Food safety programs

This fact sheet provides general information on food safety programs for food businesses licensed under the Food Act 2006 (the Act).

What is a food safety program?

A food safety program is a documented system that identifies the food safety hazards in the handling of food in a food business and details the way the hazards will be controlled in that business.

Why develop a food safety program?

The introduction of food safety programs for certain sectors of the food industry was part of the national food reform process which aimed to reduce the incidence of food borne illness, reduce the regulatory burden on the food industry and provide consistent food regulation and standards across Australia.

The National Risk Validation Report published in 2002 identified:

- the incidence of food-borne illness attributed to various food industry sectors
- the most cost effective method to reduce the incidence of food borne illness
- the overall cost benefit of implementing food safety programs.

The report identified five high risk industry sectors in which food safety programs would reduce the incidence of food-borne illness. Food safety programs have been implemented under the Act for licensable food businesses in two of these industry sectors: food service in catering operations; and food service to vulnerable persons.

What are the benefits of a food safety program?

A food safety program is a documented system for managing parameters linked to food safety. If developed and followed properly, a food safety program helps to ensure food for sale is safe. A food safety program can also help a food business manage their operations better through improved record keeping and cost control. An appropriate and well implemented food safety program can also help a food business demonstrate that all due diligence was exercised in the preparation and sale of food.

What must a food safety program contain?

A food safety program must:

- systematically identify the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in food handling operations of the food business, and
- identify where, in a food handling operation of the food business, each hazard identified can be controlled and the means of control, and
- provide for the systematic monitoring of the means of control, and
- provide for appropriate corrective action to be taken when a hazard identified is not under control, and
- provide for the regular review of the program to ensure it is appropriate for the food business, and
- provide for the keeping of appropriate records for the food business, including records about action taken to ensure the business is carried on in compliance with the program, and
- contain other information, relating to the control of food safety hazards, prescribed under a regulation.
Do I need a food safety program?

Under the Act, certain licensable food businesses in Queensland must have a food safety program accredited by their local government. There are significant penalties for not having an accredited food safety program.

Licensable food businesses are required to have an accredited food safety program if:

1. the food business involves off-site catering (refer to Food Safety Fact Sheet 22 – *Food safety programs for caterers* for further information).
2. the primary activity of the food business is on-site catering at the premises stated in the licence (refer to Food Safety Fact Sheet 22 – *Food safety programs for caterers* for further information).
3. the primary activity of the food business is on-site catering at part of the premises stated in the licence (refer to Food Safety Fact Sheet 22 – *Food safety programs for caterers* for further information).
4. the food business is carried on as part of the operations of a private hospital or otherwise processes or serves potentially hazardous food to six or more vulnerable persons (refer to Food Safety Fact Sheet 23 – *Food safety programs for vulnerable persons* for further information).

Other food businesses that are not required to have a food safety program may choose to apply for accreditation of a food safety program (refer to Food Safety Fact Sheet 24 – *Choosing to have a food safety program* for further information).

**For further information**

The Queensland Department of Health has a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. Food Safety Fact Sheets 22 to 26 provide further information on food safety programs. Fact sheets can be accessed at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

If you have any further questions relating to whether your food business is a licensable food business or if the food safety program provisions relate to your food business, contact the local government for the area where your food business is located. Contact details can be found in the White Pages or at [www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html](http://www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html).