



To: Food Business Proprietors, Food Handlers and Training Course Providers

Date: 8th August 2023

FSC Circular 01/2023: The Implementation of Legal Notice 178 of 2001 for Food Handlers Training Courses.

This circular provides brief notes to assist food business proprietors, food handlers and training course providers to implement the requirements of Legal Notice 178 of 2001.

Legal Notice 178/2001 defines ‘food handler’ as any person engaged in the preparation, manufacture and treatment in terms of the Act in a food business, whether for profit or not, and who handles or prepares food intended for human consumption; and food handling shall be construed accordingly.

The regulations require that:

1. No person shall act as a food handler without registering with the Food Safety Commission.
2. No person shall employ any food handler in any food business as a food handler unless registered with the Food Safety Commission and in possession of a current document.
3. Any food handler who applies for registration with the Food Safety Commission must possess a valid certificate as described in the schedule of these regulations.
4. Any food handler registered with the Food Safety Commission shall be issued with a registration document.
5. The Food Safety Commission shall keep register of all food handlers issued with a registration document.
6. Such registration document shall be valid for a period of two years or five years depending on the type of valid certificate presented.
7. The Food Safety Commission shall renew the registration document when requested to do so provided a valid certificate is also presented when the request is made.
8. Applicants renewing their registration document must re-attend a full food handling course.
9. Such registration document shall be available for inspection by an authorised officer when so demanded.

The regulations provide for two types of documents, one valid for two years and another valid for five years. The document valid for two years may be applied for by those food handlers who are involved in the preparation, manufacture, packaging or handling of non-high-risk food and wrapped food and those not directly involved in the preparation or manufacture of food.



The five-year document is required for those food handlers involved in the preparation of manufacture of high-risk food and retailer and wholesalers that handle open (unwrapped) high-risk food.

Although the regulations require that only food handlers are to be registered (and trained), persons holding supervisory positions in food business must be adequately trained to such level as to be able to 'supervise' and 'instruct' food handlers in hygiene matters. It is primarily the responsibility of the proprietor to ensure that his food business is carried out in the most hygienic way and that the food produced is safe for human consumption.

Trained staff may still require supervision, depending on their competence and experience. Greater degree of supervision may be needed for new staff, for less experienced staff and for staff handling high-risk food.

Training of food handlers beyond legal requirement may be carried out as a matter of good practice as their career develops and they take on extra responsibility.

Where an operation employs only one or two food handlers' supervision may not be practical and so training must be sufficient to allow work to be unsupervised.

Other staffs who are not food handlers may also need instructions, supervision, or training as a matter of good practice. This may include cleaners and other support staff who visit the kitchen and those involved in the operation such as maintenance staff.

More senior supervisors and managers who do not handle food, but who may have a direct influence on the hygienic operation of the business should also receive training as a matter of good practice. the training should commensurate with the level of their responsibility.

Staff such as Hotel Managers, Production Managers, Quality Assurance Managers, Food and Beverages Managers, Food Procurement Managers, etc. should be formally trained in food hygiene as part of their position training.



Course 1: Food handlers that fall under Category A of the schedule:

(Duration 2-3 hours)

This Category would include food industry staff employed in activities not directly involved in the preparation and personal handling of *high-risk-open food* (unwrapped food). such as: storeman, waiter / waitress, counter staff, barman serving food (but not involved in the preparation of food), pot-wash staff that do not handle food, delivery staff, sellers / hawkers of non-open food, vegetable sellers / hawkers, fish sellers / hawkers, etc. etc.

Examples of High-risk open foods: fresh cream, custards, meat including poultry and meat products including sandwiches, egg and egg products including sandwiches, rice dishes, fish and fish products, cheese and cheese products, milk and milk products, ice cream.

The aim of this course is to give the food handler a knowledge of the basic food hygiene principles. The course should be designed as much as possible with the job of the delegates in mind.

This course may include an overview of the following topics:

1. The importance of hygiene in the food industry.
2. Pathogenic organisms – the potential to cause illness.
3. High and low risk foods.
4. Causes of food poisonings and how to avoid them.
5. Personal health and hygiene: importance; the need to report illness; no smoking.
6. Cross contamination: its causes and prevention.
7. Food storage: protection; temperature control; rotation.
8. ‘Foreign bodies’ in food: types and prevention.

9. Cleaning and disinfection: materials used, methods, storage of detergents.
10. Waste disposal: storage and hygienic disposal.
11. Pest control: importance of control.
12. Legal requirements as per local legislation.
13. Any topic related to the delegates' job.
14. (from 13): Instruction on control and monitoring of critical points related to the delegates' job.
15. Information on Animal By- Products including the respective EU Reg. No. (EC) 1069 of 2009, (can be downloaded from eurlex.europa.eu search engine) which lay down health rules concerning animal by- products that are not intended for human consumption. The following basic information is to be provided to the course participants:
 - a) The three categories of ABP (further information on ABP can be obtained from Dr Vito Benvenga on 22925187)
 - b) Specified Risk Material (SRM)
 - c) Identification, storage, and disposal of different categories of ABPs in accordance with the relative legislation.
 - d) The criteria the containers used for storage of ABP must meet.
 - e) Authorised collectors for the disposal of ABP.
 - f) Keeping of records and consignment notes.
16. Description of existing Allergens, their effects on humans and the importance of the declaration of these allergens on food labels.
17. The importance of hygiene of plastic containers brought by consumers to be filled at supermarkets deli counter to prevent single use plastic containers.



Course 2: Food handlers that fall under Category B of the schedule:

(Duration 8-10 hours)

- This Category would include: Food handlers engaged in the preparation and handling of high-risk open food (unwrapped food) and owners / operators, managers or supervisors who handle any type of food.
- Job descriptions that would fall under this category include chefs, cooks, kitchen assistants, bar staff that prepare food, pot-wash staff that handle food, catering supervisors, grocery sellers that handle open food, ice cream and confectionery manufacturers and sellers, dairy products processors / manufacturers, food handlers working in fish processing and meat products processing plants.
- The material for this course should cover all the topics listed for the first course but in more detail. Ideally, this course should be aimed at food handlers with the same job requirements and with the same degree of risk involved in their food activity.
- The training material for this course could be tailor made for the food business employees concerned. In-house hygiene courses of *appropriate standard* are acceptable and will satisfy the legal requirements.
- Alternatively, the training course material could be acquired from a range of standard food hygiene course providers that are accredited such as The Royal Society of Health, The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, etc.
- Food Hygiene Courses Providers need to be approved by the Food Safety Commission. A written request to the FSC is to include the course material to be used for the training and the curriculum vitae of the trainers.

Additional Information

- Ideally, food handlers attending courses should have similar requirements and job description. The duration and structure of the courses should be such that delegates are allowed / encouraged to ask questions.
- Delegates should be assessed at the end of the course. Assessments can be a multiple-choice test paper, written or oral.



FOOD SAFETY COMMISSION

While delivering/attending the food hygiene course one must adhere to the mitigation measures listed in the following link:

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx>

N.B: In case of an online course a minimum time of 2 hours between delegate and tutor is required. The exam must be done in these two hours in the presence of the tutor.

The Food Safety Commission must always be informed at least forty-eight hours in advance of any course or test being held. Notification must include name of tutor, date, time, type of course and address of venue.

The Food Safety Commission reserves the right to request any additional information and/or documents it deems necessary to ensure that all requirements are adhered to.