

Food safety BYTES

Your own reference source on food safety

Number: 12

Traceability, withdrawals and recalls II

Construct your own digital library on food safety

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If a food safety incident happens and the food has been supplied, it will have to be withdrawn and if necessary, recalled. A withdrawal is the process by which unsafe food is removed from the supply chain that has not yet reached the consumer. A recall is when unsafe food is removed from the supply chain that has reached the consumers and the consumers are advised to take appropriate action, this could be to either return or dispose of the unsafe food.

What the law says

If a Food Business Operator (FBO) believes a food that they have imported, produced, processed, manufactured or distributed is unsafe it should immediately withdraw/recalled. FBOs must inform enforcement authorities, suppliers, business customers and consumers (for consumers this is only when a recall is required) of the food safety incident and necessary actions.

Managing a food withdrawal/recall

Here are some key steps when initiating and managing a food withdrawal/recall:

1. Know the details of the problem.
2. Know which food product and batches are affected.
3. Carry out risk assessment.
4. Stop supply.
5. Ensure product is withdrawn/recalled.
6. Inform enforcement authorities, suppliers, business customers and consumers (for consumers this is only when a recall is required).
7. Maintain communication with all relevant parties throughout the food safety incident.
8. Clearly label affected food to indicate it should not be sold.
9. Dispose of unsafe food.

Undertaking root cause analysis (RCA)

Following a food safety incident, FBOs are advised to undertake a Root Cause Analysis (RCA). This exercise can be used to determine how and why the food incident happened and to help identify actions to prevent further incidents. The results of the RCA can be used to review how FBOs manage food safety in their business, including the traceability, withdrawal and recall of unsafe food.

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