

Food Import Compliance Agreement (FICA) Requirements Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide food importers with guidance on documented food safety and compliance system (FSCS) requirements for a Food Import Compliance Agreement (FICA).

This information is intended as a guide only, to assist importers in developing a documented FSCS.

General guidance

A documented FSCS for a FICA should be clear and concise to facilitate effective implementation and audit.

To achieve this objective, the FSCS could:

- use tables, diagrams and other forms of easily understood instructions.
- group sections together rather than scatter references throughout the manual.
- cross reference sections thoroughly, particularly where monitoring forms and records are concerned.
- identify forms and records with a title or document number which is quoted whenever the form is referred to in the manual.
- clearly label flow charts, diagrams, tables and checklists for easy reference.

To facilitate amendments, all FSCS manuals could:

- be prepared in loose leaf form.
- have a version number and date on each page, with the page number identifying the total number of pages in each section.
- include a table of contents.
- include a table to record each amendment that is made and the details of what was changed with the new version number or date of effect indicated.

A well structured manual will assist all parties, being easier for the importer to use and for audit purposes.

The FICA application form includes a FSCS self assessment checklist that has been prepared to assist an importer ensure their FSCS is compliant with the FICA requirements. Importers must ensure that their FSCS covers all the essential requirements before submitting an application to the department to enter into a FICA.

Suggested structure for a food management system

The FICA requirements for a FSCS are based on *AS ISO 22000:2005 (Food safety management systems - Requirements for any organization in the food chain)*. Reviewing the detail in this standard may assist importers in addressing the FICA requirements. When developing or amending a FSCS manual consider structuring the manual in a manner that is easy to navigate and identify where to find the relevant information being sought.

The following structure is suggested in accordance with the FICA requirements:

Management practices

- Management commitment to the system

- Scope of products to be covered
- Organisational structure
- Roles and responsibilities of key staff
- Management review procedure
- Staff training procedure
- Overview of the food management system

Resource management

- Pest control
- Maintenance and cleaning procedures
- Site security

Document and data control

- Document control procedure
- Control of records
- Record retention

Food safety and compliance assessment

- Identify food types
- Relevant food standards
- Product specifications
- Product labelling
- Analysis of food safety risks
- Verification activity

Manufacturer assurance

- Assessment of the manufacturer's systems
- Verification activity
- Assessment of Australian third party providers for warehousing and storage

Verification

- On arrival check – including product testing
- Internal audit procedure

Process control

- Purchasing
- Shipping and storage
- Clearance of goods
- Traceability
- Assistance to the department

Control of noncompliance

- Corrective and preventative actions
- Handling of noncompliant food
- Food recall

Notification requirements

- Notification of notifiable events to the department
- Food subject to department notifications

Warehouses under FICA

Only warehouses where imported food is first received and dealt with by the importer are included under a FICA. Other storage facilities do not need to be listed under a FICA. Warehouses listed under a FICA may be under the control of the importer or managed by a third party logistics provider.

Multiple warehouses can be included under a FICA; however one location must be nominated as the primary warehouse. All other warehouses are termed non-primary locations. All relevant records and key staff must be located at the primary warehouse. Where the importer is not the occupier of the primary warehouse, a combination of the head office and a designated warehouse will make up the primary warehouse location.

The department requires the applicant to list the location of all the warehouses that will be used to receive imported food in the FICA application form.

Consignments of imported food that are delivered directly to a client's warehouse in Australia can be included under a FICA, subject to the importer demonstrating how such arrangements will comply with the FICA requirements.

Further assistance

If you require further information please contact the following food safety auditors:

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Phone: 03 8318 6954

or by mail to: Director

Imported Food

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