

## Case study

“Food Safety Culture Excellence is a great tool which allows people to feedback honestly with their opinions about the business without anyone feeling uncomfortable.”

**Claire Mooney**  
Technical Manager



## The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company

How Food Safety Culture Excellence helped The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company stay compliant.

**Claire Money, Technical Manager at The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company explains why they implemented the Food Safety Culture Excellence assessment and how it has benefited them.**

### Tell us a little bit about The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company

The Natural Fruit and Beverage Company is a small business with 85 staff, based on one site in Glasgow. The site is a processor and packer of food products into resealable pouches and we have established ourselves as the UK's leading exponent of this type of packaging with sales increasing sevenfold in the past five years.

We do not manufacture our own brand products but produce baby food pouches for large retailers like Aldi, as well as for special medical purposes for adults and children with autoimmune diseases.

Our site has BRCGS Food Safety Standard certification (Grade AA) for its blending, processing and packing operations. In the Food Safety Culture Module, we achieved Grade B after completing it for the first time in September 2019.

### How would you describe the company's food safety culture before the survey?

Although staff were aware of the importance of food safety and embraced good practice, they still perceived it as a quality / technical issue. We noticed an overall assumption that food safety was dealt with by Technical and Quality function, through the management of BRCGS Food Safety certification and audit programme.

### Why did you decide to take a BRCGS Food Safety Culture Excellence assessment?

The Food Safety Culture Excellence (FSCE) assessment was undertaken because of the new clause in the Food Safety Standard.

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### **How did you find the process of taking the survey and gaining staff feedback?**

I was tasked with managing the roll-out of the survey and encouraging staff to participate. It was slightly challenging to get staff engaged with the survey, and persuading them to take the time to complete it.

### **What were the most significant changes and challenges you faced during the assessment process?**

Managers and supervisors were more willing to complete the survey and we reached the required percentages in these groups relatively quickly. However, when it came to the production staff, it was much more challenging. We needed to explain more about the benefits of completing the survey and why it was be relevant to them.

However, I had great support from my Managing Director and Financial Director who offered staff a reward if they completed the survey, which eventually generated the minimum number of responses needed for production staff.

### **What were the outcomes of the assessment?**

The Senior Management Team were pleased with the results in the assessment report and noticed that the exercise had started to help improve food safety communications onsite. For example, as a direct outcome of the survey, the site now produces a regular newsletter and senior management has put in place more incentives and benefits for staff to recognise and reward them when they are doing a great job, which has been very well received.

In addition, an internal feedback form is now available and staff were gradually warming to the idea of making suggestions when they have ideas about improving ways of working. Also, staff were pleased that senior management listened to their request for a vending machine and a Christmas bonus as an alternative to the Christmas night out, which was cancelled to Covid-19.

### **Were there any specific issues that it uncovered that you were not expecting?**

One of the most useful issues the assessment report has flagged is the lack of communication within the business and senior management. It identified the need to provide leadership training for all team leaders. By doing so, it would assist the team leaders with the tools and techniques to encourage their teams to be more proactively engaged

with food safety issues. We believe that by empowering staff to feel involved and recognised for the important role they play in the manufacturing of a safe and high- quality product, they will feel proud of what they do and it will further improve the site's food safety culture.

Another area where we felt improvements could be is in the identification of a cross-functional team who could champion food safety issues across the site, at all levels. The team would be managed through the Technical Team function and supported by regular communication on food safety in the staff newsletter, at team meetings and wherever there was a possible opportunity to include it.

Finally, it's clear that communication across the site has improved.

### **Have you seen any significant operational benefits after taking the survey?**

Targets have improved because of the survey. For example, complaints have reduced and are now down to less than 3 per million even though production levels are increasing annually.

### **Would you recommend the survey to other manufacturing sites?**

Yes, it is a great tool which allows people to feedback honestly with their opinions about the business without anyone feeling uncomfortable.

### **Do you have any top tips for sites who are planning to apply for FSCE module?**

Communication is key to the success of launching the Food Safety Culture Excellence assessment, although it is challenging to get all staff to complete the survey. Therefore, communication and encouragement are key to getting people to complete it. If senior management agree to an incentive for staff for the completion of the survey, that can help too.