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## **AFCC issues call to arms to halt huge food loss and wastage**

The Chairman of the Australian Food Cold Chain Council (AFCCC), Mr Mark Mitchell, made a 'call to arms' at the APEC 2021 virtual conference (on 14 April 2021) for players in the cold chain to make far better use of existing technologies as a means of building a robust and compliant cold chain.

He told the international delegates from the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) countries that only a compliant cold chain had a chance of delivering consistent food quality and reducing food loss and waste, which has reached mammoth proportions globally. Food waste in Australia alone is valued at AUD\$3.8 billion at farm gate prices, and on top of that, there are huge impacts of poor temperature control in the cold chain that results in reduced shelf life.

In his presentation to APEC, hosted by New Zealand this year, Mr Mitchell said that while product traceability encompassing just location and time might be OK for non-refrigerated consumer goods, such monitoring was not sufficient for food. Product temperature monitoring must be continuous – a confirmation of temperature only at the end point of the chain was not good enough.

The technology and automatic systems for monitoring temperature throughout the whole journey were already available, but perhaps under-utilised in the food industry.

His message for cold chain practitioners who want to be part of a compliant cold chain, was that they need to become verifiers in cold chain processes that allow measurement of temperature at all points, with the data handed over during receiving and delivery of goods.

A 2020 study funded by Australia's Environment Department and Refrigerants Australia found three areas that were crying out for improvement – better food handling, such as reducing the time food spends outside refrigerated environments during transfer and more accurate measurement of food temperatures; increased use of tracking/tracing technologies; and improved 'chain of custody' documentation ensuring shared responsibilities for maintaining food quality.

Mr Mitchell said that compliance to world's best practices was on the APEC agenda because of the food loss and waste crisis. He said commercial, consumer, logistics and contractual arrangements should no longer ignore food safety and the opportunity for waste reduction.

New technology and systems were always at the forefront of the refrigeration industry and the cold chain, but proper implementation of existing first level technology was required to achieve compliant and optimised cold chains.

*The AFCCC was formed in mid 2017 by a cross section of industry leaders covering manufacturing, food transport, refrigeration and cold chain services. The Council sees itself as an important part of the solution, encouraging innovation, compliance, waste reduction and safety across the Australian food cold chain. The new Council is not about promoting an industry – it wants to change the industry for the better. It acknowledges that Australia's track record in efficient cold food handling, from farm to plate, is far from perfect.*

*For more information, please contact:*

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