

4.3 Quality and safety

PRODUCT
DISTRIBUTION
PROMOTION
PEOPLE
FINANCE
RISK
GROWTH

- > *Council notification*
- > *FoodSafe*
- > *Product recall plan*
- > *Good Manufacturing Practices*
- > *HACCP*
- > *Quality management*
- > *Food integrity*

Product safety and quality, especially in the food industry, are a 'must have' for any food business to survive. Food safety and quality systems do place a burden on individual businesses, however, if used wisely and proactively to add value to the product, will ensure the survival of your business and may even give you a point of difference.

Safety breakdowns, on the other hand, will damage your reputation and may put you out of business altogether. They may also have wider ramifications. The Garibaldi salmonella outbreak did not just close down Garibaldi, it damaged the whole smallgoods sector. The Nippy's salmonella outbreak, while handled much better, did not simply set Nippy's back, it constrained juice sales for a time.

Council notification

All businesses selling food are required, by law, to notify their local council. You can do this by:

1. Ringing your local council and asking to speak to the environmental health officer
2. Registering online at www.fbn.sa.gov.au/fbn/foodBusinessLogin.jsp

FoodSafe

It is strongly recommended that all businesses involved in the preparation and/or sale of any food products follows a Food Safety Program. The basic 'Food Safe' program is available via your local council. Information is available by following these links www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Food/food-handlers.htm and www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Foodsmall-food-processors.pdf

Product recall plan

Having a product recall plan is part of a good operational plan in a food business, and is a legal requirement for all businesses that are not simply food retailers. The following link will take you to a page which sets out a very simple product recall plan. www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Food/food-industry-bulletin-3-03.pdf

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

Good Manufacturing Practices are the fundamental principles, procedures and means required to create a suitable environment for producing food of acceptable quality. GMP are pivotal to the safe production of food as it embodies basic hygiene principles to ensure the safety, cleanliness and wholesomeness of the environment in which the food products are produced. A GMP program should have comprehensive records of areas such as personal cleanliness and conduct, hand washing, waste facilities,

general protection from contamination, water quality control, temperature and humidity control.

HACCP

The next step in food safety is to follow HACCP principles. HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point which is a food safety management system. A HACCP system requires

1. a description of the product, its distribution method, intended use and target consumers
2. an assessment of food hazards
3. the establishment of acceptability limits
4. the monitoring of processes
5. the implementation, where necessary, of corrective action.
6. Documentation and verification are also key elements of the HACCP process.

Once implemented, the integrity of the system can be underpinned by third-party certification.

Many small businesses choose to set up a HACCP system in the first place to ensure the best possible food safety system is being followed, and then review the need for third party certification at a later date, depending upon the needs of their customers. If you are interested in finding out more about HACCP programs, please contact Food SA for details on these programs, specifically designed for small food businesses.



Quality management

What is quality? This is a difficult definition especially as it is a word we use a great deal, especially when describing our often boutique, artisan products. Quality relates to each product and put simply, is a principle that encourages excellence in everything in a business. Just as important as attaining quality, is the maintenance of quality. Quality is consistent. You can produce a product that is excellent once by chance. True quality is about consistently maintaining excellence.

You ensure quality by putting in systems that monitor your production methods, ensuring that if a product falls outside of established parameters then the product will be discarded or corrected before reaching the consumer. Having a food safety program in place is the first step to quality. In fact food safety programs use quality systems to ensure safety by defining goals, measuring, monitoring, checking, evaluating and modifying in a systematic cycle.

You can develop your own quality system based on fairly basic principles.

1. Define what quality means to you with your product
 - > Evaluate products you wish to compete with. What makes them good?
 - > Think about the brand values you defined.

» 3.1 Brands and branding

- > Write down what quality means to you.
2. Bring together your thoughts. For example, you may have defined quality as tasty, fresh and always on time, with only 5% waste in production.
3. Put in place systems to measure what is being achieved.
4. Document your regular checks.
5. Evaluate your measures on a regular basis using customer feedback.
6. Modify where required.
7. Implement any changes.

Continue this process to continually improve.

Many industries have developed their own definition and measure of quality in their industry. For example, Food Barossa has defined what quality means to Food Barossa and has a rigorous certification process to back this up. Only those businesses that meet these standards can use the Food Barossa logo.

ISO 9000 is the internationally recognised standard for quality management systems. This is a quality management standard that if attained means the business is meeting:

1. the customer's quality requirements, and
2. applicable regulatory requirements, while aiming to
3. enhance customer satisfaction, and
4. achieve continual improvement of its performance in pursuit of these objectives

Once again, many businesses implement the ISO 9000 standards but don't necessarily go through the certification process straight away. They use the principles to assist them in running a quality business while taking time to assess the needs of their customers and whether certification will add value for them.

Whether you seek formal certification or not, the documentation of systems and standards is very important. Documentation gives you a basis for continuous improvement. It also facilitates the management of your business by other people as you grow, or when you sell. Apart from these benefits, it might be very helpful in establishing your practice if there is ever a problem with your products that results in legal action.

Food integrity and traceability

Food integrity and traceability are now becoming part of the definition of quality. All good safety and quality programs use systems that can enable tracing of food processing and also the integrity of the food. See www.safoodcentre.com/foodtalk/pages/news/autumn05/ for further information on food integrity.

Council notification

www.fbn.sa.gov.au/fbn/foodBusinessLogin.jsp

Food safety

www.foodstandards.gov.au/

www.arrowscientific.com.au/new/front.phtml

Guidelines for Microbial Examination of Ready to Eat Foods www.foodstandards.gov.au/mediareleasespublications/publications/guidelinesformicrobi1306.cfm

www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/food-index.htm

www.dh.sa.gov.au/pehs/Food/food-notification.htm

Food quality

Australian Quality Council www.aqc.org.au

Quality in the Australian Pork Industry

www.sardi.sa.gov.au/pages/livestock/pigs/qa/pig_apiq.htm:sectID=538&tempID=129

Food Safety and Quality Navigator www.affa.gov.au/content/food_navigator/foodqa_main.cfm

International Standards Organization www.iso.org