

Foodsafety BYTES

Your own reference source on food safety

Number: 11

Traceability, withdrawals and recalls

Construct your own digital library on food safety

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Global food safety incidents are frequently reported and continue to rise. The increase in food safety incidents is a threat to public health and to the economic costs of countries and businesses. A food safety incident takes place when concerns around the safety or quality of food may require action to protect the consumers. Food safety incidents can fall into four categories; biological, chemical, physical, and allergen. Identifying the root cause of food safety incidents is needed to help food businesses develop risk mitigating strategies.

The responsibility lies with the food business

A Food Business Operator (FBO) is responsible for the safety of the food they produce, distribute, store and/or sell.

A Food Business Operator must:

- Not place unsafe food on the market.
- Comply with food laws in the production, distribution, storage and sale of food.
- Label or identify food placed on the market to facilitate its traceability.
- Have traceability information for suppliers and business customers.
- Allow for traceability information to be made available to enforcement authorities on demand.
- Remove unsafe food from the market in the event of a food safety incident.

Traceability

Traceability is key. It helps keep track of food within the supply chain, which, if needed, supports the withdrawal/recall of unsafe food. The more information a FBO keeps, the quicker it is to identify the affected food and mitigate risks to consumers, saving time and money.

Here are some key steps in developing a food traceability system:

- The system. FBOs must have a system in place to be able to trace food purchased from suppliers and then supplied to business customers. This does not include food supplied to the final consumer.
- Food batches. Defining batches of food will help to ensure good traceability and can limit the amount of food withdrawn/recalled.
- Traceability information. The very basic information logged should include the business name, business address, a description of the foods purchased and sold, quantities and transaction dates. As mentioned above, the more information kept, the better.
- Record keeping. FBOs must ensure traceability information can be made available on demand.

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