

Guide for choosing a food safety or traceability consultant

The agriculture, food and seafood industry must adhere to high food safety and traceability standards to protect public health and satisfy an increasingly demanding consumer market. To develop new or upgrade an existing food safety or traceability system, outsourcing some expertise may be needed. Qualified food safety and traceability consultants can assist you in planning for and implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) programs and traceability systems tailored for your business needs.

Benefits of hiring a consultant

Consultants can promote business development by:

1. Providing specific technical expertise and assessing the need for food safety and traceability improvements
2. Identifying challenges and opportunities related to food safety and traceability by providing fresh ideas and feedback
3. Providing tailored (cost-efficient) solutions for developing or improving food safety and traceability systems

Role of the consultant

Consultants can provide multiple services and tailor advice based on your business requirements, such as:

1. Conduct an initial assessment of your operation to identify food safety and traceability needs
2. Provide cost-effective food safety and traceability system recommendations applicable to your operation (e.g., traceability hardware, software, training, GAP, GMP, HACCP)
3. Assist in developing a work plan for implementing the food safety and traceability system
4. Implement and test the food safety and traceability system (including conducting a mock recall exercise)
5. Develop a maintenance plan for the food safety and traceability system
6. Develop written food safety and traceability protocols (e.g., a Food Safety Plan, HACCP plan or mock recall plan)
7. Develop a record keeping system
8. Provide a training plan and training for employees
9. Assist with preparation for future audits

Finding the right consultant for the job

1. Ask your peers and colleagues – word of mouth is great way to find a consultant
2. Visit websites of professional associations and not for profit industry associations
3. Visit websites of universities and government agencies that publish consultant lists (e.g., [B.C. Traceability Outcome +](#))
4. Visit websites of nationally/internationally recognized food safety certification programs (e.g., CanadaGAP, [SQF](#))
5. Directly contact consultant companies
6. Use internet platforms for professionals (e.g., LinkedIn)

Expertise & suitability of the consultant

Consultants should provide evidence of their expertise. Evaluate their experience and suitability for your project by checking the following:

1. Technical knowledge in food safety and traceability (e.g., certificates, training courses, workshops, degree in Food Science, other related qualifications)
2. Knowledge of the food safety and traceability regulatory requirements in your sector (e.g., Safe Food for Canadians, CanadaGAP program)
3. Experience in implementing food safety and traceability systems (e.g., years of work in the field)
4. Previous experience in consulting similar projects (e.g., previous engagements with businesses of similar size and sector)
5. Willingness to scan the current system and identify specific traceability needs
6. Previous experience and willingness to provide training (e.g., testimonials, resume)
7. Willingness to maintain the implemented system
8. References from previous clients

Preparing & signing the contract

Usually, the consultant will provide a written contract where all work responsibilities are outlined. Before signing the contract check whether all important points related to project management are covered. The following list indicates the most important points:

1. Clearly outline a list of actions, deliverables, and associated timelines
2. Identify individual/s who will be working and communicating with the consultant
3. Specify reporting requirements (i.e., when, how and where report/s will be delivered)
4. Clearly outline the payment arrangements (e.g., hourly rate or per day flat fee)
5. Include confidentiality agreement
6. Include provisions for non-performance or unforeseen circumstances

Additional resources

Choosing a Consultant: An Investment in Your Business

[https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex8287/\\$file/823-1.pdf?OpenElement](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex8287/$file/823-1.pdf?OpenElement)

How to Choose a Consultant - A Resource for Your Community or Organization

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/nfporgs/98-053.htm>

Selecting a Food Safety Consultant

https://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/food-safety-program/pubs/fs_1.pdf

On-Farm Recognised Certifications and Accredited Food Safety Professionals

<http://bconfarmfoodsafety.com/accredited-food-safety-professionals/>

Post-Farm Recognised Certifications and Accredited Food Safety Professionals

<http://bcpostfarmfoodsafety.com/accredited-food-safety-professionals/>

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