

Competency and training for dairy manufacturers

A competent, well-trained workforce is essential for the manufacture of safe food.

The Food Standards Code requires owners of dairy manufacturing premises to ensure that employees' can demonstrate competency in skills and knowledge in food safety and food hygiene matters. Furthermore, each manufacturer's food safety programs (FSPs) must address staff competency by describing the training requirements for all employees performing operations that impact on food safety, and recording the details of all training undertaken.

To be most effective, training should be relevant to the workplace, regularly repeated or updated, and verified that the trainee has understood and adopted the learnings.

Who needs training?

At a minimum, any employee involved in the manufacture of dairy products needs to have an understanding of personal hygiene requirements and practices that may lead to contamination of product and the growth of microorganisms. This applies specifically to:

- new employees
- employees undertaking new tasks
- non-production workers such as: managers, maintenance and quality assurance staff.

Occasionally, other personnel such as tradesmen, suppliers, auditors or other visitors, will enter production areas. Although these personnel should not come into contact with product contact surfaces or exposed product, it is still important that they have an understanding of their potential



to compromise food safety. A basic food safety induction training procedure is a good way to address this issue.

What training is required?

The Code does not specify the type of training required. It is up to each manufacturer to identify what skills and competencies are required, based on an assessment of:

- the skills and knowledge required for the job or specific tasks
- the current skill level or experience of individual employees
- employees' education level, literacy or English proficiency.

Training methods available

Not all staff need formal training in food safety, but they must understand food safety and hygiene practices, and there must be enough competent personnel to supervise the production and handling of dairy product in a safe and hygienic manner. Training methods may include the following:

- **Internal**
 - Induction/on-the-job training for new employees.
 - Mentoring or training delivered by experienced employees.
 - Training delivered on-site by a consultant or training provider.
- **External**
 - Formal training and assessment against units of competence obtained through a registered training organisation (RTO) – from targeted short courses through to formal qualifications.
 - Use of an external training provider (for example, chemical companies, or equipment suppliers).
 - Attendance at food safety training courses or dairy industry association seminars.
 - On-line or e-learning training through RTOs.



Proof of competency

Formal staff training should be followed up with a workplace assessment to prove competence: this requires employees to demonstrate required food safety knowledge and the practical application of these skills in the workplace. Management support for the development of competence is essential for a successful training outcome.

Training records

All manufacturers licensed with DFSV must maintain a record of all the food safety training received by employees as part of their food safety program.

Choosing a trainer or training course

The [National Centre for Dairy Education Australia](#) (NCDEA) is the Australian dairy industry's leading provider of education and training, with a range of dairy industry specific training courses. Courses extend from Certificate I through to Advanced Diploma programs and may provide pathways to degree level qualifications.

NCDEA operates through a national alliance of partner RTOs. In Victoria this partnership is with Goulburn-Ovens TAFE (GOTAFE).

Courses of relevance to dairy manufacturing fall under the training package [FDF10 – Food Processing](#)

A useful checklist when selecting an RTO is available on the [Victorian Skills Gateway](#) website.

Funding assistance

Depending on the type of training undertaken, some form of Federal or State government funding assistance may be available. Check with the training provider about eligibility or go to the [Victorian Skills Gateway](#) website.

Key points to consider

- Staff training is essential to ensure food hygiene and safe food handling practices are understood and applied.
- Training should be relevant to each individual's role within the manufacturing process.
- Training can be provided in different formats.
- Successful training should result in employees being able to demonstrate the appropriate skills required to perform their job competently.
- Everyone involved in the manufacture of dairy products must have an understanding of personal hygiene requirements and safe food handling practices.

References

Dairy Food Safety Victoria, [Guidelines for food safety: Dairy food manufacturers](#), DFSV, Melbourne, 2002.

Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code – [Standard 3.2.2 – Food Safety Practices and General Requirements](#) (Australia Only), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2012

Food Standards Australia New Zealand, [Food Safety Programs – A guide to Standard 3.2.1](#), Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2007.

The Victorian Department of Health's free on-line learning program, [Do Food Safely](#) covers safe food handling techniques

Further information

Further food safety technical information is available at www.dairysafe.vic.gov.au

Or contact Dairy Food Safety Victoria on **(03) 9810 5900** or info@dairysafe.vic.gov.au

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