A Food Recall Plan - Do I Need One?

Food manufacturers and small processors, wholesalers and importers are required by law to have a documented food recall plan to effectively deal with unforseen food safety problems. Does your business have one? Have you considered the risk to your brand and reputation should an unsafe food product reaches the market place?

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) defines a food recall as 'an action taken to remove from distribution, sale and consumption, food which may pose a health and safety risk to consumers'.

A food recall plan should be part of your company's risk management strategy in order to better manage business risks should unsafe food be distributed into the market place.

FSANZ has provided the food industry with a Food Recall Protocol to assist in developing a food recall plan. Visit www.foodstandards.gov.au

To achieve total compliance and effectively manage your business risk you should develop and implement systems to facilitate **traceability** and recall in the event of a food safety problem. Traceability means the tracking of a food product for human consumption through all stages of production, processing and distribution. Undertaking a mock recall to test your procedures makes good business sense.

Your recall plan should identify:

- the membership, roles and responsibilities of key personnel and contact details (recall committee)

- contact details of the FSANZ Recall Officer, State and Territory Action Officers, Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Ministers

- arrangements for stopping the sale and distribution of the product

- informing the public

- developing a public relations campaign to inform and reassure

- retrieving the product and assessing the cause and safe disposal

- the process for developing a plan to eliminate the cause

Traceability records include supplier identification, production and distribution records for a specific batch of product. It should be orderly, properly maintained and easily retrievable.

Consumers and regulators demand food that is safe for human consumption. If you are the business owner, a manager or the quality assurance officer you must ensure you have sound food safety systems in place to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the continuous improvement process and to minimise business risk.