

Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control System

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34

35 **1 Scope**

36

37 This document is intended to provide practical guidance to assist the national government,
38 and their responsible competent authority in the design, development, operation,
39 evaluation and improvement of the national food control system. It highlights the key
40 principles and core elements of an efficient and effective food control system. It is not
41 intended that the guidance results in “one system” being appropriate to all circumstances.
42 Rather, various approaches may be used, as appropriate to the national circumstances, to
43 achieve an effective national food control system.

44

45 While the focus of the Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control Systems is on the
46 production, packing, storage, transport, handling and sale of foods within national borders,
47 the document is consistent with and should be read in conjunction with relevant Codex
48 texts and the national food safety legislation. Codex texts of particular relevance include the
49 Principles for Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification (CAC/GL 20-1995), the
50 Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and
51 Export Inspection and Certification (CAC/GL 26-1997), the Guidelines for Food Import
52 Control Systems (CAC/GL 47-2003) and the Guidelines for the Exchange of Information
53 between countries on rejections of imported foods (CAC/GL 25-1997). Reference to these
54 texts relating to food import and export control is important since, while the national food
55 control system is ultimately responsible for the safety of food offered within its border, in
56 today’s global market, much food is sourced from outside the country; hence, properly
57 designed import and export control systems, as part of the overall national food control
58 system, are essential.

59

60 In addition, the relevant chapters of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
61 Terrestrial Animal Health Code and Aquatic Animal Health Code are valuable resources for
62 member governments and organizations. Documents and guidance material developed by
63 FAO and WHO may also be useful resources.

64

65 A responsible competent authority may apply these principles and guidelines, where
66 appropriate, according to their particular situations. When developing a national food
67 control system, the responsible national competent authority should ensure that the
68 objectives of the system are addressed as outlined in the principles below and should allow
69 for flexibility and modification as required to ensure the objectives can be achieved.

70

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71 2 Objective of a National Food Control System

72 The objective of a national food control system is to protect the health of consumers and
73 ensure fair practices in the food trade.

74 3 Principles of a National Food Control System

75 A national food control system should be based on the following principles:
76

77 3.1 Protection of consumers

78 National food control systems should be designed, implemented and maintained with the
79 primary goal to protect consumers. In the event of a conflict with other interests,
80 precedence should be given to protecting the health of consumers.
81

82 3.2 The whole food chain approach

83 The national food control system should cover the entire food chain from primary
84 production to consumption.
85

86 3.3 Transparency

87 All aspects of a national food control system should be transparent and open to scrutiny by
88 all stakeholders, while respecting legal requirements to protect confidential information as
89 appropriate. Transparency considerations apply to all participants in the food chain and
90 this can be achieved through clear documentation and communication.
91

92 3.4 Roles and Responsibilities

93 All participants in a national food control system should have specific roles and
94 responsibilities clearly defined.
95

96 Food business operators have the primary role and responsibility for managing the food
97 safety of their products and for complying with requirements relating to those aspects of
98 food under their control.
99

100 The national government (and in some cases a competent authority) has the role and
101 responsibility to establish and maintain up to date legal requirements. The competent
102 authority has the responsibility to ensure the effective operation of the national food
103 control system.
104

105 Consumers also have a role in managing food safety risks under their control and where
106 relevant should be provided with information on how to achieve this.

107 Academics and scientific institutions/organizations have a role in contributing to a national
108 food control system, as they are a source of expertise to support the risk based and
109 scientific foundation of such a system.

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3.5 Consistency and impartiality

All aspects of a national food control system should be applied consistently and impartially. The competent authority and all participants acting in official functions should be free of improper or undue influence or conflict of interest.

3.6 Risk-based, science-based and evidence-based decision making

A competent authority should make decisions within a national food control system based on scientific information, evidence and/or risk analysis principles as appropriate.

3.7 Cooperation and coordination between multiple competent authorities

The competent authorities within a national food control system should operate in a cooperative and coordinated manner, within clearly assigned roles and responsibilities, for the most effective use of resources in order to minimise duplication and/or gaps and to facilitate information exchange.

3.8 Preventive measures

To prevent and when necessary to respond to food safety incidents a national food control system should encompass the core elements of prevention, intervention and response.

3.9 Self-assessment and review procedures

The national food control system should possess the capacity and capability to undergo continuous improvement and include mechanisms to evaluate whether the system is able to achieve its objective.

3.10 Recognition of other systems (including equivalences)

Competent authorities should recognise that food control systems or their components although designed and structured differently may be capable of meeting the same objective. This recognition can apply at the national and international level. The concept of recognition of systems, including equivalences, should be provided for in the national food control system.

3.11 Legal foundation

The national government should have in place fundamental legal structures to enable the establishment of food laws and competent authorities, so that they can develop, establish, implement, maintain and enforce a national food control system.

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150

3.12 Harmonization

152 When designing and applying a food control system, the competent authority shall adopt
153 Codex standards, recommendations, and guidelines whenever appropriate as elements of
154 their national food control system to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair
155 practices in the food trade. Standards, recommendations or guidelines from other
156 international inter-governmental organizations whose membership is open to all countries
157 may also be useful.

158

3.13 Resources

160 A national food control system should have sufficient resources to enable it to meet the
161 system's objectives.

162

4 Framework for the design and operation of the national food control system

163

164 The national food control system will be based on particular governmental or
165 constitutional arrangements and institutions, (e.g. presence or absence of sub-national
166 governments), national goals and objectives.

167

168 The responsible competent authority has a pivotal role in the national food control system,
169 in that the competent authority:

170

- 171
- 172 a) provides leadership and coordination for the national food control system;
 - 173 b) designs, develops, operates, evaluates and improves the national food control system;
 - 174 c) establishes, implements and enforces science and risk based regulatory requirements
175 that encourage and promote positive food safety outcomes;
 - 176 d) establishes, implements and enforces regulatory requirements supporting fair
177 practices in the food trade;
 - 178 e) establishes and maintains arrangements with supporting organizations such as
179 officially recognized inspection, audit, certification and accreditation bodies, where
180 appropriate;
 - 181 f) advances and fosters knowledge, science, research and education regarding food
182 safety;
 - 183 g) engages with stakeholders to ensure transparency and to obtain their views; and
 - 184 h) where appropriate, establishes and maintains arrangements with other countries e.g.
185 cooperation programs, equivalence agreements etc.

186

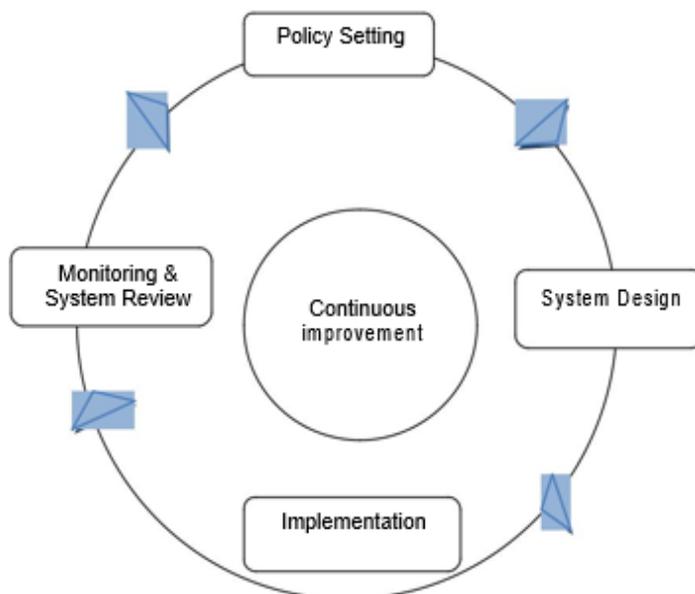
187 Where there is more than one competent authority their roles and responsibilities should
188 be clearly defined and their activities coordinated to the greatest extent possible to
189 minimize gaps and overlaps.

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190 The design and implementation of a national food control system should follow a logical
191 and transparent process. This should include the consistent application of a systematic
192 framework for the identification, evaluation and, as necessary, control of food safety risks
193 associated with existing, new or re-emerging hazards.

194
195 In developing a national food control system the competent authority, in consultation with
196 stakeholders, should adopt the following framework, which will reflect the principles of a
197 national food control system and are described in Section 3 of this document.

Framework for the development of a national food control system



4.1 Policy setting

221 **4.1.1** Policy setting is the process by which the goals and objectives for the national food
222 control system are established by the national government, along with the commitment to
223 a course of action to achieve those goals and objectives. It should also include the
224 identification and clear articulation of expected outcomes. Policy decisions guide
225 subsequent actions, including the establishment of legislation and regulations.

227 **4.1.2** Public policy decisions should take into account a broad range of factors and require
228 a careful assessment of options. The responsible competent authorities should consider,
229 among other things, stakeholder interests, how the food control system will relate to
230 international and national standards, assessment of risks and/or benefits, effectiveness and

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231 efficiency of various controls and methods of oversight, existing and planned government
232 structures, coordination among authorities along the food chain, technical and scientific
233 information, the roles of government and food business operators, and best
234 practices/models.

235

236 **4.1.3** The responsible competent authority should actively engage stakeholders, including
237 food business operators and consumers, in the setting of policy.

238

239 **4.1.4** National goals and priorities will ensure consumer protection by taking into account
240 among other things, food production and consumption patterns, risk profile and consumer
241 concerns in relation to food safety and fair practices in the food trade and also the
242 preparedness and capability of the country.

243

244 **4.1.5** When establishing the national food control system, the national government should
245 identify its short, medium and long term objectives to be addressed through the system.
246 The main objectives should be aligned with and assist in implementing the principles
247 outlined in Section 3. Consideration should be given to the development of a national food
248 control strategy, which will aid clarification of the objectives to be addressed set priorities
249 and support system design.

250

251 **4.1.6** Once public policy goals and desired outcomes for the national food control system
252 are established, they should be clearly articulated and described in order to effectively
253 guide subsequent actions.

254

255 **4.1.7** The national food control system should possess three main characteristics which,
256 among other things, can be used in self-assessment or other evaluation to determine if the
257 system is fully functional and effective:

258 i) **Characteristic 1** Situational awareness means that the national food control system
259 avails itself of accurate and current information on the entire food chain.

260

261 ii) **Characteristic 2** Pro-activity means that the national food control system is capable
262 of identifying existing or emerging hazards before they materialize as risks in the
263 food production and/or processing chain and at the early stages rather than in the
264 end product. Early warning and/or rapid alert systems, traceability and contingency
265 planning for managing and preparing for potential food safety incidents should be
266 an inherent part of a pro-active control system.

267

268 iii) **Characteristic 3** Continuous improvement means that the national food control
269 system should possess the capability to learn through a process of review and
270 reform utilising mechanisms that check and evaluate whether the system is able to
271 achieve its objectives.

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- 272
273 **4.1.8** In order to reflect national policies and strategies legislation should, among other
274 things:
275
276 a) Frame the structure of the national food control system and its goals and
277 objectives;
278
279 b) Provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities of participants in the national
280 food control system, i.e. the central government, the competent authority (or of each
281 competent authority where there is more than one), third party providers (where
282 these are used), food business operators and other stakeholders as appropriate;
283
284 c) Set out the overarching objectives of the national food control system and any
285 specific or lower order objectives that relate to participants or sectors;
286
287 d) Clearly define obligations for food business operators and other participants in
288 the food chain to establish and monitor controls; and
289
290 e) Clearly define obligations on food businesses to place only safe food on the
291 market and apply fair practices in trade.
292
- 293 **4.1.9** The legislation should provide the responsible competent authority with the range
294 of powers and mechanisms sufficient to manage and operate the national food
295 control system which may include and are not limited to the following:
296
297 a) Establish standards or other management options to prevent and control food borne
298 hazards including but not limited to disease-causing organisms, contaminants,
299 veterinary drug and pesticide residues;
300 b) Establish, monitor and enforce national standards;
301 c) Recognize other competent authorities' standards at the appropriate stage(s) in the
302 food chain;
303 d) Establish cooperative arrangements with other government entities;
304 e) Establish approaches to ensure the safety and safe use of inputs to the food chain,
305 such as food additives, pesticides, veterinary drugs;
306 f) Recognize and/or harmonize with Codex standards;
307 g) Perform audits, verification, inspections and investigations, gather evidence, collect
308 and analyze samples and otherwise verify compliance with standards and
309 requirements;
310 h) Consider official recognition of inspection, audit, certification and accreditation
311 bodies;

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- 312 i) Enforce legislation and take proportionate, dissuasive and effective action in case of
313 non-compliance with requirements including, as appropriate, investigations and
314 application of sanctions and penalties;
- 315 j) Ensure that risks associated with non-compliant foods are evaluated and the
316 appropriate action taken; e.g. disposal, treated appropriately or redirected.
- 317 k) Ensure the integrity, impartiality and independence of officially recognized
318 inspection, audit, certification and accreditation;
- 319 l) Enable traceability/product tracing; and
- 320 m) Ensure that unsafe food is prevented from entering the market or is withdrawn and
321 dealt with appropriately.

322

323 **4.1.10** Legislation may also include provisions, as appropriate, for the registration
324 of establishments, establishment approval, licensing or registration of traders, equipment
325 design approval, penalties in the event of non-compliance and charging of fees or levies.

326

327 **4.1.11** The competent authority should, engage with stakeholders including the
328 food business operators and consumers, in the development of new legislation, and when
329 making regulatory changes. The competent authority should also disseminate the
330 legislation.

331

332 **4.2 System Design**

333

334 When designing a national food control system the national government should ensure the
335 main objectives as defined in the policy are addressed as well as how to incorporate the
336 principles in Section 3.

337

338 The design of a food control system should take into account the following elements:

- 339
- 340 a) Existing or necessary regulatory and legislative framework (laws, regulations,
341 guidance);
- 342 b) How the national food control system relates to international and national standards
343 including food import and export system requirements;
- 344 c) The recognition of other food control systems, including equivalence;
- 345 d) The level and method of oversight including control programs from primary production
346 through manufacturing to transportation and distribution;
- 347 e) How issues and risks are managed;
- 348 f) Enforcement and compliance programs;
- 349 g) Coordination and communication between authorities with control responsibilities in
350 different parts of the food chain and with the public health authorities;
- 351 h) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- 352 i) Access to adequate laboratory capacity and capability;

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- 353 j) Staff competence and training;
354 k) The resources needed to meet the objectives of the national food control system, their
355 allocation and how the system is to be funded;
356 l) Surveillance, investigation, emergency preparedness and response to food borne and
357 food related incidents;
358 m) Assessment and evaluation;
359 n) Stakeholder engagement;
360 o) International communication and harmonization; and
361 p) Periodic review and continuous improvement.

362
363 Consideration should be given to the development and implementation of a standardized
364 approach to risk management incorporating the *Working principles for risk analysis for food*
365 *safety for application by governments* (CAC/GL 62-2007).

366
367 An appropriate system design should consider a range of factors including (but not limited
368 to) product risk, current scientific information, industry-based controls and system review
369 findings. It should also provide for flexibility in the application of control measures to
370 reflect variations in these factors.

371
372 Development of an effective method of data collection across the food chain is important
373 for situational awareness, performance measurement and continuous review and system
374 improvement. For instance, surveillance and monitoring programs can be used to target
375 priority risks.

376
377 The responsible competent authority should utilise findings from laboratories to monitor
378 trends in the food chain and assist in compliance and enforcement. Laboratory access and
379 capacity should be commensurate with the need to address priority food risks.

380
381 The national food control system, including a description of its scope and operation, and a
382 clear description of the roles and responsibilities of all parties, should be fully documented
383 and publicly available to ensure its transparency and consistent application of control
384 measures. National food control systems should be designed to ensure administrative
385 procedures are in place for documentation of control programs and their findings.

386
387 Control programs should be based on risk and designed to take into account a number of
388 factors including but not limited to:

- 389
390 • Food safety hazards associated with different products and the risk to human health
391 posed by the food or food-related products;
392 • Risk of unfair practices in the food trade associated with different products, such as
393 potential fraud or deception of consumers;

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- 394 • Information that may be available from a range of sources including government,
395 academia, scientific institutions and industry data;
- 396 • Statistical data on production, trade and consumption;
- 397 • Results of previous controls including analytical results;
- 398 • The effectiveness and reliability of controls including those of food business
399 operators;
- 400 • Knowledge of operators at various stages of the food chain typical and atypical use
401 of products, raw materials and by-products; structure of production and supply
402 chains; production technologies, processes and practices; relevant product tracing
403 information; and
- 404 • Epidemiological data on food-borne disease.

405
406 In the absence of risk analysis data control programs should be based on technical and
407 scientific data developed from current knowledge and practice.

408
409 Control programs should be applied at the point or points in the production or supply chain
410 where hazards can be most effectively or efficiently controlled taking into account the
411 available resources and capability. Control programs among other things may cover, as
412 appropriate:

- 413 • Establishments, installations, equipment, personnel and material;
- 414 • Products, from raw material to the final products, including intermediate products;
- 415 • Preventative controls including Good Agricultural Practice GAP, Good
416 Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) and Hazard Analysis
417 Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles;
- 418 • Means of distribution; and
- 419 • Human resources, infrastructure and confidentiality.

420
421
422 Control programs should be designed to include the following elements but not limited to:

- 423
- 424 • Inspection, verification and audit including on-site visits;
- 425 • Market surveillance;
- 426 • Sampling and analysis;
- 427 • Examination of written and other records;
- 428 • Documentation of observations and findings; and
- 429 • Examination of the results of any verification systems operated by the
430 establishment.

431
432 Where quality assurance systems are used by food business operators, the national food
433 control system should take them into account where such systems relate to protecting

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434 consumer health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade. The responsible competent
435 authority should encourage, as appropriate, the use of Good Laboratory Practices (GLP)
436 GAP, GMP, GHP and HACCP approach in accordance with General Principles of Food
437 Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969).

438
439 The system design should provide for the capability to evaluate the effectiveness of the
440 national food control system. Verifying the effectiveness of the national food control system
441 should be targeted at the most appropriate stages of the food chain, based on risk analysis
442 conducted in accordance with internationally accepted methodology.

443
444 A national food control system should be subject to regular review of results obtained so
445 that it can be continuously improved to reflect changes in product risk, the production
446 environment (including technology), increased scientific knowledge, and level of
447 confidence in industry, to ensure the objective of the national food control system is met in
448 an efficient and effective manner.

449
450 Compliance and enforcement programs should be designed to provide the ability for the
451 responsible competent authority to take corrective action to ensure the situation is
452 remedied where the food business operators are not meeting their obligations or a product
453 or process is found not to be in conformity. Programs should be designed to:

- 454
- 455 • Be proportionate to the degree of public health risk or potential fraud or deception
 - 456 of consumers;
 - 457 • Encourage acceptance of responsibility and compliance by all participants; and
 - 458 • Provide for a full range of responses from provision of information or education
 - 459 material, imposing of corrective actions, setting of sanctions.
 - 460 • Take into account repeated non-conformity by food business operators.

461 The responsible competent authority and any officially recognized bodies undertaking
462 compliance and enforcement activities on behalf of the responsible competent authority
463 should be resourced sufficiently and transparently to enable the national food control
464 programs to achieve its objectives without compromising the programs integrity and
465 independence. Third party providers may be approved and/or authorised to implement the
466 national food control system and the competent authority must have capacity to supervise
467 and control third party providers.

468
469 The design and implementation of a national food control system should be on a scale
470 appropriate to the resources available, while allowing for appropriate expansion.
471 Resources should be prioritized to maximise protection of public health. Resource
472 allocations made in the context of a national food control system may be attributed to:

- 473
- 474 • Training and basic infrastructure;

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- 475 • Suitably qualified personnel of relevant disciplinary backgrounds
- 476 • Reliable transportation systems and equipment to perform inspection, audit and
- 477 verification services and transmission of samples to laboratories; and
- 478 • Information, communication and technology (ICT) systems;

479
480 The design of the national food control system should incorporate timely access to
481 adequate information relating to the surveillance, investigation and response to food borne
482 illness and food related incidents. Such information can identify the risks or issues that
483 need to be addressed and also whether or not the controls or measures in place are
484 effective.

485
486 In order to respond to food safety emergencies, consideration should be given to the
487 establishment of the national food safety emergency plan with establishment of a
488 coordination arrangement with links to public health authorities, law enforcement
489 agencies, food recall systems, risk assessment specialists, food business operators, and
490 others. Traceability/product tracing systems provides for the timely identification of the
491 sources for emergencies and allowing effective recall of affected products.

492
493 The national food control system should have procedures covering the prompt removal of
494 unsafe food which includes but not limited to recall systems for processed foods and
495 quarantine procedures for primary and postharvest products, such as confiscation,
496 rejection, etc. The responsible competent authority and food business operators may adopt
497 established procedures for recall and confiscation of product. Setting up these procedures
498 is the primary responsibility of food business operators and they should ensure that
499 products that are deemed to be unsafe should be recalled, appropriately dealt with to
500 ensure consumer protection. The responsible competent authority should ensure
501 appropriate consumer notification is carried out when distribution of unsafe food has
502 occurred.

503
504 Recall systems and other market withdrawal systems should be a coordinated effort
505 between the responsible competent authority and food business operators and be effective
506 and enforceable. If the responsible competent authority requires or requests a recall,
507 operators should have an affirmative duty to give effect to established procedures to
508 recover recalled products and to destroy or dispose of them properly. National laws should
509 include penalties or sanctions for companies that fail to comply with recall requests.

510
511 In order to promote consumer confidence in food safety and ensure fair practices in the
512 food trade, the responsible competent authority should be clear and transparent in their
513 communications relating to all aspects of the national food control system for which they
514 are responsible, including the development, implementation and enforcement of the
515 requirements.

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516
517 Communication among public health (food safety), agriculture and other relevant
518 authorities, consumers and consumer organizations, and food business operators should
519 be an on-going function of a responsible competent authority with responsibility for a
520 national food control system.

521
522 Consideration should be given to the development of communication programs to provide
523 outreach and education programs and information exchange on food safety risks and
524 mitigation steps which may be taken to reduce these risks, among regulators, food business
525 operators, consumers and academia.

526
527 When developing an educational program the relevant authorities should clearly identify
528 the target audience, the priority content and the strategies to be implemented. The
529 educational materials developed should use language suitable for the intended audience.
530 Basic elements of food safety educational activities should be widely disseminated,
531 preferably using mass communication.

532
533 Where appropriate, the responsible competent authority should utilize the *Principles and*
534 *Guidelines for the Exchange of Information in Food Safety Emergency Situations* (CAC/GL 19-
535 1995), the International Health Regulations (IHR), OIE disease notification requirements,
536 IPPC regulations, the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) and
537 International and National Rapid Alert Systems [e.g. EU Rapid Alert System for Food and
538 Feed (EU-RASFF), ASEAN Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (A-RASFF), Philippine
539 Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (Phil RASFF)], for national and international
540 emergency notification and response.

541

4.3 Implementation

542

543
544 Following the design or modification of the national food control system the responsible
545 competent authority should prepare an implementation plan including the sequence for
546 different elements of design suitable with their preparedness and capability. This will
547 require engagement and analysis by a variety of experts, disciplines and all stakeholders.
548 The responsible competent authority's plan may include:

549

- 550 • Priorities and time frames for implementation;
- 551 • Deliverables;
- 552 • Responsibilities for implementation;
- 553 • Allocation of resources for personnel and infrastructure;
- 554 • Training and operation manuals; and
- 555 • Stakeholder engagement.

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556
557 Guidance and instructions relating to the national food control system, control programs
558 and compliance and enforcement, including legal requirements should be developed for
559 responsible competent authority staff and food business operators to ensure that:

- 560
- 561 • all participants are fully aware of the objectives of the system and what is expected
 - 562 from them;
 - 563 • application of legislation is consistent; and
 - 564 • they have the necessary resources (human, material and financial resources)
 - 565 available to carry out their tasks.
- 566

567 Programs and training manuals should be developed and maintained to ensure consistent
568 application of requirements. This material should include as appropriate and not limited
569 to:

- 570 • An organizational chart of the official control system;
 - 571 • Roles of each level in the hierarchy (including other relevant jurisdictions; i.e.
 - 572 national, regional and local);
 - 573 • Job functions and qualifications as appropriate;
 - 574 • Operating procedures including methods of audit, verification, inspection and
 - 575 control, sampling plans, and testing;
 - 576 • Relevant legislation and requirements;
 - 577 • Processes and procedures relating to compliance and enforcement;
 - 578 • Arrangements for coordination with relevant competent authorities and
 - 579 stakeholders;
 - 580 • Relevant information about food contamination and food control;
 - 581 • Procedures for dealing with food safety emergencies and conducting food recalls
 - 582 and investigations;
 - 583 • Relevant information on staff training; and
 - 584 • Formal review process of the national food control system.
- 585

586 National food control systems should be supported by training programs designed to
587 ensure that all appointed officers (e.g. inspectors, auditors, assessors), analysts, and other
588 individuals carrying out technical and/or professional duties receive the training required
589 to adequately perform their work assignments and to maintain their professional
590 competence and ensure consistent application of requirements.

591
592 The responsible competent authority should ensure that sufficient guidance, training and
593 awareness programs targeted at all relevant stakeholders are in place to facilitate effective
594 notification of suspect cases of food related illnesses or health hazards detected in the food
595 chain. Administrative procedures or contingency plans (as appropriate) should provide

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596 guidance on initiating coordination mechanisms when involvement of several competent
597 authorities is required to resolve the incident. Rapid alert systems and response should be
598 designed and implemented for this purpose.

599
600 Food business operators should also be encouraged to develop or access training and
601 education programs relevant to their activities and responsibilities. Such programs can
602 include formal education and/or academic studies, industry training organisation courses
603 or individual business staff training

604
605 Where a responsible competent authority intends to use third party providers to
606 implement controls, before being authorized, the third party provider should be assessed
607 against objective criteria to ensure their competency. The on-going performance of
608 officially authorized bodies should be regularly assessed by the responsible competent
609 authority. The responsible competent authority should initiate procedures to correct
610 deficiencies and, as appropriate, enable withdrawal of official authorisation.

611
612 Responsible competent authorities should utilize laboratories that are authorized or
613 accredited under officially recognized programs to ensure that adequate quality controls
614 are in place to ensure the reliability of test results. Internationally recognized and validated
615 analytical methods should be used and Good Laboratory Practices should be adhered to.

616 Responsible competent authorities should ensure that authorised or accredited
617 laboratories participate in regular proficiency testing. Such testing may be organised
618 nationally or internationally and reference laboratory may have a role in organising
619 proficiency testing programs.

620
621 Where appropriate, the responsible competent authority should provide access to
622 educational information on food safety risks and mitigation steps, which may be taken to
623 reduce these risks.

624
625 As appropriate, the responsible competent authority should:

- 626
- 627 • Communicate food safety issues and concerns with (relevant competent authorities)
628 trading partners;
 - 629 • Participate in bilateral exchange with (relevant competent authorities) trading
630 partners and international organisations related to food safety regulations and their
631 enforcement;
 - 632 • Communicate and collaborate with international organizations, such as FAO and
633 WHO through International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), WHO in
634 accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005) and OIE as
635 appropriate, in cases where food(s) implicated in incidents or outbreaks of food
636 borne illness may be circulating in international trade and

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- 637 • Have in place a process for engagement with stakeholders including food business
638 operators, consumers and other interested parties.

639
640 The responsible competent authority should implement a range of food control activities,
641 including inspections, audits, verification and surveillance to ensure that food business
642 operators meet their responsibilities and are in compliance with requirements. Detailed
643 procedures should be developed to articulate the key tasks and responsibilities of
644 verification of compliance and the consequences of non-compliance, including repeated
645 non-compliance.

646
647 Where a product or process is found not to be in conformity, the responsible competent
648 authority should take action to ensure that the operator remedies the situation. The
649 resulting measures should take into account any repeated non-conformity of the same
650 product or process to ensure that any action is proportionate: to the degree of public health
651 risk, potential fraud or deception of consumers. As an example to illustrate this point the
652 specific measures that may be applied in continuous cases of non-conformity may include:

- 653
- 654 • Increased intensity of audits and/ or inspection and/or monitoring of products
655 and/or processes; identified as being not in conformity and/or the undertakings
656 concerned; and
 - 657 • In the most serious or persistent cases, revocation of the registration of the
658 producer and/or processor or closure of the relevant establishment.
 - 659 • Other penalties and sanctions may be applied in accordance with the relevant
660 national food safety legislation

661

4.4 Monitoring and System Review

662

663
664 The effectiveness and appropriateness of the national food control system should be
665 regularly assessed against the objective of the system, effectiveness of control programs, as
666 well as against legislative and other regulatory requirements. Criteria for assessment
667 should be established, clearly defined and documented, and may also include cost benefits
668 and efficiency.

669

670 Control programs should be subject to on-going monitoring to ensure that its objectives are
671 being achieved at all stages of the food chain, including production, manufacture,
672 importation, processing, storage, transportation, distribution and trade. The assessment of
673 control programs should cover issues such as:

674

- 675 • Effectiveness of control procedures;
- 676 • Suitability in achieving objectives;

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- 677 • Whether the program has covered relevant stages in the production chain, taking
678 into account risk factors; and
679 • Consideration of emerging trends.
680

681 The national food control system should be regularly reviewed to contribute to the systems
682 improvement, in response to for example, control program data, non-compliances, food
683 safety incidents, scientific research, and history of conformance, external and self-reviews
684 of the system and changes to product risk or the production environment. Such reviews
685 may take place at the level of system or program design or implementation as appropriate.
686

687 The review of food-related non-compliances and/or incidents is an opportunity to learn
688 which can be used as a feedback loop for the planning process by the responsible
689 competent authority. A responsible competent authority should use these opportunities to
690 engage in continuous improvement by assessing an incident from first signal through
691 response and incorporating lessons learned in the design and planning phase.
692

693 Responsible competent authorities should ensure that the response system in regards to
694 food safety and related events is effective, with clear communication between responsible
695 competent authorities, food business operators and consumers. These systems should be
696 periodically tested to ensure that the communication and response systems work
697 effectively.
698

699 Responsible competent authorities and/or national governments should periodically
700 review their surveillance systems with respect to their capacity to recognize emergencies
701 rapidly. Elements of the review may include but not limited to:
702

- 703 • Links between the symptomatic food borne illness surveillance system and the food
704 monitoring system;
705 • Data on the symptoms and effects of chronic exposure to food borne contamination;
706 • Systems to allow rapid detection of contamination incidents to ensure prompt
707 public alerts; and
708 • Links with the veterinary public health sector.
709

710 Particular attention should be paid to early warning mechanisms, coordination between
711 responsible competent authorities, communication to stakeholders and the use and
712 effectiveness of contingency planning. Corrective action should be taken as appropriate.
713

714 A responsible competent authority should utilize information gained from the surveillance
715 of food borne illness as a risk management tool in the operation of their food control
716 systems. Food recalls and adjustments to food production and processing operations,

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717 including emergency responses, may be based on information obtained from food borne
718 disease information and food monitoring systems. Food borne illness and outbreak
719 information should be used to inform the risk analysis activities of responsible competent
720 authorities.

721

722 The results of the evaluations, including the results of self-assessment and audits should
723 also be taken into account in further improvement of the system, and corrective actions
724 should be taken into account as appropriate.

725

726 Any review and continuous improvement of the national food control system should be
727 communicated effectively and efficiently to ensure that clear exchange of information and
728 engagement between all stakeholders in the national food control system occurs. Following
729 any review, all related documentation, procedures and guidance should be reviewed and
730 updated if necessary to reflect any changes.

731

732 Responsible competent authorities should consider the results of monitoring and review
733 processes and take preventive or corrective action or improve the system as appropriate.

734

5. References

736

737 Codex Alimentarius Commission. *Principles and Guidelines for National Food Control*
738 *Systems* (CAC/GL 82-2013)

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