers;
- (b) appointing selection agents to assist in the search for an appropriate person;

- (c) short-listing the applications and conducting interviews with the appropriate candidates;
- (d) appointing the appropriate person by the Board; and
- (e) approving the appointment by the government.

Organizational structure of the food safety regulatory authority

5.7 FSA is organized into seven bureaux, which are Food Safety Policy, Consumer Choice and Dietary Health, Corporate Resources, Meat Hygiene Service (MHS), Enforcement, Legal Services and Communications. Among these bureaux, Food Safety Policy, MHS and Enforcement are mainly responsible for regulating food safety. The organizational structure of FSA is in **Appendix V**.

Number and duties of veterinarians in the food safety regulatory authority

Number of veterinarians

5.8 FSA has 14 veterinarians, accounting for 0.6% of its total staff (2 235).

Duties

5.9 The duties of veterinarians include:

- (a) formulating policies on meat hygiene;
- (b) reviewing food safety laws and regulatory framework;
- (c) approving meat plants, slaughterhouses and cutting premises; and
- (d) providing veterinary advice on meat hygiene and other veterinary public health matters.

Key food safety measures implemented

5.10 Key food safety measures implemented by FSA include:

- (a) protecting consumers through improved food safety standards;
- (b) improving the enforcement of food safety laws by consolidating and revising the codes of practice and associated guidelines for enforcement officers;

- (c) inspecting meat at licensed slaughterhouses and meat cutting plants from around 300 local authorities;
- (d) providing national training programmes for enforcement officers on imported food controls;
- (e) enhancing sampling and surveillance of imported food;
- (f) promoting informative labelling;
- (g) facilitating the uptake of food safety management by providing training programmes and practical guidance for small food businesses; and
- (h) recalling food products which may not be fit for human consumption.

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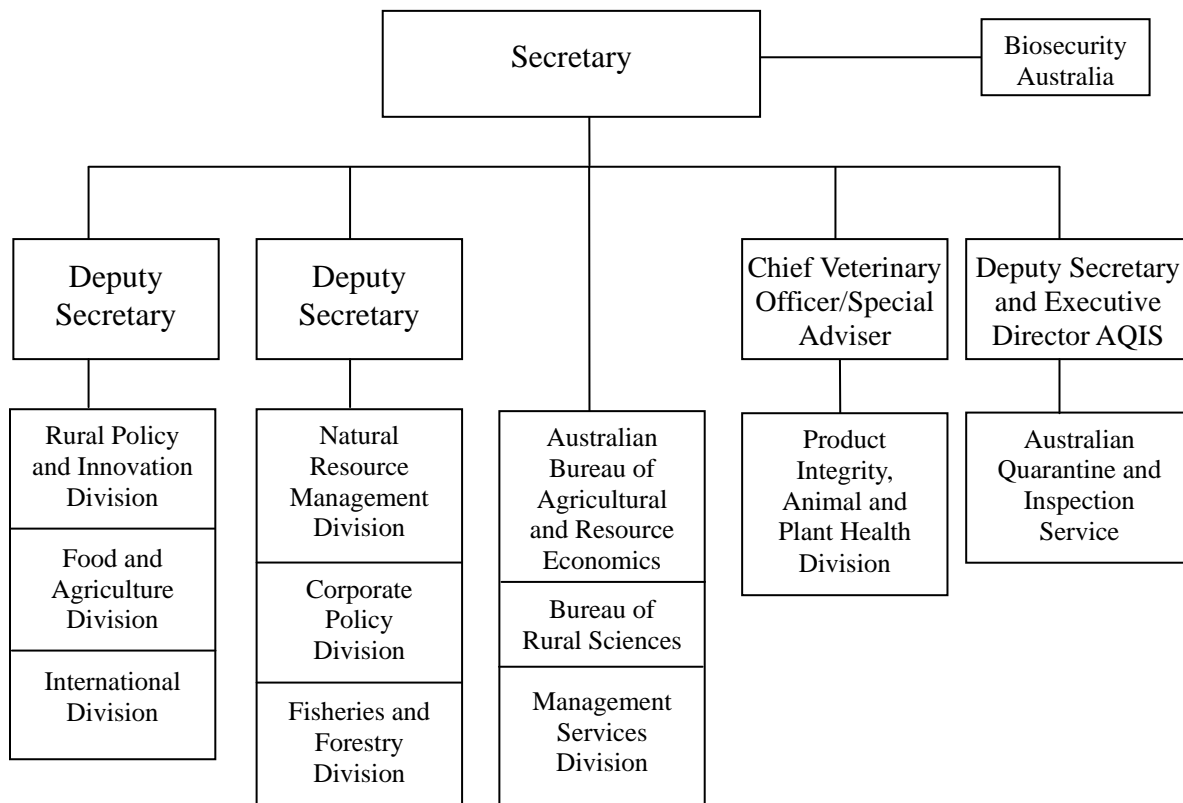
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Table — Some features of the food safety regulatory authorities in Australia, Singapore, Taiwan and the United Kingdom

	Requirements for heads of the food safety regulatory authorities to have professional qualifications/ working experiences relating to agriculture or food safety	Number of veterinarians (percentage share in the total number of staff)	Key measures implemented for regulating food safety of imported food
Australia: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Food Standards Australia New Zealand	No	135 (4.8%)	(a) Imported Food Inspection Scheme (b) "Quarantine Matters!" campaign
Singapore: Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority	No	25 (3.1%)	(a) Trade licence system (b) Accreditation of foreign farms and food processing plants
Taiwan: Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine	No	48 (9%)	(a) Overseas on-site inspections (b) Improving animal feed and controlling the use of additives by feed manufacturers
United Kingdom: Food Standards Agency	No	14 (0.6%)	(a) National training programmes for enforcement officers on imported food controls (b) Sampling and surveillance of imported food

Appendix I

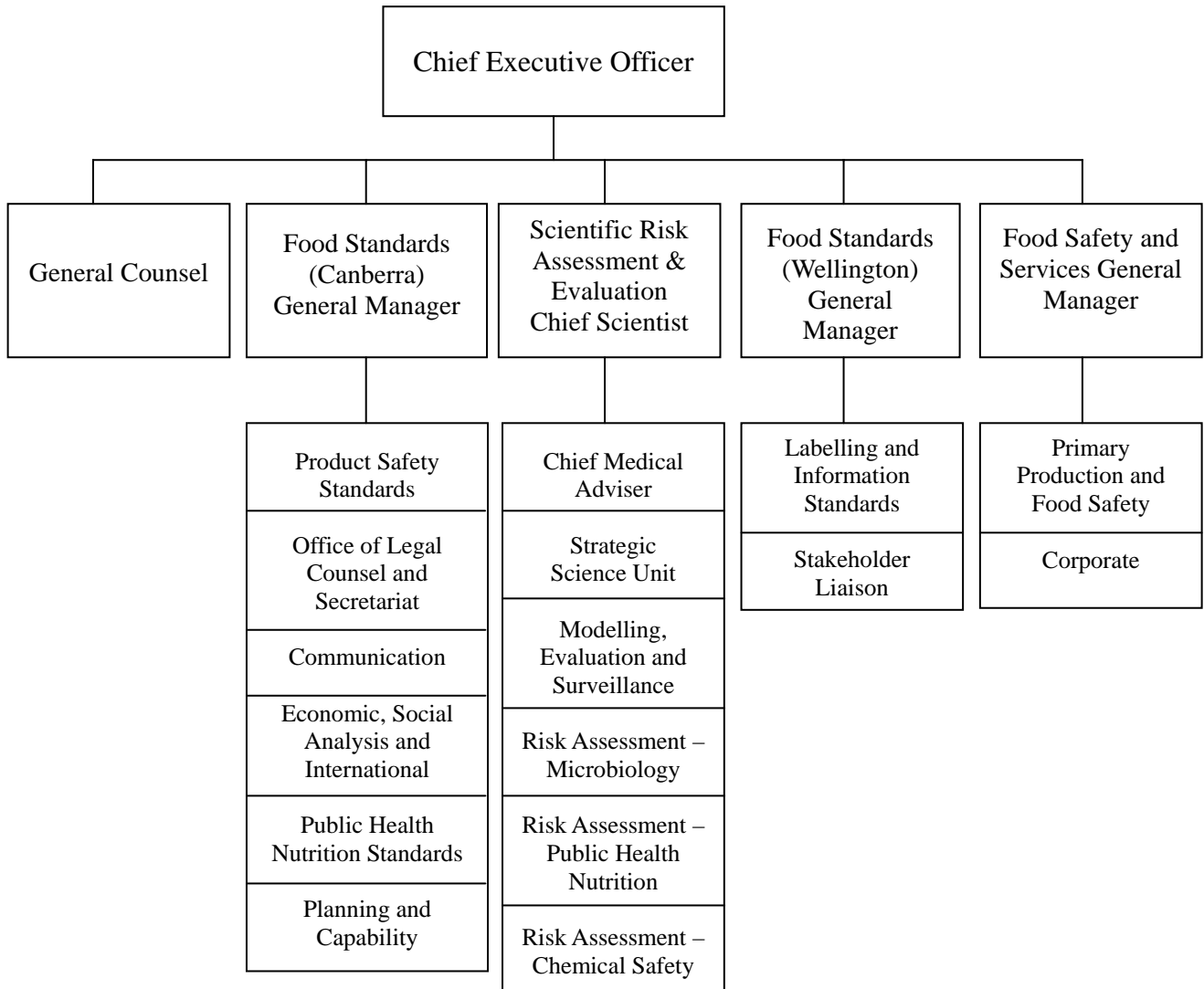
Organizational structure of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of the Australian government



Source: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (2006).

Appendix II

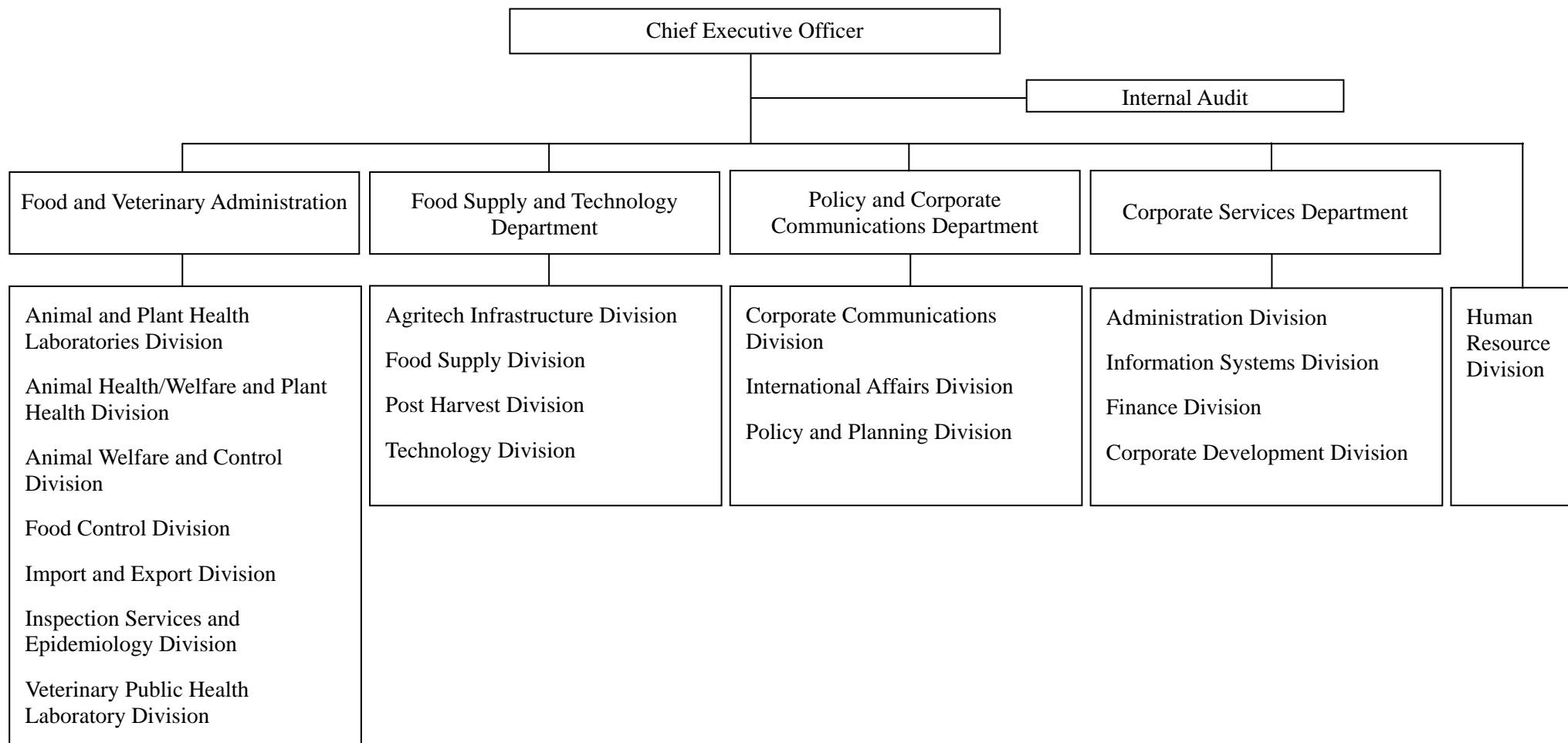
Organizational structure of Food Standards Australia New Zealand



Source: Food Standards Australia New Zealand (2006).

Appendix III

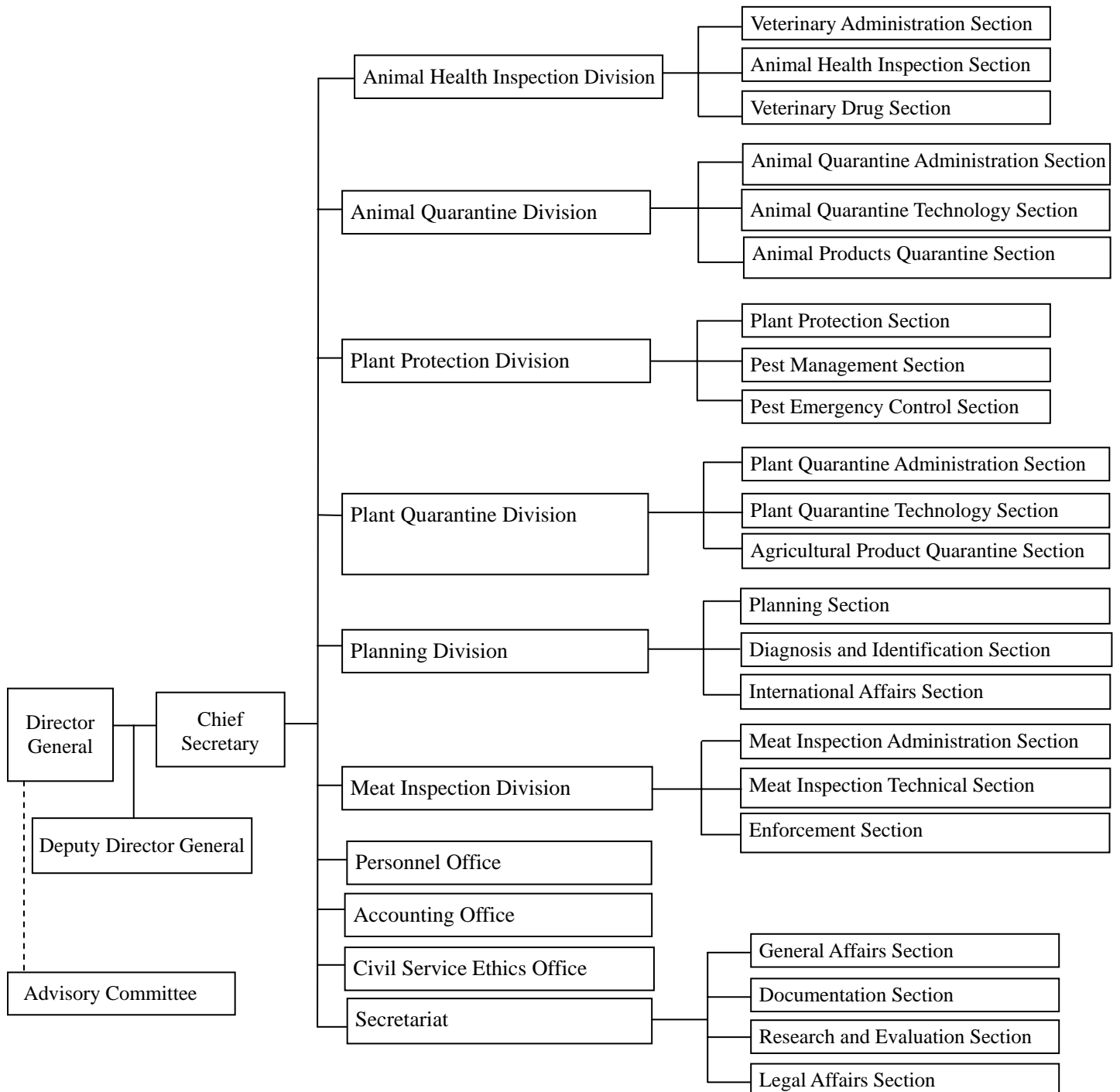
Organizational structure of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority in Singapore



Source: *Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority* (2005).

Appendix IV

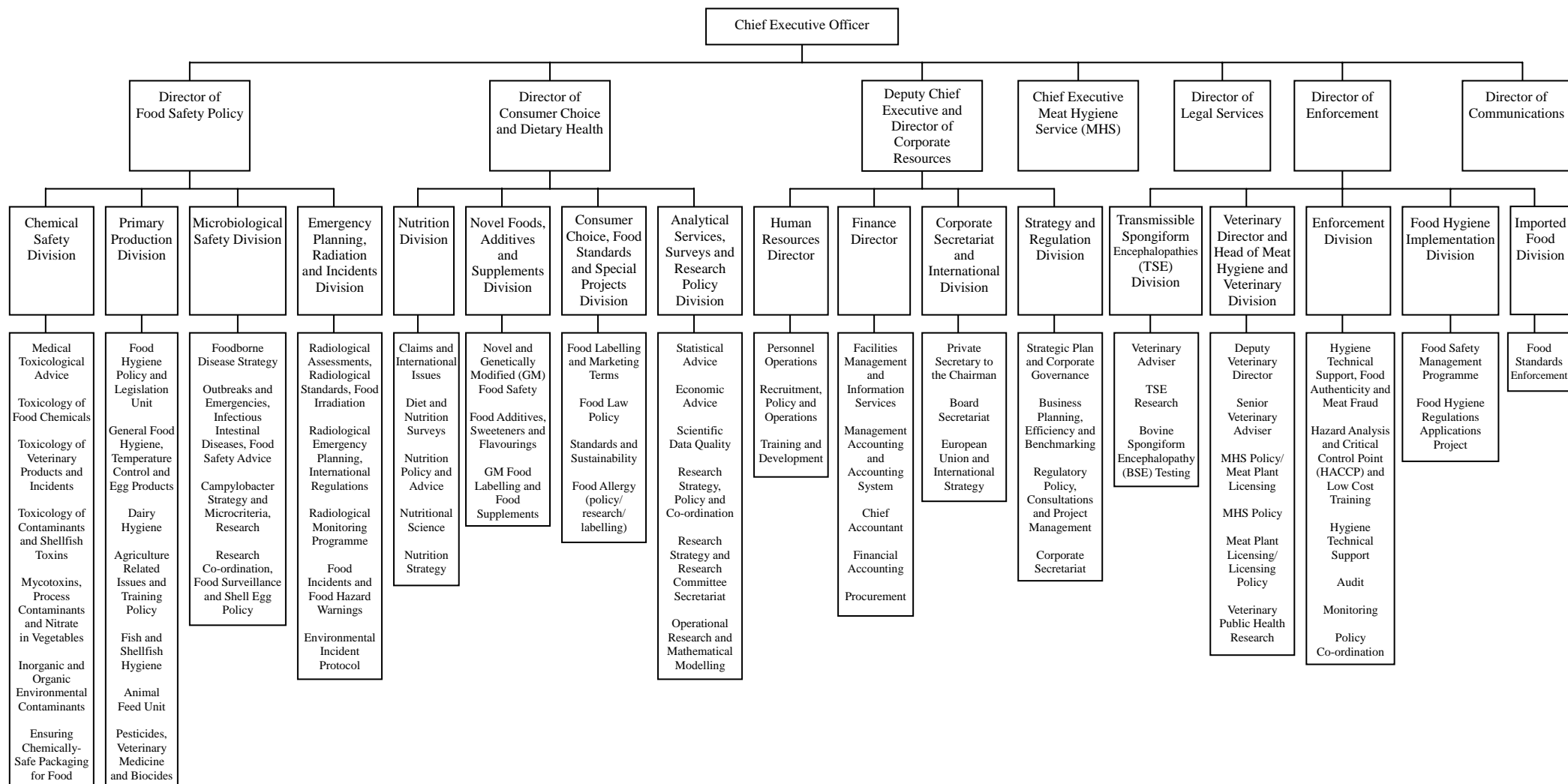
**Organizational structure of the Bureau of
Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine in Taiwan**



Source: Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine (2006).

Appendix V

Organizational structure of the Food Standards Agency in the United Kingdom



Source: Food Standards Agency (2005a).

References

Australia

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Others

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