



## Food Safety Officer

## Requirements Guide

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## **Introduction:**

Food safety is a crucial foundation for improving public health and preventing illnesses and food poisoning incidents, which requires the establishment of precise technical criteria and regulatory measures that help ensure the implementation of best practices throughout all stages of the food production chain. To ensure food products comply with the highest standards and to safeguard consumers, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) issues rules and guidelines that build trust in the national food sector. In this context, this guide is issued to clarify the requirements for appointing a Food Safety Officer, given the pivotal and positive impact this role has on ensuring product safety by supervising the implementation of the approved technical and procedural requirements within the facility, in compliance with the regulations and laws issued by the Authority and relevant entities.

## **Purpose of The Guide:**

- Food facilities are required to appoint a Food Safety Officer who is responsible for ensuring food safety and full compliance with the regulations and laws issued by the Saudi Food and Drug Authority and the relevant authorities.
- Defining and clarifying the mechanism for appointing the Food Safety Officer, along with the specific requirements and conditions related to the role.

## **Legal Provisions:**

The Authority has issued the following:

- Articles (6) and (9) of the "Executive Regulations of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority Law" issued by Royal Decree No. (M/6) dated 25/1/1428 AH.
- Articles (4), (27), and (50) of the "Executive Regulation of the Food Law" issued by the Authority's Board of Directors No. (44/4) dated 14/6/1446 AH.

## **Definitions:**

**The Authority:** Saudi Food and Drug Authority.

**Law:** Food Law.

**Regulation:** Executive Regulation of the Food Law.

**Food Facilities:** Food product factories, food distribution centers, and warehouses that fall under the supervision of the Authority according to the National Guide to Economic Activities (ISIC4).

**Food Factory:** A building or buildings whether combined or separate or any apart thereof used for producing, operating, manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of food. As well as storing raw materials and product, it also includes the surrounding area under the factory's control.

**Food Warehouse:** A building or any apart of it specifically designated for storing and preserving food products for a limited period until they are marketed. It operates as an independent facility.

**Food Distribution Center:** A building or part of a building designated for the short-term storage of products before they are distributed. This type of facility is typically used when there is a need to distribute locally produced goods to areas that are far from the main factory.

**Relevant Authorities:** Government authorities that are ensuring food safety, and are tasked with implementing the Food Law and its executive regulation.

**Food Safety Officer:** The licensed person or the person legally authorized by the licensee and responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of the system and the decisions issued under it in the establishment that falls under their responsibility.

**The Licensee:** A normal or legal person who is granted permission to engage in food activity at any stage of the food chain.

**Requirements:** The standards and conditions set by the relevant competent authorities for handling food, which includes protecting public health and ensuring consumer safety.

**Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP):** A systematic approach to identifying, evaluating, and controlling potential hazards by adopting a process that is regularly reviewed and updated based on new developments or implemented measures.

**Good Operational Practice:** Procedures and precautions issued by local or international authorities that must be followed in food handling throughout the food chain to ensure food safety and quality. Such as good manufacturing practices and good agricultural practice, among others.

**Verification of Compliance:** Ensuring that all necessary requirements are met according to the applicable laws and technical regulations.

**Batch:** A specific quantity of food produced under the same conditions.

**Product:** The food item in its final form, ready for human consumption.

**Batch Approval:** The process through which a batch of the food product is approved after completing the manufacturing stage, allowing it to be accepted and marketed.

**Product Approval:** The process by which the food product is approved after transportation, storage, and acceptance, permitting its distribution in the markets.

## Related Documents:

- Food Law and Its Executive Regulations.
- Classification Table of Violations of the Food Law and Its Executive Regulations and the Corresponding Penalties.

## Scope:

This guideline applies to all food facilities subject to the supervision and control of the Authority within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Firstly: Conditions for Appointing the Food Safety Officer in Factories:

1. The candidate must hold a minimum qualification of a diploma in one of the following specializations: Nutrition, Food Science, Food Manufacturing, Manufacturing Technology, Production Engineering, Agricultural Sciences, Chemistry, Microbiology, or any other specialization or qualification accepted by the Authority. Preferably, candidates with relevant practical experience in one of the following fields are also eligible: Food Industry, Quality Control and Food Safety, Food Supply Chain Management, Food Auditing and Inspection, or other related fields.
2. The Food Safety Officer must have completed training in Quality Management Systems and Food Safety (ISO 22000) and the (HACCP) system from an accredited body approved by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation or an equivalent institution. They must also understand the Authority's requirements related to the safety and quality of food products. Some essential skills the Food Safety Officer should possess include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - An understanding of food regulations, quality management systems, and professional responsibilities.
  - Technical knowledge related to the production and storage of food.
  - Familiarity with the principles of manufacturing and supply chain.
  - Possess leadership skills that enable effective handling of situations to make appropriate decisions.
  - Understanding the factors that may impact the safety of food products and the supply chain.
3. The information of the Food Safety Officer must be recorded in the licensing form submitted to the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. If the facility is already licensed and registered, the information must be updated and the Food Safety Officer's details must be added to the facility's account at the Authority. This information should be updated regularly or whenever there are changes related to the responsible person or any significant changes that affect the officer's suitability to perform their duties.

4. A person who meets the criteria can be assigned the duties of the "Food Safety Officer" without necessarily hiring a new employee, provided that their information is recorded with the Authority in accordance with paragraph (3).

**Secondly: Conditions for Appointing the Food Safety Officer in Warehouses and Distribution Centers:**

1. The "Food Safety Officer" must be Saudi national.
2. The job title of the Food Safety Officer must be as specified in the positions published on the Authority's website.
3. The candidate must hold a minimum qualification of a diploma in one of the following fields: Nutrition, Food Science, Occupational Safety and Health, Chemistry, Biology, or any other specialization and qualification accepted by the Authority. Candidates with prior practical experience in the same field are exempt from the qualification requirement.
4. The Food Safety Officer must have received training in food safety management from an accredited institution approved by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, and must understand the Authority's requirements related to the safety and quality of food products. Important skills that the facility officer should possess include:
  - An understanding of food regulations, quality management systems, and professional responsibilities.
  - Technical knowledge related to the storage of food.
  - Familiarity with the principles of manufacturing and supply chain.
  - Possess leadership skills that enable effective handling of situations to make appropriate decisions.
  - Understanding the factors that may impact the safety of food products and the supply chain.
5. The information of the Food Safety Officer must be recorded in the licensing form submitted to the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. If the facility is already licensed and registered, the information must be updated and the Food Safety Officer's details must be added to the facility's account at the Authority. This information should be updated regularly or whenever there are changes related to the responsible person or any significant changes that affect the officer's suitability to perform their duties.
6. A person who meets the criteria can be assigned the duties of the "Officer" without necessarily hiring a new employee, provided that their information is recorded with the Authority in accordance with paragraph (5).

### **Thirdly: Duties of the Food Safety Officer:**

According to the tasks shown in the Executive Regulations of the Food Law, the person in charge of the food facility shall be deemed responsible for the actions of food handlers working in the establishment and its facilities, in accordance with the provisions of the Law and its Regulations. In particular, the person in charge shall be responsible for the following:

- Training food handlers and providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills required in the field of food safety, as well as good operational practices, according to the tasks assigned to each of them.
- Food handlers in the facility who are suspected of having a disease or carrying an infection that may pose a risk to food safety shall not be allowed to work in the food facility, except in accordance with the provisions of the Law and its Regulations.
- Implementing food safety management systems.
- Streamlining the inspector's workflow when conducting regulatory inspections.
- Maintaining the required records and documents as specified by the Authority and providing them upon request.
- Immediate reporting of any food suspected of posing a risk to consumer health or causing food poisoning, and the actions taken to prevent it from reaching the consumer.
- Commitment to implementing tracking, recall, and withdrawal systems.
- Reporting any new activities or changes in the food facility, its products, or its employees, as well as any activities that are discontinued.

### **Fourthly: General Provisions:**

- Food facility must appoint at least one person responsible for the facility and designate a representative in their absence.
- The facility is held responsible and is not exempt from penalties if the person in charge violates the duties assigned to them.
- Fulfilling the documents and requirements issued by the relevant government authorities.

### **Fifthly: Application Procedure and Decision Enforcement:**

#### **Application Procedure:**

- Food facilities are required to register the information of the person responsible for the establishment with the authority. This person, referred to as the "Food Safety Officer" is classified administratively by the authority according to a set of specified tasks and duties. It is not necessary for this title to exactly match the actual job title held within the facility. This responsibility may be assigned to individuals with other job titles that align with the nature of the tasks, such as quality-

related positions or similar roles, provided there is full compliance with the duties and responsibilities outlined in this guide during the specified enforcement period mentioned above.

- The authority reviews the application and submitted documents to ensure the facility's compliance with the requirements.
- During inspection visits, it is verified that the person responsible for the establishment is fulfilling their job duties, including being present at the facility and providing the necessary records and documents specified by the authority upon request.
- Any violation of the requirements outlined in this guide, or failure to appoint a responsible person for the establishment, will result in the application of the official penalties stipulated in the schedule of violations and corresponding sanctions, in accordance with the Food Law and its Executive Regulations.

#### **Decision Enforcement:**

- All food facilities are required to begin the process of appointing a Food Safety Officer during a gradual grace period, starting from the date this guide is published on the website of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. After this period ends, the requirements outlined in this guide will become fully mandatory and enforceable.
- The requirements of the guide will be implemented gradually for food facilities as follows:
  - **Large Facilities:** Food facilities with (250) employees or more must begin implementing the requirements of the guide and comply with the appointment of a Food Safety Officer within (6) months from the date of the guide's publication.
  - **Medium, small, and micro Facilities:** Food facilities with fewer than (250) employees must begin implementing the requirements of the guide and comply with the appointment of a Food Safety Officer within (1) year from the date of the guide's publication.

For more information, to ask questions, and to provide comments and suggestions, please visit the website

[Saudi Food and Drug Authority](http://www.sFDA.gov.sa)