

# **Implementation Support Handbook for Food Safety Culture, Edition 1.0**

**Japan Food Safety Management Association  
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# BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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In recent years, incidents affecting food safety have continued to occur, including foreign material contamination, deliberate acts of sabotage, and food fraud, in addition to foodborne illnesses caused by deficiencies in hygiene management. These incidents directly threaten consumer safety and confidence, and their impact also extends to business continuity and brand value. To address such risks, it is essential not only to operate a Food Safety Management System, but also to establish an organizational climate rooted in the organization's values, beliefs, and day-to-day behaviors—namely, a Food Safety Culture. Even when a Food Safety Management System is in place, incidents may still occur if it is not effectively put into practice in day-to-day operations.

. In other words, the strength of the system depends on the strength of the culture that supports it. The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) defines Food Safety Culture as follows:

Shared values, beliefs and norms that affect mindset and behavior toward food safety in, across and throughout an organization.

Through the embedding of Food Safety Culture, employees are able, in their day-to-day activities, to proactively identify and share abnormalities and threats, prevent misconduct, and make decisions that prioritize food safety as a matter of course. Such a culture fosters trust among consumers, the market, and business partners, and contributes to the delivery of safe and trusted food.

This Handbook is a support tool designed to help organizations systematically implement, maintain, and improve Food Safety Culture in line with the JFS-C Standard and related guidelines, from top management to frontline employees. It has been developed with the aim of fostering a value system in which food safety is given the highest priority.

# 1. REQUIREMENTS

## JFS-C version 3.2 | FSM 2 Top Management Commitment and Food Safety Culture

### Requirements

Top management shall demonstrate evidence of its commitment to establish direction, engage personnel, and provide sufficient resources to maintain a positive food safety culture and develop and continuously improve food safety management system shall be provided.

The organization shall establish, implement and maintain an assessment plan to identify areas for improvement to drive a positive behavior in its food safety culture. This assessment plan shall include, at a minimum, communicating with employees, responding to Kaizen suggestions, training to improve food safety, and assessing the performance of food safety activities.

And top management shall ensure that all personnel demonstrate a clear commitment to safe food production and handling.

### Concepts, specific examples

1. Top management is responsible for maintaining a positive food safety culture and for establishing, implementing, maintaining and continually improving the food safety management system, and demonstrates its commitment to establishing direction, engaging personnel and providing sufficient resources through the implementation of the following:
  - 1) Develop a food safety policy.
  - 2) Communicate to employees in a timely manner the importance of compliance with laws, standards, social norms, and rules set by the organization.
  - 3) Review the food safety management system in a timely manner.
  - 4) Provide necessary resources including human resources in a timely manner.
  - 5) Ensure that employees are aware of factors that can influence food defense and food fraud risks. To this end, establish and maintain a system that allows the organization to constantly obtain the following information.
    - All related laws
    - Scientific and technological developments
    - Industry code of practice
    - Other information on food safety and product quality issues, etc.
  - 6) Engage, direct, and support employees to contribute to food safety effectiveness.
  - 7) Set business goals that support food safety.
  - 8) Provide opportunities and means for all employees involved in food safety to provide the organization with potential food safety improvements they discover. (Responding to “Suggestions for improving food safety from employees” listed in “FSM 27.”)
  - 9) Other matters necessary for the establishment, implementation and maintenance of food safety management systems.

2. In order to promote improvements through the food safety management system, the organization shall establish, implement and maintain an assessment plan to identify areas for improvement to promote positive action regarding the food safety culture that the top management commits to. The following are examples of the elements. (5 dimensions)
  - 1) Clarify the vision and mission.

Is food safety integrated into your business strategy? (including providing resources and other support).

Does the company provide direction and objective goals to employees and clearly state what is expected of them?

Does it provide messaging with leadership to employees?
  - 2) Conduct outreach to the people.

Have the necessary stakeholders been clarified and the governance structure clarified?

Do you communicate with employees on site? (e.g., by holding meetings)

Is there an organization in place for learning and training?

Does the company have an evaluation system (incentives, rewards, recognition, etc.) for actions taken by employees?
  - 3) Consistency.

Is the top management taking the responsibility seriously as the person who is ultimately responsible for the company?

Are employees' performances properly evaluated?

Are all processes kept in writing?
  - 4) Adaptability.

Do they demonstrate food safety expectations while understanding the personal cultural differences of each employee?

Does the company provide prompt feedback on employee offers?

Is the business model appropriately changed to manage risks and solve problems?
  - 5) Recognize hazards and risks.

Does the company provide risk prevention education, such as by providing basic hazard information?

Are employees involved in activities to prevent near misses?

Are hazards verified when they occur and are risks communicated?

\*The Food Communication Project (FCP) site on the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries website (see link below) is also a useful reference.

<https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/fcp/index.html>
3. Fundamental to a well-functioning food safety management system is the establishment and maintenance of a positive food safety culture that recognizes the importance of the actions of all employees involved in providing safe and appropriate food. Therefore, top management shall ensure that all personnel demonstrate a clear commitment to safe food production and handling. Reference examples are as follows.

(Reference case)

- Personal commitments such as conducting thorough visual checks of the manufacturing process after washing/cleaning and before the start of manufacturing in order to prevent contamination by foreign matter. etc.
- Signatures in the record after food safety training at the time of joining the organization or at morning meetings, etc.
- Confirmation of commitment during food safety performance assessment, etc.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION STEPS .

The implementation and fostering of Food Safety Culture can be achieved through a variety of approaches.

The following presents, as one example, a method for fostering Food Safety Culture in accordance with the PDCA cycle.

### 2.1 Plan

Objective: To share the Food Safety Policy throughout the organization and establish a practical plan for fostering Food Safety Culture.

Key points for each role

Role	Key points
Top Management	As the party responsible for the policy, clearly demonstrate its significance and priority.
Leaders	As those responsible for implementation of the plan, translate it into a form that can be carried out effectively in daily practice.
Operators	Understand their roles within the scope of their own work and participate in the planning process.

Specific implementation activities

Activity	Purpose / Key points
Establishment of the Food Safety Policy	Demonstrate a clear policy based on awareness of the social responsibility to protect the safety of food.
Setting evaluation indicators	Establish evaluation indicators that enable the organization's current status to be assessed objectively.
Planning	Develop a plan to share and embed awareness of food safety throughout the organization.
Development of the education system	Develop an education plan that focuses not only on knowledge, but also on fostering awareness and attitude.
Securing resources	Prepare the necessary personnel, equipment, budget, and information.
Promoting employee involvement	Establish a system that enables employees to participate proactively.

## Implementation Support Handbook for Food Safety Culture,

### 2.2 Do

Objective: To ensure that the intent of the plan and the expected outcomes are understood, and that all personnel engage with a sense of ownership.

Key points for each role

Role	Key points
Top Management	Serve as a role model in action and demonstrate ongoing commitment.
Leaders	Support implementation in day-to-day operations and remove obstacles.
Operators	Understand the plan and act proactively.

Points to emphasize

Activity	Purpose / Key points
Communication of information	Communicate clearly so that the purpose is accurately understood and translated into action in day-to-day operations.
Collection of opinions	Receive opinions fairly regardless of position, and ensure responsible follow-up.
Implementation of education and training	Include content that fosters not only knowledge acquisition, but also empathy for the pain and satisfaction experienced by consumers.
Putting actions into practice	Act on one's own initiative, with an understanding of the purpose, and recognize the effort as a meaningful contribution.

### 2.3 Check

Objective: To verify the effectiveness of the initiative and clarify its contribution to achieving the policy, as well as identify areas for improvement.

Key points for each role

Role	Key points
Top Management	Take responsibility for the evaluation results and review the policy and resource allocation as necessary.
Leaders	Analyze the situation in day-to-day operations, including their own involvement, as well as the effectiveness of support provided, and indicate directions for improvement.
Operators	Reflect on their own actions and participate in improvement efforts.

Points to emphasize

Purpose / Key points
1) Include in the evaluation the effectiveness of leadership and the management system.
2) Evaluate the degree of involvement of managers in each department in encouraging proactive efforts in day-to-day operations.
3) Do not place undue emphasis on year-on-year comparisons; instead, focus on contribution to achieving the policy.
4) Ensure objectivity and transparency in the evaluation process and eliminate arbitrariness.
5) Use the analysis results for organizational learning and continual improvement.
6) Share the knowledge gained and issues identified with relevant personnel and reflect them in improvement actions.

## 2.4 Act

Objective: To implement effective improvements based on the evaluation results.

Key points for each role

Role	Key points
Top Management	Support the implementation and continuation of improvements from a medium- to long-term perspective, without being overly bound by year-on-year comparisons.
Leaders	Design and implement improvement plans that function effectively at the in day-to-day operations.
Operators	Take ownership of improvements, implement them, and make them part of daily practice.

Points to emphasize

Purpose / Key points
1) Do not make surpassing past performance an objective in itself; prioritize achievement of the policy.
2) Based on the plan and evaluation results, implement effective improvement measures suited to the operational environment.
3) Implement improvements as an organizational effort rather than relying on individuals.
4) Carry out improvements on a continual basis and use them to embed food safety awareness throughout the organization.

### 3. EVALUATION INDICATORS

By documenting initiatives related to Food Safety Culture and sharing them within the organization, progress and the results of improvement efforts can be monitored. In evaluation, it is important not merely to track numerical results, but to confirm that each employee understands the importance of food safety and the behaviors expected of them, and reflects this understanding in their daily work. This helps ensure that the culture becomes firmly embedded throughout the organization. Examples of methods for evaluating Food Safety Culture are provided below.

#### Example 1: Evaluation Based on Five Dimensions

Method: Responding to questions using an evaluation scale (e.g. a five-point scale)

Dimension	Item	Example question (e.g. five-point scale)
1) Vision and Mission	Is it embedded in management?	Does top management communicate the importance of food safety?
	Are objectives and goals clearly communicated?	Do employees understand their role in food safety?
	Communication from top management	Does top management regularly communicate messages on food safety?
2) Engagement with People	Clarification of responsibilities	Are the roles of responsible persons and committees clearly defined?
	Communication	Is there an environment in which employees can express their opinions easily?
	Education and training	Are there opportunities for employees to learn about food safety?
	Evaluation and incentives	Are positive behaviors and improvement efforts recognized?
3) Consistency	Top management accountability	Does management respond appropriately when problems occur?
	Employee evaluation	Are daily food safety practices reflected in employee evaluation?
	Documentation	Are procedures and responses documented and recorded?
4) Adaptability	Responding to cultural differences	Are explanations adapted to suit a diverse workforce?
	Feedback	Are opinions responded to and addressed promptly?
	Problem-solving	Are response methods adjusted when problems arise?
5) Hazard and Risk Awareness	Education on hazard-related information	Do employees understand hazards and preventive measures?
	Prevention of near misses	Are near misses reported and used for improvement?
	Response when incidents occur	Are root cause investigation and preventive measures against recurrence shared?

### Example 2: Evaluation by Defining Key Focus Areas of Food Safety Culture

#### Key points to emphasize

1. Status of the organizational culture  
Understand the overall atmosphere and values of the organization and confirm the foundation that supports Food Safety Culture.
2. Key elements of Food Safety Culture  
Evaluate the elements necessary to ensure food safety on a continual basis and connect them to day-to-day practice.
3. Understanding the current status against the “desired state”  
Compare the organization’s ideal vision of Food Safety Culture with the current situation, and assess employees’ awareness and behaviors.

#### Examples of how evaluation can be operated in practice

##### Employee awareness survey

- Define the desired state as “a condition in which employees and the company are aligned in the same direction and grow together.”
- Conduct a questionnaire survey once a year for all employees.
- Quantify the results and share them by department. Based on the results, each workplace discusses questions such as “How can we make the workplace easier to work in?” and “How can we enhance motivation and sense of fulfillment?”, and uses the outcomes for improvement.

##### Learning on food safety and quality, and comprehension checks

- Provide e-learning and conduct comprehension tests, with a system that allows employees to retake the test until they pass.
- Passing the test is regarded as evidence that the content has been correctly understood.
- Consolidate the results across all plants and use them to review educational content and improve the level of implementation in day-to-day operations.

##### Awareness survey on Food Safety Culture

- Once a year, in conjunction with training, conduct a questionnaire survey to identify the gap between “the Food Safety Culture the company aims to achieve” and “the current state.”
- Use the results as a basis for considering “which areas are currently insufficient” and “which initiatives should be strengthened.”

### 4. CASE STUDIES

The actions required to build a Food Safety Culture vary widely depending on factors such as the size of the company, the industry sector, and the characteristics of the products handled. The following examples are provided for reference to support consideration within each company.

#### ① Building the Foundation (Organizational Climate, Vision, and Policy)

Case 1: Introducing the use of respectful forms of address such as “-san”

Case 2: Presenting the desired state of Food Safety Culture

Case 3: Embedding food safety awareness through leadership behavior

#### ② Training and Embedding

Case 4: Training that incorporates elements of Food Safety Culture

Case 5: Training that fosters employees’ sense of ownership

Case 6: Guidelines developed with employee participation

Case 7: Clarifying understanding and responsibility through communication of the guidelines, study sessions, and signatures

Case 8: Embedding food safety awareness into daily operations through experiential events

#### ③ Operational Practice and Engagement

Case 9: Promoting active engagement through the collection of opinions, recognition, and feedback

Case 10: Sharing issues through on-site experience, workplace rounds, and meetings

Case 11: Ensuring transparency and trust through record management and a reporting system

Case 12: Embedding awareness through employee-led improvement actions and recognition

Case 13: Daily tasting sessions

Case 14: Installation of suggestion boxes

Case 15: Food safety meetings involving general employees

#### ④ Mechanisms for Evaluation and Improvement

Case 16: Embedding behaviors through food safety objectives, evaluation, and audits

Case 17: Evaluating initiatives for fostering Food Safety Culture

#### ⑤ Pitfalls and Points to Note

Case 18: The consistency of top management’s words, actions, and policy influences Food Safety Culture

Case 19: Pitfalls of overemphasizing KPIs and the number of cases

Case 20: Overly difficult targets can lead to concealment

Case 21: Misunderstanding common rules can lower the level of control

### ① Building the Foundation (Organizational Climate, Vision, and Policy)

#### Case 1: Introducing the Use of “-san” as a Standard Form of Address

The company recommended that employees address one another using the respectful suffix “-san” rather than job titles, and implemented this practice across the entire company.

Explanation:

- The aim was to enable flat and smooth communication without excessive awareness of hierarchy, thereby enhancing psychological safety.
- In the past, efforts to introduce the use of “-san” at the organizational unit level were difficult to sustain. However, implementing the practice company-wide made it easier to embed. As a result, an atmosphere was created in which employees could speak more easily to supervisors and senior personnel, making it easier to raise food safety concerns and questions.

Key points:

- Promote flat communication without undue awareness of hierarchy.
- Company-wide implementation is key to embedding the practice.
- Enhance psychological safety and facilitate consultation and information sharing on food safety matters.

#### Case 2: Presenting the Desired State of Food Safety Culture

One company group presented the desired state of its Food Safety Culture in a single diagram and implemented initiatives to embed this way of thinking throughout the organization.

Explanation:

- The desired state was developed based on the company’s philosophy and tailored to the current situation of the group, with reference to the GFSI Position Paper.
- The mindset and elements that all personnel should acquire were clearly identified, and Food Safety Culture was fostered by encouraging employees to keep them in mind in their daily food safety activities.
- Using a diagram makes the concept easier to understand visually and helps promote its dissemination.

Key points:

- Clarify the desired state based on the company’s philosophy and current situation.
- Identify the mindset and elements that all personnel should acquire.
- Foster the culture by encouraging daily practice with these elements in mind.
- Use diagrams to promote visual understanding and dissemination.

#### Case 3: Embedding Food Safety Awareness through Leadership Behavior

In one department, instructions and attitudes from a strong leader had a significant influence, and employees tended to watch the leader’s reactions rather than act proactively. As a result, they found it difficult to develop voluntary food safety awareness, and food safety mindset had not been sufficiently embedded in daily practice. The leader was therefore instructed to demonstrate

behaviors reflecting a high level of food safety awareness while paying attention to employees' reactions and opinions. Through the leader's exemplary behavior, employees also learned, and efforts were made to create an environment in which food safety awareness could be more easily fostered across the department as a whole.

Explanation:

- When a strong leader is present, employees tend to become dependent and less likely to make their own judgments.
- When leaders demonstrate safety-conscious behavior while taking employees' opinions into account, employees are also more likely to act with safety in mind.
- Establishing a two-way relationship between leaders and employees contributes to fostering Food Safety Culture throughout the department.

Key points:

- Leaders themselves should demonstrate safety-conscious behavior while taking employees' actions and opinions into account.
- Support employees so that they can make food safety judgments on their own rather than relying entirely on the leader.
- Create an environment in which the entire department can more easily maintain food safety awareness.

### ② Training and Embedding

#### Case 4: Training that Incorporates Elements of Food Safety Culture

Training was provided on standard requirements and basic food safety behaviors with the aim of helping employees understand the reasoning behind them. The training materials were presented in a story-based format in which the characters voiced the learners' questions and emotions.

Explanation:

- By providing training in a format with which learners could empathize, the program promoted not merely the acquisition of knowledge but a more essential understanding.
- The training was also provided as an e-learning course four times a year, with a different theme each year, and has been continued on an ongoing basis.
- Even Frontline workers can understand it easily, enabling them to relate food safety mindset to themselves and apply it to their daily judgments and actions.

Key points:

- Emphasize understanding why actions are required.
- Use a story-based format so that learners can study with empathy.
- Promote essential understanding through continuous, phased training.
- Provide learning that leads not only to knowledge, but also to judgment and action.

#### Case 5: Training that Fosters Employees' Sense of Ownership

Based on widely known food safety incidents, training was conducted using small-group work built around the following three questions:

- How do you feel when you see this news?
- Could this also happen with our products?
- What can we do to prevent it?

Through dialogue within the group, employees were encouraged to understand standard requirements and basic behaviors in connection with the purpose and background behind why such actions are necessary, thereby leading to a sense of ownership and concrete improvement actions.

Explanation:

- Putting thoughts into words in relation to a specific theme promoted memorable learning.
- Speaking to others also provided opportunities for employees to express their own views and receive reactions from others.
- By learning from simulated experiences without having to cause an incident in their own company, employees can study a wide variety of cases.

Key points:

- Remember that employees themselves are also consumers, and think from the consumer's perspective.
- In group work, it is important that everyone speaks and expresses their own views.
- The aim is not one-off training, but to build the habit of seeing news in daily life and considering what it would mean for one's own company.
- By envisaging a range of cases, employees can respond appropriately if something does occur.

### **Case 6: Employee-led Development of a Code of Conduct**

To encourage responsible food safety behavior, younger employees took the lead in developing a code of conduct. Executives and managers limited their involvement to a final review. The code covered such areas as compliance with laws and regulations, retention of food safety knowledge, prevention of concealment, and thorough communication.

Explanation:

- When employees take the lead in drafting the code, the content becomes more practical and aligned with actual operations, while also increasing their sense of responsibility.
- By limiting senior management's role to review, it becomes possible to develop a balanced code without being overly influenced by a limited set of opinions.

Key points:

- Have younger employees take the lead in drafting the code so as to foster ownership.
- Limit senior management's involvement to a final review.
- Cover the necessary behavioral norms comprehensively.

### **Case 7: Clarifying Understanding and Responsibility through Communication of the Code, Study Sessions, and Signatures**

To communicate the code of conduct to all employees, study sessions were held. Food safety

specialists were trained and provided education based on science and legal requirements. In addition, e-learning content was created for pre-study, allowing individuals to study and complete tests in advance, and after the study sessions employees signed a declaration of compliance with the code.

Explanation:

- Creating an environment in which everyone can understand the code helps standardize knowledge and foster a sense of responsibility.
- Obtaining signatures clarifies personal responsibility and accelerates the embedding of Food Safety Culture.
- It is important to explain that signatures should not be merely formal, but should be given with understanding of the content and awareness of responsibility.

Key points:

- Provide training and communication to all employees.
- Assure the quality of education through a specialist system.
- Clarify a sense of responsibility through signatures confirming compliance with the code.

### **Case 8: Embedding Food Safety Awareness into Daily Operations through Experiential Events**

One company held an internal event on World Food Safety Day. The event included WHO animations, allergen displays, and presentations of anaphylaxis cases, enabling employees to feel the importance of food safety more directly. Game-like elements such as card games and stamp rallies were also incorporated to provide opportunities for employees to learn while enjoying the experience.

Explanation:

- By using experiential content to show risks concretely, it becomes possible not only to understand rules in the abstract, but also to embed food safety awareness into daily operations.
- When participants experience and understand issues for themselves, they are better able to translate this into safe behavior in daily practice.

Key points:

- Improve interest in and understanding of food safety.
- Embed awareness into daily work.
- Make improvements by incorporating participants' feedback.

### **③ Operational Practice and Engagement**

#### **Case 9: Promoting Active Engagement through the Collection of Opinions, Recognition, and Feedback**

Improvement proposals and issue reports from employees were clearly categorized as feasible, not feasible, or pending, and all were answered without exception. In addition, employees who actively took improvement actions or reported issues were recognized.

### Explanation:

- By responding rather than merely listening, management can gain and maintain employees' trust through actions rather than words, thereby promoting active engagement.
- Recognition naturally reinforces positive behavior and contributes to fostering Food Safety Culture throughout the organization.

### Key points:

- Managers should demonstrate genuine commitment through their actions.
- Always respond to opinions and prevent any omissions in follow-up.
- Encourage improvement actions through recognition.
- Maintain employees' sense of trust.

### **Case 10: Sharing Issues through On-site Experience, Workplace Rounds, and Meetings**

Rule makers experienced operational work directly and then reconstructed the rules. In addition, issues were identified through workplace rounds, and all participants, including both responsible persons and employees, confirmed issues during morning briefings and meetings.

### Explanation:

- Rules can improve both work efficiency and safety when they are developed with a sound understanding of operational realities.
- Eliminating the gap between actual operations and the system makes implementation more realistic and workable.
- Two-way communication through workplace rounds and meetings also helps enhance trust and promote the embedding of Food Safety Culture.

### Key points:

- Develop rules based on an understanding of actual operations.
- Share issues with all personnel through workplace rounds and meetings.
- Promote the embedding of culture through two-way communication.

### **Case 11: Ensuring Transparency and Trust through Record Management and a Reporting System**

To prevent tampering, record management was increasingly systemized, and a mechanism using blockchain technology was introduced to preserve histories in a form that could not be altered and could be viewed by all. Violations of the code could be reported through an independent third-party reporting channel, and violators, including executives, were disclosed and disciplined.

### Explanation:

- Trustworthy culture can be maintained by ensuring transparency and fair handling.
- Preventing concealment increases food safety awareness throughout the organization.

### Key points:

- Manage records through a tamper-proof system.

- Handle reporting and responses to code violations fairly.
- Prevent concealment and ensure trust.

### **Case 12: Embedding Awareness through Employee-led Improvement Actions and Recognition**

A recognition system was introduced to acknowledge employees' small improvements and ideas. Workplace rounds were conducted for inspections and interviews, and environmental improvements such as the installation of boxes for unnecessary items were also implemented. As a result, the annual number of complaints decreased significantly.

Explanation:

- This is an approach designed to make it easier for employees to take actions related to food safety on their own initiative.
- By evaluating improvement actions through recognition and workplace rounds, awareness can be embedded naturally.

Key points:

- Promote proactive improvement and safe behavior.
- Embed awareness through visible initiatives.
- Reflect frontline feedback in continual improvement.

### **Case 13: Daily Tasting Sessions**

Employees were given planned opportunities to taste products every day, separately from in-process tasting or personnel responsible for sensory testing, so that they could directly experience what safety means. By making this part of daily work, food safety awareness becomes a natural habit, and employees become able to notice abnormalities or changes in product quality more quickly.

Explanation:

- When employees actually taste products, they can understand the abstract concept of safety in concrete terms.
- By incorporating this into daily work, it becomes habitual, making it easier to detect small changes and abnormalities and link them to rapid response and improvement.

Key points:

- Conduct the activity in a planned manner, separately from in-process tasting or sensory testing.
- Incorporate it into daily work so that it becomes habitual.
- Share and record insights gained from tasting and use them for improvement.
- Establish a mechanism to notice and report even small changes.

### **Case 14: Installation of Suggestion Boxes**

Suggestion boxes were installed so that employees could easily submit opinions about inconveniences or improvement points noticed in daily work. The collected opinions were reviewed

and addressed promptly, and the results of the responses were posted in list form to show employees that their suggestions were being reflected in improvements.

Explanation:

- Collecting employees' voices broadly helps embed an improvement mindset throughout the organization.
- Prompt responses and sharing of results enable employees to feel that their own actions contribute to organizational improvement, thereby supporting the embedding of Food Safety Culture.
- If suggestion boxes are not an effective means of collecting employees' voices, other practical methods should be considered without being constrained by the format itself.

Key points:

- Establish a mechanism that allows employees to submit opinions easily.
- Respond promptly to collected opinions and share the results in a visible list.
- Draw out employees' improvement awareness and link it to the fostering of Food Safety Culture.

### **Case 15: Food Safety Meetings Involving General Employees**

Food safety meetings were held not only with managers, but also with general employees.

Explanation:

- Providing opportunities to hear frontline feedback across departments enables improvements that reflect actual conditions to proceed more quickly.
- When general employees participate, it becomes easier to notice operational issues, while the ability to implement improvements and the sense of unity across the organization are also strengthened.

Key points:

- Hold meetings regularly and share agendas and materials in advance.
- Clearly define the flow of "operational proposal → implementation → reporting" in meetings.
- Provide feedback on the results to all personnel and make the improvement cycle visible.

## **④ Mechanisms for Evaluation and Improvement**

### **Case 16: Embedding Behaviors through Food Safety Objectives, Evaluation, and Audits**

Individual food safety objectives were shared and documented at the beginning of the period and evaluated at the end of the period. The development of culture at each site and the allocation of resources were confirmed through audits, and the results were reported to management.

Explanation:

- Combining objective setting, evaluation, and audits helps embed employees' behaviors while maintaining Food Safety Culture across the organization.

- Reporting evaluation and audit results to management makes it possible to align awareness company-wide and allocate resources appropriately.

### Key points:

- Embed behaviors through the sharing and evaluation of individual objectives.
- Confirm the maintenance of culture and the appropriateness of resource allocation through audits.
- Promote company-wide alignment of awareness through reporting to management.

### **Case 17: Evaluating Initiatives for Fostering Food Safety Culture**

The status of day-to-day initiatives for fostering Food Safety Culture, such as employee engagement, improvement activities, workplace rounds, meeting participation, submission of opinions, and recognition systems, was evaluated regularly. Questionnaires and self-assessments were used to confirm changes in employees' awareness and behavior, and the results were fed back to management and operational managers.

### Explanation:

- By making the initiatives themselves subject to evaluation, it becomes possible to assess not only rule compliance and outcomes, but also the degree of employees' proactive involvement and the extent to which the culture has been embedded.
- Clarifying improvement points through evaluation and reflecting them in training, recognition, and meeting management leads to continual fostering of the culture.

### Key points:

- Use questionnaires and self-assessments to confirm the status of daily activities and engagement.
- Feed evaluation results back to managers and top management.
- Reflect the results in improvement activities and training plans.
- Capture changes in employee-led behavior and awareness both quantitatively and qualitatively.

## ⑤ Pitfalls and Points to Note

### **Case 18: The Consistency of Top Management's Words, Actions, and Policy Influences Food Safety Culture**

The president of one company established a policy to introduce Food Safety Culture. However, in day-to-day operations, attitudes prioritizing profit and efficiency over food safety were conspicuous, and employees came to distrust the policy.

### Explanation:

- Simply setting out a policy is not enough. If management behavior and operational responses are not aligned with it, employees' understanding and trust cannot be obtained.
- For Food Safety Culture to be embedded, it is essential that top management's actions are consistent with the policy.

### Key points:

- Management must demonstrate “food safety first” not only in words, but also in daily instructions and decisions.
- Create an environment in which employees can prioritize food safety without hesitation in daily practice.
- Top management should participate in workplace rounds and improvement activities and embody the mindset personally.

### **Case 19: Pitfalls of Overemphasizing KPIs and the Number of Cases**

When the number of improvement proposals was linked to KPIs and the evaluation system, employees began submitting proposals with priority on quantity. The original objectives of improvement and raising safety awareness were pushed aside, and motivation also declined.

### Explanation:

- Focusing only on figures and numbers can undermine ownership and quality.
- In fostering culture, it is important to emphasize the quality of proposals and the extent to which improvements are embedded in daily practice, rather than the number alone.

### Key points:

- Emphasize the quality and feasibility of proposals.
- Confirm whether improvements are actually embedded in daily practice.
- Establish mechanisms through which employees can feel the significance of making proposals.

### **Case 20: Overly Difficult Targets Can Lead to Concealment**

Because a zero-complaint target was set, employees feared that their performance evaluation would be lowered, and false reporting became widespread.

### Explanation:

- Targets that cannot realistically be achieved hinder honest reporting.
- A mechanism is needed that encourages honest reporting and links issues to improvement, rather than driving concealment.

### Key points:

- Share operational realities accurately.
- Establish an environment in which employees can report honestly.

### **Case 21: Misunderstanding Common Rules Can Lower the Level of Control**

In one company that established common rules nationwide, a site that had been able to achieve a high level of operation suited to its own conditions came to misunderstand the new rules, thinking that it might have been doing too much. As a result, its level of control declined and the risk of incidents increased.

### Explanation:

- Common rules need to be understood and recognized in a manner suited to the realities of each site.
- If sites look only at the common activities and come to think that “we may be doing too much,” a wave of lowering control levels may occur, creating the risk of collapse of the culture that has been fostered.

### Key points:

- Communicate the intent and purpose of the rules carefully.
- Ensure that the rules are understood in connection with day-to-day activities.
- Respect site-specific ingenuity and promote the embedding of culture.

### 5. Q&A

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#### ① Questions Related to Frontline Personnel, New Employees, and Short-Term Workers

Q1: When hiring foreign workers, what actions are required from managers?

Q2: When employing part-time workers with very short working hours (e.g. only one hour), what should managers do?

Q3: When short-term part-time workers are frequently replaced and training cannot keep up, what should be done?

Q4: What are the basic food safety principles that new employees should be made aware of first?

#### ② Questions Related to Managers and Frontline Supervisors

Q5: What should be done if managers do not fully understand the importance of food safety?

Q6: What should be done if there are large differences in food safety awareness among employees and this may lead to problems?

Q7: What should be done if daily operations are busy and training or checks tend to be postponed?

Q8: What should be done if equipment and resources are limited and investment is difficult?

Q9: If a minor violation is observed during operations, how can it be improved without causing friction?

Q10: What should be done if past improvement measures and training are not retained and tend to be forgotten?

#### ③ Questions Related to Top Management and the Organization as a Whole

Q11: If there is a gap in awareness between top management and frontline employees, how can it be aligned?

Q12: How should the same Food Safety Culture be communicated to both top management and frontline employees?

Q13: Should training content and expectations differ between managers and general employees?

Q14: If roles and responsibilities differ by position, how can the culture be consistently aligned and embedded?

Q15: If there are multiple departments or plants, how can the same standards be maintained across the company?

Q16: What is necessary to embed Food Safety Culture over the long term?

Q17: How does Food Safety Culture mature and become embedded at the operational level?

Q18: How long does it take to foster Food Safety Culture?

Q19: How should best practices for Food Safety Culture be established?

#### ④ Questions Related to External Parties and Stakeholders

Q20: If a deficiency is found at the time of delivery, how can prompt reporting be ensured?

Q21: If an abnormality or complaint occurs, what should be prioritized for a rapid response at the operational level?

Q22: What is “Just Culture”?

Q23: What is psychological safety, and what should be done at the operational level?

### ① Questions Related to Frontline Personnel, New Hires, and Short-Term Workers

#### **Q1: When hiring foreign workers, what actions are required from managers?**

**A1:** Managers should communicate the fundamentals of food safety in a way that can be understood by everyone, taking differences in language and culture into account. Manuals and notices should be multilingual, and practical on-site instruction should be provided in addition to classroom-style training. A workplace atmosphere should also be created in which questions and consultation are easy, together with a system for observing behavior and providing feedback.

Key points:

- Training and communication that take language and cultural differences into account
- Ensure understanding through classroom training plus on-site practice
- Create an environment that accepts opinions and questions, and confirms and improves behavior

#### **Q2: When employing short-hour workers (e.g. a one-hour part-time worker), what should managers do?**

**A2:** Managers should ensure that the basic behaviors required for food safety are thoroughly taught. Important points to be checked before work should be communicated verbally and through notices, and procedures should be confirmed together on site. A system should also be established so that someone is always available to support and monitor the worker during operations.

Key points:

- Thoroughly enforce basic behaviors even for short working hours
- Confirm procedures together on site and monitor behavior
- Prevent hazards and mistakes through a support system

#### **Q3: When short-term part-time workers are frequently replaced and training cannot keep up, what should be done?**

**A3:** Prepare short training sessions focused only on the most critical food safety behaviors. Enable self-study through manuals, notices, and videos, and have experienced personnel provide instruction while confirming actual behavior on site.

Key points:

- Prepare short training focused on critical behaviors
- Enable self-study through manuals, notices, and videos
- Have experienced personnel provide instruction and confirmation

#### **Q4: What are the basic food safety principles that new employees should first be made aware of?**

**A4:** Focus first on the basic behaviors that must always be followed in daily work. Priority should be given to behaviors directly linked to risk, such as handwashing, sanitization, prevention of cross-contamination, and prevention of foreign material contamination. Other matters should be learned step by step through actual work.

Key points:

- Focus on the basic behaviors required in daily operations
- Prioritize behaviors directly linked to risk
- Learn other matters progressively through practical work

### ② Questions Related to Managers and Frontline Supervisors

**Q5: What should be done if managers do not fully understand the importance of food safety?**

**A5:** It is essential that managers understand food safety as something directly relevant to themselves. Top management and handbook users should present examples and messages, and establish mechanisms that allow managers to become involved in operational guidance and improvement activities.

Key points:

- Managers should understand food safety as their own responsibility
- Top management and handbook users should present examples and messages
- Create mechanisms that enable managers to participate in frontline guidance and improvement

**Q6: What should be done if there are large differences in food safety awareness among employees and this may lead to problems?**

**A6:** Establish common behavioral standards and confirm and share them in day-to-day operations. Employees with high awareness should be used as role models, and differences should be adjusted through reflection and discussion.

Key points:

- Clarify behavioral standards that everyone must follow
- Use highly aware employees as role models
- Reduce differences through reflection and discussion
- Ensure the involvement of top management and leaders

**Q7: What should be done if daily operations are busy and training or confirmation tends to be postponed?**

**A7:** Integrate training and confirmation into daily operations. Use methods that can be implemented in a short time, such as morning briefings, pre-operation checks, and checklists, and have managers take the lead in providing guidance.

Key points:

- Integrate training and confirmation into daily operations
- Prepare methods that can be implemented in a short time
- Managers should lead by example in practice and guidance

### **Q8: What should be done if equipment and resources are limited and investment is difficult?**

**A8:** Address the highest-priority risks first and present methods that can be implemented in day-to-day operations. Improvements should be introduced step by step so that the safety culture can be embedded without overburdening the organization.

Key points:

- Address the highest-priority risks first
- Present methods that can be implemented on site
- Embed the culture through phased improvement

### **Q9: If a minor violation is observed during operations, how can it be improved without causing friction?**

**A9:** Focus on the behavior itself and explain the issue specifically without blaming the person. Show the correct behavior and confirm improvement methods together.

Key points:

- Focus on behavior
- Explain the error and its impact specifically
- Confirm the correct behavior and improvement method together

### **Q10: What should be done if past improvement measures and training are not retained and tend to be forgotten?**

**A10:** Training and improvement should be repeatedly incorporated into daily operations. Top management and leaders should monitor behavior and provide feedback, while practical examples and reflection should be used together in daily practice.

Key points:

- Incorporate training and improvement into daily operations
- Have top management and leaders monitor and provide feedback
- Combine practical examples with reflection

## **③ Questions Related to Top Management and the Organization as a Whole**

### **Q11: If there is a gap in awareness between top management and frontline employees, how can it be aligned?**

**A11:** Clearly communicate policies and expectations, and create opportunities to hear frontline feedback. Awareness can be aligned by presenting behavioral examples and repeating practice and feedback.

Key points:

- Clearly communicate policies and expectations
- Create two-way opportunities to hear frontline feedback
- Deepen understanding through behavioral examples and feedback

- Top management should demonstrate food safety in daily practice

**Q12: How should the same Food Safety Culture be communicated to both top management and frontline employees?**

**A12:** The purpose and expectations should be shared across the entire company. A strategic perspective should be presented to top management, while specific behavioral examples should be presented to frontline employees. Understanding can be aligned through regular two-way exchanges that reflect questions and opinions.

Key points:

- Share the purpose and expectations company-wide
- Present strategy to top management and behavioral examples to frontline employees
- Align understanding and awareness through two-way communication

**Q13: Should training content and expectations differ between managers and general employees?**

**A13:** Training content and expectations should be adjusted according to roles. Managers should focus on guidance and improvement, while employees should focus on specific daily behaviors. However, the basic principles and culture should be understood commonly by all.

Key points:

- Adjust training content and expectations according to roles
- Managers should focus on guidance and improvement
- Employees should focus on daily behaviors
- Basic principles and culture should be shared by all

**Q14: If roles and responsibilities differ by position, how can the culture be consistently aligned and embedded?**

**A14:** Present common principles and behavioral standards, and clarify the specific responsibilities of each position. A shared understanding of the culture should be maintained through reflection and sharing.

Key points:

- Present common principles and behavioral standards to all
- Clarify the roles and expectations of each position
- Maintain common understanding through reflection and sharing

**Q15: If there are multiple departments or plants, how can the same standards be maintained across the company?**

**A15:** Common policies and procedures should be documented and communicated. Responsible persons should be assigned in each department, with regular confirmation and sharing. Gaps between local rules and common standards should be corrected, and top management should confirm consistency on an ongoing basis.

Key points:

- Document and communicate common policies and procedures
- Assign responsible persons in each department for confirmation and sharing
- Correct gaps between local rules and common standards
- Have top management confirm consistency continuously

### Q16: What is necessary to embed Food Safety Culture over the long term?

**A16:** Habit formation and continual involvement are required. Top management should demonstrate the right attitude, safe behaviors should be repeated in daily work, and training and improvements should be reviewed regularly.

Key points:

- Top management should demonstrate food safety in daily practice
- Make safe behaviors habitual in daily operations
- Review training and improvements regularly

### Q17: How does Food Safety Culture mature and become embedded in daily practice?

**A17:** A common understanding that “delivering safe food is important” should continue to be shared across the company. It is important to create an environment in which employees understand the connection between their work and food safety, and can think and act for themselves.

#### Food Safety Culture Maturity Model (3 stages):

The degree to which awareness and behavior related to food safety are embedded within an organization can be organized into the following three levels.

Level	Workplace atmosphere and behavior	Characteristics	Outcomes	Challenges
1. Formal compliance stage	Rules are seen simply as something that must be followed. Handwashing is imitated from posters without real understanding. When trouble occurs, employees wait for instructions from their supervisor.	—	—	Although the rules may appear to be followed, people cannot act effectively when needed. The meaning of safety is not deeply understood, making improvement difficult.

## Implementation Support Handbook for Food Safety Culture,

2. Thinking and practicing independently stage	Employees understand why a procedure is necessary and act accordingly. They conduct inspections and checks proactively and share what they notice. Reports begin to include both the cause and how to improve.	Rules become habitual, and speaking up to others becomes more active. Barriers within the organization gradually decrease, making proactive action possible.	—	Coordination between teams and alignment of values across the organization remain future challenges.
3. Culture-embedded stage	Food safety is understood and discussed by everyone as something natural. Improvement ideas and proposals are shared beyond departmental boundaries. When trouble occurs, information circulates quickly and everyone concerned can respond.	There is a culture of learning from and cooperating with one another across levels and departments. Small successes are also shared and recognized, creating a positive flow.	Incidents and problems decrease, and the ability to prevent them in advance is strengthened. Both new and experienced employees can explain their own roles and their significance.	—

### Q18: How long does it take to foster Food Safety Culture?

**A18:** Creating a state in which everyone in the organization shares appropriate values and beliefs requires a certain number of years and cannot be achieved in the short term. Persistent and continual efforts are important.

#### Key points:

- It cannot be formed in a short period
- The goal is to align the values, beliefs, and behaviors of everyone in the organization
- Continual and persistent efforts are required

### Q19: How should best practices for Food Safety Culture be established?

**A19:** The cultural foundation should be designed and operated around seven elements rooted in frontline practice. It is important to begin by accumulating small success stories.

## Key points:

- Start not only from abstract principles, but from concrete measures that can be implemented on site
- When frontline workers take the lead, initiatives become rooted in actual operations
- Expand small success stories across the company to accelerate culture building
- Sharing successful experiences strengthens employee ownership and leads to the next improvement action

## Seven practical elements that support the culture

Category	Specific initiatives
Integrity	Capture frontline feedback and provide prompt feedback; Hold sharing meetings among related personnel; Establish organizational support for food safety activities
Resources	Build systems on the premise of collaboration with other departments; Allocate necessary resources in a planned manner
Transparency	Suppress concealment of information and encourage reporting; Introduce reward systems for failures and learning; actively share examples from other industries and internal insights
Gratitude	Make appreciation visible through awards, commemorative gifts, and specialist assignments; Implement a Just Culture that focuses on identifying causes rather than assigning blame
Adaptability	Ensure opportunities for open dialogue based on risk assessment; Conduct program reviews by external experts
Accessibility	Ensure that senior leaders have direct contact with the workplace as the “face of food safety”; Create an environment in which consultation is easy through meetings and one-on-one discussions; Ensure easy access to information
Assessment	Conduct regular self-assessment and peer assessment led by senior leaders; Clearly document the Food Safety Policy and embed it company-wide

## ④ Questions Related to External Parties and Stakeholders

### **Q20: If a deficiency is found at the time of delivery, how can prompt reporting be ensured?**

**A20:** Reporting should be treated as an opportunity for improvement, and communicated as a response action rather than something that results in reprimand. A mechanism should be created that makes reporting easy, and reporting behavior should always be acknowledged with feedback and appreciation.

## Key points:

- Treat reporting as an opportunity for improvement
- Create mechanisms that make reporting easy

- Recognize reporting behavior with appreciation and feedback

### **Q21: If an abnormality or complaint occurs, what should be prioritized for a rapid response in day-to-day operations?**

**A21:** The first priority should be to ensure safety, including prevention of harm and prevention of expansion of the hazard. The scope of the problem should be identified and isolated, and supervisors and related departments should be informed promptly. If initial response procedures are standardized in advance, rapid action becomes possible.

Key points:

- Ensure safety first, including prevention of harm and expansion of the hazard
- Identify and isolate the scope of the problem
- Report promptly to supervisors and related departments
- Standardize initial response procedures

### **Q22: What is “Just Culture”?**

**A22:** It is “a culture in which mistakes are not simply blamed, but their causes are correctly understood and used for improvement.”

Purpose / effects:

- Employees can report mistakes and problems without fear
- The organization as a whole can learn and improve
- The workplace focuses on process improvement rather than blaming individuals

Examples:

- Recognizing rather than punishing a person who reports foreign material contamination
- Learning from failures and sharing improvements to procedures and stronger training

Key points:

- Intentional violations and serious misconduct should still be held accountable
- Negligence and human error should not be punished automatically; instead, recurrence prevention should be considered
- Focus on processes rather than individuals and promote organizational learning

### **Q23: What is psychological safety, and what should be done in day-to-day operations?**

**A23:** The aim is to build “an environment in which people can report mistakes and questions without fear.”

Purpose / effects:

- Employees can act without fear of reporting
- Small problems can be identified and improved at an early stage
- Employee ownership is encouraged

Practical ideas for day-to-day operations:

- Treat reporting not as something to be reprimanded, but as an opportunity for improvement

- Share even small failures and discuss improvement measures
- Recognize those who report and evaluate correct behavior positively

Key points:

- Create an environment in which mistakes can be reported without concealment
- Help employees feel that reporting leads to improvement
- Promote cultural embedding through successful experiences

## 6. REFERENCE INFORMATION AND LINKS

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Japan Food Safety Management Association

<https://www.jfsm.or.jp/>

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF): FCP Food Safety Culture Tool

[https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/fcp/other\\_tools/250331.html](https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/fcp/other_tools/250331.html)

Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI): Position Paper

<https://mygfsi.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GFSI-Food-Safety-Culture-Full-Japanese.pdf>

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