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## FOOD SAFETY STANDARD

PILLAR 1  
BENEFICIAL PRODUCTS



### Commitment

Prevent and eliminate food safety hazards in the company's operations and value chain to ensure safe food for consumers and prevent harms to broader ecosystems.

A sow and her piglets in a piggery.  
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Aligning a company's practices with the SDGs entails preventing and eliminating food safety hazards or foodborne disease (FBDs) and promoting best practices for food safety in their operations, value chain, and the broader ecosystem. Food safety is a cornerstone of food security, particularly for those living in poverty and other vulnerable situations, and is a requisite for a sustainable and equitable food industry. Food safety is also closely linked to food waste,<sup>1</sup> human nutrition and health,<sup>2</sup> and the environment,<sup>3</sup> and therefore, contributes to the achievement of SDGs 2, 3, and 12. Minimizing the incidence of food safety hazards and foodborne illness can also improve economic productivity and human prosperity.

FBDs are illnesses that result from the ingestion of food or beverages with safety hazards. Food safety hazards include anything that can harm the health of consumers and are often classified as biological (e.g., bacteria or parasites), chemical (e.g., heavy metals or pesticides), or physical (e.g., metal fragments or glass shards). Factors that contribute to food hazards include, "improper agricultural practices; poor hygiene at all stages of the food chain; lack of preventive controls in food processing and preparation operations; misuse of chemicals; contaminated raw materials, ingredients and water; and inadequate storage."<sup>4</sup>



A study by the World Health Organization (WHO) found that in 2010 food hazards caused 600 million FBDs and 420,000 deaths.<sup>5</sup> The global burden was 33 million Disability Adjusted Life Years<sup>6</sup> (DALYs), and most of this burden fell on developing countries.<sup>9</sup> Although children under five comprised only 9% of the global population that year, they bore 40% of this burden.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, 97% of foodborne illnesses resulted from biological hazards such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites.<sup>8</sup>

Many FBDs are zoonotic, which means they are transmissible between animals and humans and can result in new emerging diseases and even widespread pandemics. Therefore, many food safety experts increasingly rely on the One Health concept to identify the crucial intersection between human, animal, and ecosystem health, particularly as it relates to the detection and prevention of zoonotic disease through risk assessment methodology.<sup>9</sup>

For food companies, practicing good food safety management practices concerns remaining vigilant over the hygienic and nutritional quality of their products and the presence of potential allergens. It requires implementing proper management systems and methods for labeling, presentation, sampling, and risk analysis.<sup>10</sup> By using their leverage to influence actors in their value chains and the food sector more broadly to adopt more stringent food safety practices, food companies play a vital role in preventing food safety-related impacts and scaling practices for good food hygiene. In doing so, they protect human health, environmental sustainability, food security, and human wellbeing. Increased attention to food safety will improve nutritional outcomes worldwide, produce less waste, and increase food security. In turn, better nutrition and more efficient food systems pay long-term dividends for health, productivity, and economic growth.

#### BOX 6: KEY RESOURCES FOR FOOD SAFETY

- Codex Alimentarius guidelines on General Principles of Food Hygiene: Good Hygiene Practices<sup>11</sup>
- Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) benchmark.<sup>12</sup>
- CFS Principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems.<sup>13</sup>

a. “The overall burden of disease is assessed using the disability-adjusted life year (DALY), a time-based measure that combines years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLLs) and years of life lost due to time lived in states of less than full health, or years of healthy life lost due to disability (YLDs). One DALY represents the loss of the equivalent of one year of full health.” (Source: WHO, “Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs),” 2021, <https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/158>.)



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FOOD SAFETY

**SDG-ALIGNMENT:** THIS STANDARD CONTRIBUTES TO ACHIEVING THE FOLLOWING SDGS:



**SDG 2 – Zero hunger**

**Target 2.1:** By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.



**SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production**

**Target 12.2:** By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

**Target 12.3:** By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

**Target 12.6:** Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

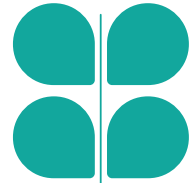
**Target 12.7:** Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.



**SDG 3 – Good health and well-being**

**Target 3.4:** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

**Target 3.9:** By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.



  
**PILLAR**  
**1**

BENEFICIAL PRODUCTS



## STEPS TO MEET THE COMMITMENT

### 1. ADOPT A POLICY AND EMBED IT INTO GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

#### 1.1. ADOPT A POLICY

The board or the most senior level of SDG-aligned companies adopt a policy based on their commitment to respecting the human rights to food and health, including by ensuring food safety across its operations and business relationships. The policy:

- Aligns with and explicitly references the standards listed in Box 7.
- If the national law where a company and its business relationships operate conflicts with international standards, the company defers to the higher standard.

#### BOX 7: INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS ON THE RIGHTS TO FOOD & HEALTH

- Universal Declaration of Human rights, Article 25.<sup>14</sup>
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 11 and 12.<sup>15</sup>
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 5 (e)(iv).<sup>16</sup>
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Articles 11(1)(f), 12, and 14(2)(b).<sup>17</sup>
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24.<sup>18</sup>
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Articles 28, 43(e), and 45(c).<sup>19</sup>
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 25.<sup>20</sup>

#### 1.2. EMBED THE POLICY INTO GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

To embed the policy, SDG-aligned companies:

- Communicate expectations for implementing the policy internally and externally to the workforce, shareholders, subsidiaries' governing bodies, and business relationships, including through contractual terms.
- Integrate the policy into the procurement policy, responsible sourcing policy, contract terms with suppliers, clients, recruitment agencies, and other business relationships in the value chain, and partnerships within and beyond the food sector.<sup>21</sup>
- Integrate the policy into by-laws and other governance documents (i.e., Code of Conduct, Code of Ethics) and its management procedures.<sup>22</sup>
- Ensure their business practices and the incentives they create do not contradict the policy in form or substance.

### 2. ASSESS ACTUAL & POTENTIAL IMPACTS

SDG-aligned companies identify and assess actual or potential impacts on food safety or poor hygiene practices within their business operations and value chains in accordance with Codex standards.<sup>23</sup> To systematically assess actual or potential instances of food safety hazards on an ongoing basis within their operations and value chain, SDG-aligned companies:

- Consider how their business models and common business practices incentivize or facilitate poor food safety protocols, negligence, or introduction of food safety hazards. This includes assessing worker culture, regional waste management and hygiene guidelines, and other potential sources of contamination or negligence characteristic of certain companies' business models (e.g., high volumes of animals in confinement, low-cost production with strict delivery deadlines, or other potential pressure points for food safety).
- Regularly conduct audits of all production facilities or plants along the value chain, especially considering high-risk areas such as where animals are confined, where products require temperature regulation, or where hazardous materials are involved in production. Audits employ the Codex<sup>24</sup> and GFSI standards as benchmarks<sup>25</sup> and require that best practices and technologies are utilized for food safety.
- Engage qualified and credible individual experts and expert organizations in on-site food safety impact assessments, including assessments of suppliers' practices in accordance with Codex standards<sup>26</sup> and periodic testing of the quality and purity of final ingredients and products produced.



- Engage with workers and trade unions to identify areas and activities that present food safety risks in their operations and value chain.
- Cooperate at a sector-wide and, where relevant, cross-sectoral level with governments, workers, international organizations, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders operating on the ground to identify activities and areas that are high-risk for food safety hazards or food safety breaches.

### 3. INTEGRATE BY SETTING TARGETS & TAKING ACTION

SDG-aligned companies integrate the findings of their assessments of any actual or potential impacts due to food safety hazards into relevant internal functions and processes by **setting targets** and then **taking action** to align with the standard within set target dates.

#### 3.1. SET TARGETS

SDG-aligned companies set specific time-bound intermediate and long-term targets to eliminate and prevent food safety hazards and implement good food safety management practices that are ambitious enough to contribute significantly to the SDGs' achievement. The intermediate targets are relevant to monitor their continuous improvement and that of their business relationships towards meeting the standard. Where possible, indicators measure outcomes rather than outputs or activities. These targets are tailored to a company's business activities and relationships based on its assessment of the actual and potential impacts on food safety in the company's operations and value chain.

#### 3.2. TAKE ACTION

SDG-aligned companies integrate the findings of their assessments of food safety into relevant internal functions and processes. They take appropriate action to cease, prevent, and mitigate negative impacts. Where a company identifies actual or potential food safety hazards in its value chain, it uses and increases its leverage to prevent, mitigate, and remediate these risks. SDG-aligned companies use the internationally recognized Codex standards<sup>27</sup> in conjunction with relevant national guidelines and up-to-date science when determining hygiene practices and targets for every stage of the food chain, from production to harvest, processing, storage, distribution, to preparation and consumption.

Depending on the specific risks and impacts identified, measures to address actual or potential food safety impacts include:

- **Adopting Codex-aligned hygiene and food safety production practices** in company operations, as well as choosing suppliers who have already adopted these practices or supporting suppliers in adopting them. SDG-aligned companies, in every stage of the value chain, and work to empower small producers and food facilities to adopt GFSI-recognized food safety schemes/ programmes<sup>28</sup> to ensure that their products meet international safety standards.
- **Establishing production and manufacturing methods in accordance with best practices in food hygiene and safety** and adjusting any that are in tension with its ability to ensure adequate and consistent food safety in company operations and value chains. This includes keeping facilities clean according to HACCP food safety management standards,<sup>b</sup> properly handling and isolating ingredients (particularly allergens), utilizing best practices in animal confinement, properly addressing waste management in production (particularly of sensitive ingredients or chemicals that could be damaging to human or environmental health), and ensuring cold chain storage is adequate for transport. Agricultural production also limits the use of agrichemical inputs to minimize the contamination of food products with hazardous chemicals, such as glyphosate. SDG-aligned companies defer to international best practices regarding the use of food additives and synthetic ingredients in their products and ensure that they are aligned with the most recent scientific research about the health and environmental impacts of each ingredient used along the value chain.
- **Utilizing data labels clearly and legibly on packaging** to alert consumers as to the date where a food item will no longer be suitable for human consumption. Importantly, the date labels reflect food *safety*, not food peak quality, so as not to incentivize excess food waste.
- **Providing adequate guidance for consumers to determine food safety risks of packaged foods** and decipher the information provided on food labels. Labels also alert consumers to specific handling requirements of the food item, such as refrigeration or storage.

b. "Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product." (Source: FDA, "Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)," 2018, <https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-regulation-food-and-dietary-supplements/hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-haccp>.)



- **Utilizing appropriate and sustainable packaging** to protect food items from external contamination and to preserve freshness for as long as possible, simultaneously targeting both food security and food waste.
- **Providing extensive worker capacity building on good food safety management practices.** Where company internal practices or practices along the value chain are found to be discordant with food safety management and hazard control, appropriate research and training are conducted to provide safe and hygienic alternatives.
- **Engaging in consumer education and providing resources** to (1) reduce knowledge gaps about proper handling, storage, and cooking methods for different food items; (2) help them to make safe purchasing choices; (3) prevent foodborne illness.

## 4. ESTABLISH AND PARTICIPATE IN EFFECTIVE GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS & PROVIDE OR ENABLE REMEDY

### 4.1. ESTABLISH GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

SDG-aligned companies establish effective mechanisms to provide or enable remedy when food safety breaches or outbreaks occur. The companies also have and use leverage to ensure their business relationships have effective grievance mechanisms in place.<sup>c</sup> These mechanisms are accessible to their workers, value chain workers, and any person from the community to report non-compliance with food safety standards and their impacts (e.g., operational-level grievance mechanisms, hotlines with effective grievance handling procedures). The companies provide training or develop actions to communicate the existence and operation of such grievance mechanisms to all potentially affected stakeholders and communities.<sup>29</sup>

### 4.2. COOPERATE IN STATE-BASED GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS

SDG-aligned companies refrain from using legal waivers that preclude access to judicial recourse for victims of food safety impacts. The companies cooperate with and support legitimate judicial and non-judicial State-based mechanisms to report and adjudicate food safety violations.<sup>30</sup> The companies comply with fines or other state-based sanctions issued and provide remedy to those harmed by non-compliance with national food safety and consumer protection laws.

### 4.3. PROVIDE OR ENABLE REMEDY

When a company identifies that it has caused or contributed to an instance of foodborne illness or food safety hazards in its operations or value chain, they acknowledge their part in the harm done and provide remedy through legitimate processes. Where the company did not cause or contribute to the harm directly, it enables remedy through legitimate processes. Some remedy actions include:

- Providing monetary compensation for harm caused or contributed to through a food safety breach or practice that causes an FBD outbreak or negatively affects consumer health.
- Providing resources for medical care and rehabilitation for the individuals affected by the outbreak or food safety hazard.
- Immediately halting production, take measures to prevent further contamination, including cleaning of facilities, storage facilities, or locations, and take steps to ensure that the same breach does not reoccur.
- Providing ecosystem rehabilitation in collaboration with local governments and communities, including Indigenous and farmer communities, for any environmental damage resulting from the food safety breach, such as water contamination, zoonotic disease spread, loss of biodiversity.

c. As defined by the UNGPs' Effectiveness Criteria for Non-Judicial Grievance Mechanisms ("In order to ensure their effectiveness, non-judicial grievance mechanisms, both State-based and non-State-based, should be: (a) Legitimate... (b) Accessible... (c) Predictable... (d) Equitable... (e) Transparent... (f) Rights-compatible... (g) A source of continuous learning... Operational-level mechanisms should also be: (h) Based on engagement and dialogue...") (see UNGP 31 for further information). (Source: United Nations, "Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework.")





## 5. TRACK PERFORMANCE

SDG-aligned companies track, on an ongoing basis and through qualitative and/or quantitative outcome-based performance indicators, the implementation of actions taken to meet the standard. In particular, they monitor whether actions are implemented within their target dates. The companies partner with suppliers, government institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to design and implement effective tracking and monitoring mechanisms. Threshold targets are established using compiled data by competent authorities.

The following are some examples of performance indicators to track progress over time:

- Percentage of suppliers and other business relationships in the value chain utilizing a GFSI-recognized food safety scheme/ programme and adhering to international Codex standards for food safety.
- For companies with significant operations in the animal protein sector, the percentage of animal livestock living in conditions that align with World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standards for hygiene and disease prevention (particularly where animals are closely confined and in slaughterhouses).<sup>31</sup>
- The percentage of products that contain bacteria or other microorganisms that are considered to be the most harmful to humans.
- Chemicals utilized in the value chain, including pesticides, chemical fertilizers, steroids, antibiotics, or other inputs potentially dangerous to human health, measured per mass of product and compared year over year.
- The proportion of products produced that are fully audited to meet hygiene and food safety standards, specifying the geographic locations in which the products are sold.
- Findings of third-party food safety management impact assessments and audits and remediation measures taken where instances of non-compliance were identified.

## 6. DISCLOSE PERFORMANCE

To enable transparency and accountability, SDG-aligned companies communicate publicly on their performance against their food safety commitment and targets, particularly when concerns are raised by or on behalf of affected stakeholders. Where relevant, SDG-aligned companies also share aggregate data and high-level findings directly with affected stakeholders and organizations, including human rights organizations and researchers.

Regular public disclosure is accurate, clear, accessible, and third-party verified information about the actual and potential impacts on food safety in their operations and value chain, their efforts to address these to implement their policy commitment, and performance against targets. Disclosure includes sufficient information to evaluate the adequacy of the company's approach and activities. Formal disclosure includes information on the following:

- Targets to address key food safety issues and performance against the targets.
- Internal business and value chain operations considered having significant risk for incidents of food safety hazards, contamination, foodborne illness, or poor food safety management practices, specifying the geographic locations of these operations.
- Methods used to assess operations and business relationships to identify and measure the risk for incidents of food safety hazards, contamination, foodborne illness, or poor food safety management practices.
- Measures taken during the reporting period to ensure good hygiene practices and food safety management international best practices in its operations and value chain.
- Any measures taken with peer companies, companies across industries, civil society, and/or governments to improve food safety.
- Analysis of trends demonstrating progress and, where appropriate, explaining lessons learned from stagnation or decline towards meeting the standard and achieving intermediate and long-term targets on preventing and eliminating food safety hazards in its business operations and value chain.



## ENDNOTES

1. For example, in relation to product recalls or food losses due to safety breaches.
2. For example, due to impacts from physical or biological contamination or hazardous chemical residue.
3. For example, soil and water pollution from chemicals or antimicrobial drug resistance.
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