

R. McCONNELL GROUP PLLC

A BOARD GUIDE

Food Safety

Safe, high-quality food from farm to fork

The food-safety management system: supplier and facility standards, traceability, distribution and store controls, audits, training, and product removals



WHY IT MATTERS

Why Food Safety Matters

In food, a control failure can become a public-health event

Protect customers

A comprehensive system delivers safe, high-quality food from farm to fork

Meet legal duties

All markets must comply with applicable food-safety laws and regulations

Guard the brand

Food-safety events directly impact customer trust and reputation

Drive maturity

A maturity model lets each market measure and improve its program

THE COMMITMENT

The organization is committed to providing safe, high-quality food in every market in which it operates

Safety Starts at the Source

Supplier approval, certification, and traceability govern what enters the chain

Supplier pre-approval

A formal, consistent approval process applies to suppliers and factories

Risk-based classification

A documented framework classifies suppliers by inherent and reputational risk

Recognized certification

Facilities must hold a globally recognized food-safety certification

Food-safety specifications

Documented specifications define safety requirements by product category

Traceability

One-step-back, then full supply-chain visibility for materials and products

Label & claim review

Regulatory review verifies ingredients, allergens, and claims

Operations & Oversight

Distribution, stores, audits, and rapid removals keep product safe

Receiving standards

Formal receiving and load-rejection standards apply to incoming product

Storage & protection

Proper storage, rotation, and protection run through distribution

Sanitation & pest control

Maintenance, sanitation, and pest-management plans run on schedule

Food defense

Site-security plans include vulnerability assessment and review

Food-safety audits

Standardized audits run at distribution centers and stores

Product removals

Formal procedures enable prompt recalls and removals

THE SYSTEM

Nine Program Domains

The domains that define a mature food-safety program

Suppliers & manufacturing

eCommerce

Labeling

Distribution & transport

Store operations

Training

Communication

Pest management

Food fraud

TRACEABILITY

Full end-to-end traceability is the goal; under the U.S. Food Traceability Rule (FSMA Section 204), enhanced traceability records are required for foods on the FDA Food Traceability List, with compliance required by July 20, 2028

KEY TERMS

Definitions

Traceability

The ability to follow a product and its raw materials through the supply chain

Recall / product removal

A formal procedure to identify and remove affected product promptly

Food defense

Protecting food from intentional contamination through security and vulnerability assessment

Food fraud

Intentional deception involving food for economic gain, addressed by dedicated controls

Questions the Board Should Ask

A few questions test how safe the food chain really is

01

What share of supplier facilities are certified?

Certification coverage is a leading indicator of upstream control

02

Can we trace product through every node?

Full traceability determines how fast and clean a recall is

03

How quickly can we execute a recall?

Removal speed directly limits customer harm and liability

04

Are audit exceptions tracked to closure?

Open exceptions are where food-safety failures accumulate unseen