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## NEWS FROM THE TASMANIAN INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE

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# Media Release

## Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Tuesday 3 February 2015

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### Raw-milk cheese ban lifted in Australia

Australian cheese makers can now make some cheeses using raw-milk, with the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation last week lifting the previous ban.

Studies at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government, will assist raw-milk cheese manufacturers make cheeses safely under the new regulations.

Over the last two years Associate Professor in Food Microbiology at TIA's Food Safety Centre, Tom Ross, and his co-workers, turned their laboratory into a mini cheese-making factory to study which types of cheese can be made safely using unpasteurised milk.

"Food safety is essential to industry sustainability and we need to be confident that raw-milk cheese is not going to cause food-borne illnesses from contamination with pathogenic bacteria," Dr Ross said.

"The quality of the milk you start with is paramount.

"If you are going to make cheese using raw-milk you need to make sure that the milk does not contain any pathogenic bacteria, like *Listeria monocytogenes*, and the only way to do that is to test it.

"The cheese then needs to be processed under strictly controlled conditions to achieve the needed microbiological safety standards.

"While pasteurisation is an easy way to kill harmful bacteria that can be naturally present in milk, there is a lot of interest from artisanal cheese makers in using raw-milk because there is a perception that cheese made using unpasteurised milk has more flavour or produces a distinctive regional character.

"We worked with the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries and Victorian Department of Health to identify tools that will help cheese manufacturers make a wider range of raw-milk cheeses safely."

Dr Ross is discussing his research on raw-milk cheese with industry and government partners as part of a dairy food safety symposium at TIA's Food Safety Centre Members Forum in Hobart today. The forum will also hear about alternatives to pasteurisation, horticulture food safety and smart strategies to minimise *E. coli* contamination of meat essential for continued access to international markets

TIA is partnering with industry to grow Tasmania's reputation for safe, high-quality products and processes in the food and agriculture sector.

**Information released by:**

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