Food Safety Systems

What is a food safety system?

A food safety system is a method of control which you, as the proprietor of a food business, can use to help satisfy yourself that your products are safe. This system may also be known as "Hazard Analysis".

The approach enables you to identify **hazards**, (things that can go wrong) and put into place **controls** (measures to prevent the hazard occurring) **before** they cause problems.

Why have a food safety system?

1. The **Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995** require proprietors of food businesses to identify potential food hazards, decide which of these hazards need to be controlled to ensure food safety and then put into place effective control and monitoring procedures to prevent the hazards causing harm to consumers. A well thought out food safety system will satisfy this legal requirement.

2. A food safety system will serve to satisfy you that food hazards are being controlled, ensuring a safe product for your customers.

Do I need to keep records

- It makes it very much easier for you to see that you have considered all the important points.
- Environmental Health Officers, during routine inspections, will be keen to ensure you are complying with the Regulation's requirements mentioned above. Documentation will demonstrate that you have thought about the hazards and control measures and provide a useful basis for discussion during the inspection.

- It is an offence to sell food which is unfit, sub-standard or which may cause harm to the person consuming it. The principal defence available to someone accused of selling such food is one of **due diligence.** This requires them to prove they **"took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence to avoid committing the offence".** Should anything go wrong, for example some food you have sold is connected with a food poisoning incident, documentation would be an extremely important element in establishing "a due diligence" defence.

How to design a food safety system
Please see below and follow the easy to use step by step guide

Step 1

Identify which operations or "steps" are carried out in your business, for example: delivery (of ingredients), storage, preparation, cooling, freezing, thawing, reheating, cold service, hot service, transport (to point of sale etc).

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Step 2

Using the **Hazard Flow Chart,** an example of which is shown below (you will find copies in Section 13 of this pack) fill in the first step of your operation in the left-hand column. This will usually be **Purchase/delivery**.

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Step 3

Identify the potential **Hazards** for this stage and write these in the second column. Such hazards will include things like: growth of bacteria already present in the food and contamination of the food item from dirt inside the vehicle or contact with raw foods.

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Step 4

The next column requires your to identify **Controls** you can put in place to prevent the potential hazards in column 2 from occurring. Such controls include specifying acceptable delivery temperatures, the proper use of date stamps, using reputable suppliers and so on.

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Step 5

In the column headed 'Monitoring' you should write down the method by which you can check your controls are working or being adhered to. Food example, refrigerated deliveries should arrive at 8°C or below. Checking the temperature on delivery will show whether or not your controls are being followed.

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Step 6

The last column is where you should detail the action to be taken if monitoring reveals that control measures are not being followed.

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Step 7

Repeat the above process for each of the remaining processes in your operation. See the completed **Hazard Flow Chart** (opposite) for additional examples of hazards, controls, monitoring and corrective action.

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Step 8

At regular intervals, review your system, to ensure changes to staff, equipment, legislation etc. have been accounted for.

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Step 9

Finally, make sure that **all** staff are aware of your system and what your system requires of them.

Hazard Flow Chart

For:

Step	Hazards What can go wrong?	Controls How can I prevent it going wrong?	Monitoring How can I check my control?	Corrective Action What do I do if things are not right?

Hazard Flow Chart

For: Pre-cooked meat

Step	Hazards What can go wrong?	Controls How can I prevent it going wrong?	Monitoring How can I check my control?	Corrective Action What do I do if things are not right?
Purchase/ delivery	Contamination from dirt inside vehicle or contact with raw foods.	Buy from a reputable source.	Audit supplier if possible Check condition & packaging on delivery.	Reject deliveries which do not meet standards.
	Growth of food poisoning bacteria during delivery.	Insist on refrigerated deliveries (below 8°C).	Check temperatures on delivery.	
		Specify proper date marking of meat.	Check meat is within date code.	
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Storage	Growth of bacteria already present.	Store at temperatures below 8°C.	Check fridge temperatures	Adjust fridge where necessary.
		Ensure proper stock control (a first in first out system).	Weekly stock checks	Review purchasing.
	Further contamination by bacteria	Keep fridge clean.	Cleaning schedules.	Review: - frequency. - products used. - staff training.
		Separate from raw foods e.g. raw meat.	Visual checks. Staff supervision.	Staff training.
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Preparation	Growth of bacteria already present.	Where possible prepare in cool area.	Check with a thermometer.	Ensure adequate ventilation.
				Reduce preparation time.
		Keep preparation time to a minimum.	Visual checks. Staff supervision.	Staff training.