Delivering consumer confidence in eating quality for 20 years
A brief history

Meat Standards Australia (MSA) was released in 1998 by the Australian red meat industry to improve the eating quality consistency of beef and sheepmeat. The system is based on almost 800,000 consumer taste tests by more than 114,000 consumers from 11 countries and takes into account all factors that affect eating quality from paddock to plate.

In the early 1990s the Australian beef industry identified variable eating quality as a major contributor to declining beef consumption and committed research funding to address the problem.

The ability to predict the eating quality of cooked beef prior to consumption was identified as the key.

Consumer testing protocols were developed which led to implementing MSA grading standards, defined by consumer score outcomes.

Traditional carcase grading parameters have proved to be of little value in predicting consumer outcomes. Instead a broader combination of factors forms the basis of an interactive model, which accurately predicts consumer scores for almost 200 cut-by-cook method combinations for every carcase graded.
MSA highlights

MSA has conducted consumer sensory testing with more than more than 114,000 consumers on 800,000 samples of meat in 11 countries. This research determines what attributes have an impact on eating quality. Consumer sensory testing validates all developments to the MSA Model.

26.5 million cattle have been MSA graded, supplied by over 43,000 MSA registered cattle producers.

37.2 million sheep have been processed following the MSA pathways, supplied by 27,000 MSA registered sheep producers.

Over the life of the program 549 people have been trained as MSA graders.

18,995 producers have engaged in MSA beef and sheep information sessions or eating quality workshops.

In 2017 consumer testing protocols used by MSA to support eating quality research were adopted as the global standard by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

In 2013, the MSA Index for producers was released, creating a new way to benchmark carcase performance. In 2016-17, the average MSA Index was 57.59.

More than 15,000 retail, food service and wholesaler businesses have been trained in MSA programs.

The MLA Impact Assessment for the period 2010 – 2015 reported a net industry benefit of $679 million, a benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 12.5:1 from an investment of $54 million, over the five-year period for the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) program.

Total investment by MLA into the MSA beef and sheepmeat program since 1998 is $167.5 million, including Government contribution, in areas including business development, integrity programs, marketing and research and development.

MSA has asked 38,000 consumers in 8 countries about their willingness to pay for varying levels of eating quality. Results indicate that compared to a pass or ‘good every quality’, consumers were willing to pay:

- Half or 0.5 times for a fail or ‘unsatisfactory quality’
- 1.6 times for ‘better than every day quality’
- 2.1 times for ‘premium quality’

37.2 million sheep have been processed following the MSA pathways, supplied by 27,000 MSA registered sheep producers.

*Figures as of 1 January 2018*
Milestones

1993: Concepting a brand into an SBG program.

1994: Focussing Meat Research Corporation’s (MRC) mission on the consumer.

1995: Establishing a Meat Quality Assurance Scheme. MSA was commercially implemented in WA as a subsidiary program, with the aim of testing the two programs in parallel.


1997: Company focused on delivering reliable and repeatable consumer sensory data.

1998: Commercial adoption. MSA was commercially implemented in WA as a subsidiary program, with the aim of testing the two programs in parallel.

1999: SMEQ research commenced.

2000: SMEQ research commenced.

2001: Industry takes ownership.

2002: Industry takes ownership.

2003: Introduction of the MSA core.

2004: MSA Model expansion benchmarking.

2005: MSA Model expansion benchmarking.

2006: Large processors and retailers adopt MSA.

2008: Australia’s Beef Quality Assurance (MBQA) research program commencement.

2009: Large processors and retailers adopt MSA.

2010: Aspirational future vision.

2011: MSA celebrates 20 years. MSA’s customer sensory protocols as the global standard.

2013: Introduction of the MSA core.

2015: Aspirational future vision.


2017: MSA consumer sensory protocols endorsed as global standard.

2018: MSA celebrates 20 years. MSA’s customer sensory protocols as the global standard.


2024: Inaugural 2024 Eating Quality Audit report.

2025: Inaugural 2025 Eating Quality Audit report.

2026: Inaugural 2026 Eating Quality Audit report.

2027: Inaugural 2027 Eating Quality Audit report.

2028: Inaugural 2028 Eating Quality Audit report.

2029: Inaugural 2029 Eating Quality Audit report.

2030: Inaugural 2030 Eating Quality Audit report.

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