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PAS 320:2023

Developing and sustaining a mature food safety culture – Guide



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Foreword

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Use of this document

As a guide, this PAS takes the form of guidance and advisory recommendations. It is not to be quoted as if it were a specification or a code of practice.

Presentational conventions

The guidance in this document is presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Any recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "should".

Additional commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is used (e.g. "organization" rather than "organisation").

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Compliance with a PAS cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

In particular, attention is drawn to the following specific Act and regulations:

- EC Regulation No. 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs [1];
- FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) [2]; and
- Codex Alimentarius, CXC 1-1969 [3].

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Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) [4], consuming contaminated food resulted in an estimated 600 million people – almost 1 in 10 people in the world – falling ill, and leads to 420 000 deaths every year, resulting in the loss of 33 million healthy life years.

These data confirm that organizations ought not to operate in functional silos. Instead, organizations need to have teams collaboratively working toward shared values and goals to implement an effective food safety management system (FSMS) by adopting a process approach to existing practices to drive positive behaviours.

Management commitment is fundamental to build the foundation for a food safety culture as a catalyst for business improvement, sustain the continual improvement of the organization's food safety performance, and mature its food safety culture with the mindset that food safety is a whole food supply chain responsibility regardless of the organization's size or complexity. The WHO [4] stated that "food safety is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a role to play including governments, industry, producers, business operators and consumers".

PAS 320 provides a framework, using the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) methodology and process approach, to support organizations in developing, maturing and sustaining the continual improvement of their food safety culture. This approach can be used equally well by large and small organizations. The combination of the five dimensions of food safety culture (4.2) with the FSMS, management principles, and statutory, regulatory and customer requirements related to food safety is fundamental to supporting organizations on this journey.

As a first step, PAS 320 provides guidance on understanding the fundamentals of a food safety culture, including its definition, integration between its dimensions and the FSMS principles, its relationship to the wider organizational culture, and related internal and external issues.

Following a structured and clear understanding of the fundamentals of a food safety culture, the establishment of governance plays a vital role in maturing it and sustaining its continual improvement. PAS 320 includes recommendations related to leadership; the organization's vision, mission, values and policy; organizational structure; responsibilities, accountabilities and authorities; guiding coalition team; interested parties; change champions; influencers; and food safety documentation.

With the governance in place, the guiding coalition team is able to understand the current state of their organization's food safety culture and plan to develop, mature and sustain its continual improvement. To support this step, PAS 320 provides guidance on the definition of the desired food safety culture and the assessment and measurement of the current maturity level of organizations' food safety culture.

Annex A provides an overview of the relationship of the PAS 320 clauses and key actions from each clause.

PAS 320 provides recommendations to enable the design of a strategic change plan to achieve the desired food safety culture.

PAS 320 provides guidance on the establishment of a performance monitoring system to enable ongoing evaluation of organizations' food safety culture. PAS 320 includes recommendations on implementing an ongoing improvement cycle approach which supports increased food safety performance and brings other benefits to organizations including, but not limited to, talent retention, investment return, business performance improvement, reduction of the costs associated with poor quality, and enhanced efficiency.

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1 Scope

This PAS gives guidance on how to mature, sustain and continually improve a food safety culture within an organization.

The PAS provides a framework for:

- a) understanding the fundamentals of a food safety culture;
- b) establishing the governance of a food safety culture;
- c) understanding the maturity level of the organization's food safety culture;
- d) designing a strategic change plan to achieve the desired food safety culture;
- e) preparing key functions towards the desired food safety culture;
- f) embedding the food safety culture change plan into the existing FSMS;
- g) evaluating the performance of the organization's food safety culture; and
- h) sustaining continual improvement of the organization's food safety culture.

This PAS is intended for use by any organization of any size or complexity across the food chain, from primary production to final delivery to consumers.

This PAS might be of use to educational institutions, trade associations, coalitions of action, professional bodies, certification bodies and other services providers, accreditation bodies, scheme owners and regulatory bodies.

The recommendations in this document are generic. The level of complexity of the food safety culture will depend upon each organization's context.