

INTRODUCTION

This file is to be used as a reference, training tool or even seen as the Food Safety “bible” for aligning your store with Food Safety requirements. The requirements are set out against South African Government regulations and SPAR best practice.

Food safety is the protection of food from any contamination that could cause illness or harm to our customers. It is critical to ensure that strict Food Safety Standards are followed in our stores to protect our customers and the SPAR Brand.

Food hygiene is considered the practical process of ensuring food is fit to eat. It is not just a matter of making the food premises look clean.

The activities involved include:

- Protecting food against any type of contamination (chemical, allergen, physical or microbiological).
- Preventing any organism from multiplying to levels that put customer’s health at risk or result in food spoilage.
- Destroying any harmful bacteria in food or food premises.
- Removing contaminated food so that it cannot be used for human consumption.



Benefits of high standards of food safety

The public has a considerable interest in food safety and high expectations of those involved in the food business, but general confidence is sometimes shaken by food scares, the recent *Listeria Monocytogenes* outbreak in South Africa causing the death of hundreds of people. It is therefore important that food businesses have high standards of food hygiene and that these are clear to everyone.

High standards help to create a good reputation for food businesses. In turn this helps to:

- Boost consumer confidence.
- Increase business which swells profits.
- Enhance staff morale and loyalty.
- Improve the standards and quality of the food in turn reducing waste.

The cost of food-borne illness and poor standards

The cost of poor hygiene to a SPAR retailer can be very high. These “costs” could include:

The loss of reputation leading to:

- Low morale
- Loss of business
- Diminished profits

Poor control of food leading to:

- High levels of wastage
- Loss of production
- Spoilt food
- Pest infestation
- Food poisoning and food-borne disease

Higher costs resulting in:

- High staff turnover
- Legal action and fines
- Civil action for compensation to people who have become ill
- Food wastage
- Closure of the SPAR store

People employed in food businesses with low standards may have to deal with:

- The loss of their jobs – either because of the closure of the store or because of a loss of business.
- Becoming a long-term carrier of pathogenic organisms.
- Damaged personal reputations if their workplace is known to have poor hygiene standards.
- The loss of overtime and bonuses.



Important! The staff members role in food safety

All staff that are involved in food handling are responsible for ensuring that they handle food safely.

Their responsibilities include:

- Keeping themselves clean i.e. following good hygiene practices, particularly hand washing.
- Not preparing food if they are ill.
- Keeping their work stations clean (clean as you go).
- Protecting food from contamination.
- Maintenance of the cold chain and temperature monitoring.
- Stock rotation.

Bacterial food poisoning

The number of people suffering from food poisoning has increased dramatically over the last decade.

There are many reasons proposed for the increase in food-borne illnesses including:

- More people are eating out.
- Increased variety of food outlets selling exotic foods.
- Customers buying fully or semi-prepared foods.
- A greater number of meals served at certain times e.g. Christmas or weddings.
- Misuse of equipment e.g. a microwave or fridge/freezer.
- More people are using convenience foods/products.
- Seasonal variations e.g. in summer there may be:
 - Higher ambient temperatures.
 - Overcrowded refrigerators.
 - People buying more prepared cold food such as cooked meats.
 - Temporary staff for peak periods.
 - Food transported in non-refrigerated vehicles.

The foods most commonly involved in food poisoning outbreaks include what is considered “high risk” foods e.g. poultry (especially chicken), beef, pork and ham, lamb, milk, cream and dairy products, rice, fish and shellfish, eggs and egg products, gravy and sauces.



Hygiene Legislation

Hygiene legislation has been compiled to govern the handling, transportation, storage and sale of all foods to the public of South Africa by food producing establishments. These laws are in place to protect the customer against any potential risk and it is therefore important to ensure good personal hygiene practises to prevent customers contracting food poisoning or a food-borne illness.

These laws also protect the food industry from legal action by specifications and guidelines in which to operate. If these laws and regulations are adhered to, the likelihood of customers becoming ill is greatly reduced, which in turn minimises the possibility of legal action or loss of business for the retailers.

The Health Act (61/2003) is the act which governs health and hygiene in South Africa. All acts are amended from time to time. Revised Regulations promulgated in terms of section 15(1) of the Foodstuff, Cosmetic and Disinfections Act, 1972 (Act No 54 of 1972) of which the recent update was done on R.962 and replaced with R.638. The R.638 addresses the regulations that oversee

general hygiene requirements for food premises and the transportation of food. These regulations set out the minimum hygiene requirements for the employer and the employees of organisations that produce, manufacture and sell food to adhere to.

A regulation relating to the application of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system (HACCP) Regulation R.908 also falls under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, Act No 54 of 1972. R.908 controls how organisations design and implement HACCP by putting control measures into place to prevent or eliminate food safety hazards or reduce it to an acceptable level.

Provincial and municipal local authorities also have their own regulations that direct hygiene; for example, the regulations that preside over buildings often stipulate certain hygiene specifications. In South Africa all food production businesses must have a Certificate of Acceptability (COA). This certificate is awarded when the health department has checked the food production facility and approved it for food production.



Important! Please take note that you need to comply with:

THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD PREMISES AND THE TRANSPORT OF FOOD AND RELATED MATTERS (Published under Government Notice No. R.638 of 22 June 2018)

In summary, the regulations require that:

- The premises you operate from has been issued with a Certificate of Acceptability (COA) from your local Department of Health. You can download this Regulation from www.doh.gov.za, under Legislation, under the year 2003 or it is available on the NSDL. If you need to apply for this certificate, the application form is at the end of the Regulation. The Certificate of Acceptability is applicable for the specific store only and for the person in charge of the store. If there is a change of ownership, the new owner will have to apply for a new Certificate of Acceptability to be issued.

Furthermore, the regulations clearly outline the standards and requirements for:

- The food premises with regards to location, design, construction and finish. Clear reasons for these building standards include the protection of the food handling conditions e.g. pest control, allergens, dust and ventilation.
- Staff facilities and hand washing.
- Food containers and pre-packed food, appliances, ventilation and equipment, specifically mentioning milk tank/s.
- The display, storage, defrosting and temperature of food.
- Protective clothing for food handlers and visitors.

- Duties of the person in charge of food premises include the responsibility of overseeing food handlers and training requirements. The regulation defines the responsible procedures specific for traceability and product recall.
- Duties of the food handlers are clearly defined and cover personal hygiene practices.
- The handling and transportation of meat and meat products.
- The transport of food.
- Exceptions, addition requirements and reservations.

HACCP Food Regulations

HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points) is a food safety management system. It is a process of identifying hazards and implementation of preventative actions that could occur during food/product handling. Standard implementation occurs from receiving to production to serving and/or selling.

Examples of hazards can be:

- Chemical (e.g. spillage of harmful chemicals into food)
- Microbiological (e.g. contamination with bacteria such as E. coli or Staph Aureaus)
- Physical (e.g. hair, dust, insects, jewellery, glass or wires from brushes that fall into food during production and packaging).

The basis of a HACCP system is Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's) and record keeping, as detailed in this file. In order to show due diligence in the event of an alleged food poisoning complaint, you need to be able to provide proof and records of the Good Hygiene Practices implemented. Examples of possible records needed are cleaning schedules, staff training records, traceability records and temperature monitoring records. Once potential hazards have been identified, **control measures** need to be put into **place to prevent or reduce the potential risk** to an acceptable food safety



level. An example of a **control measure** could be only using a red cloth in the butchery area or specific temperatures and times to cook specific foods. A full HACCP system would require that these critical control points are monitored, and records kept. Should a process or procedure fail, corrective actions should be established and implemented. HACCP should identify which of the control measures are essential to ensuring safe food. HACCP provides a common sense approach to identifying and controlling risk factors. Systems and processors should be simple, effective and achievable.

By passing the SPAR Food Safety Audit, you will be complying with basic requirements but will not be HACCP Certified. HACCP Regulations have not yet been enforced by the Government on retailers but is a minimum guideline for food outlets.

Guidelines for managing food safety

The person in charge of food premises (owner or store manager), takes full ownership towards safeguarding the food products sold in his/her store. This would include managing all food safety issues by means of:

- ✓ Ensuring all staff have access to The Store Safe File, understanding and implementing the content.
- ✓ From time to time the regional DC team shall notify you of updates and changes, based on regulation changes. Store owners/managers need to print this new material and place it in the Store Safe File.
- ✓ The cover sheet of the file offers a register for store management/supervisors and department managers to sign in acknowledgement of commitment and understanding of food safety requirements.

Establish a food safety committee

It would be best practice to establish a food safety committee in your store. This committee must comprise of:

- Store owner or manager
- Assistant manager
- GUEST champion
- A representative (manager or supervisor) from each fresh food department
- A representative (manager or supervisor) from groceries, perishables and receiving.

The function of the committee is to meet every quarter, in preparation for the food safety audit and following the results of the food safety audit.

The committee should discuss all relevant food safety related issues, which should include:

- The audit results and corrective action plan – indicate the person responsible for the task to be corrected and signed off.
- Forthcoming and anticipated challenges e.g. power cuts, staff strikes or pathogen outbreaks.
- Report and discuss any food safety related incidents e.g. customer complaints.
- Training plan.

The committee should share the work tasks and minutes should be documented, signed and filed. As a management team always lead by example by wearing protective clothing where necessary and hair nets when entering the service area. Use the checklists provided. Practise good hand washing in front of staff and conduct spot checks. Hold staff accountable for their work and actions.



It is a legislated requirement that all food handlers must be trained in basic food safety. This can be achieved by:

- Completing all the food safety modules on e-learning (remember to print the register and have it in your food safety training file to present to the auditor).
- By attending food safety training classes held at the regional DC.
- A service provider can come and train instore.

It is further required that follow up assessments must be done to establish when staff requires further training or correction. This can be done by using the departmental scores following the outcome of your Foods Safety Audit. You should be able to identify overlapping points to action in all departments e.g. temperatures that are logged incorrectly. Proof of these assessments and follow up training identification must be on file and available for review.

Good communication is key on all food safety issues with staff and store management.

And finally, good documentation. There are several checklists, cleaning schedules and temperature checklists at the back of the file. Ensure that they are all in use within your store. Ensure they are being completed correctly and accurately. Your completed documentation is to safeguard yourself, protect the brand and can be presented in the court of law to prove compliance and due diligence.