

# Food Safety Culture Questionnaire

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SQF Edition 10-aligned assessment for manufacturing sites

Built for real FSQA teams to assess leadership behaviors, communication, competence, accountability, verification, and continuous improvement.

## How to use this document

- Use with cross-functional respondents from QA, operations, sanitation, maintenance, warehousing, and site leadership.
- This is designed as an assessment tool, not just a survey. Review results by area, shift, and level where anonymity can still be preserved.
- Pair the questionnaire with floor observations, interviews, trend data, CAPA review, internal audit findings, and management review outputs.

<b>Site / Facility</b>		<b>Assessment date</b>	
<b>Lead owner</b>		<b>Review cycle</b>	Annual full assessment + optional pulse checks

## Purpose, scope, and response instructions

**Purpose.** This questionnaire helps a site evaluate whether food safety expectations are truly understood, supported, and followed in day-to-day work - especially under pressure, during change, and when problems occur.

**Suggested respondent groups.** Site leadership, QA, supervisors, operators, sanitation, maintenance, receiving, warehousing, temporary labor, and other roles that influence product safety.

How to answer	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Mark one box per statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable / Not observed

### Administration guidance

- Use anonymous responses where possible. Fear of blame can hide real risk.
- Translate or explain statements as needed so all personnel can respond confidently.
- Do not over-segment results if groups are too small to protect anonymity.
- Review low scores, high N/A rates, and repeated comments together. Weak culture usually appears as a pattern, not a single answer.

### Recommended demographic fields

Department		Shift	
Role level		Time at site	
Employment type	Employee / temp / contractor	Language used	

## 1. Leadership commitment and resource support

**What this section measures:** Whether leaders visibly prioritize food safety, respond to issues, provide resources, and reinforce sound decisions when food safety and operational pressure collide.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Senior leaders consistently communicate that food safety comes before output, speed, or convenience.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Supervisors reinforce food safety expectations through daily actions, not only during audits or investigations.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Employees believe management will support them if they stop work or escalate a food safety concern.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. The site provides enough time, staffing, tools, and	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
materials to perform food safety tasks correctly.						
5. Food safety responsibilities are clear at each level of the organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Leadership follows through on food safety commitments and corrective actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 2. Communication, speak-up culture, and engagement

**What this section measures:** Whether personnel understand expectations, know how to report concerns, and feel safe raising issues without blame or retaliation.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Food safety expectations are communicated clearly in a format employees can understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Important food safety changes are communicated before they affect daily work.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Employees know how to raise a food safety concern and who to notify.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. People feel comfortable reporting mistakes, deviations, and near misses.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Concerns raised by frontline employees are taken seriously and addressed respectfully.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Cross-functional communication between QA, operations, sanitation, and maintenance supports food safety rather than creating confusion.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 3. Training, competency, and applied knowledge

**What this section measures:** Whether training is role-specific, practical, understood, and strong enough to drive correct action on the floor.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Employees receive food safety training appropriate to their specific job tasks and risks.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Training is provided in a language and format employees can understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. New hires and temporary workers are trained before performing tasks independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Employees can explain the food safety hazards relevant to their area.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Supervisors verify understanding and competence rather than only collecting signatures.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Refresher training is triggered when procedures change, trends worsen, or errors repeat.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 4. Hazard control discipline, verification, and response

**What this section measures:** Whether key controls are followed consistently, deviations are managed correctly, and verification is taken seriously.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Critical food safety controls are consistently followed even during busy periods or staffing challenges.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Employees know what to do when a limit, check, or preventive control is missed or out of specification.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Records related to monitoring, verification, and checks are completed accurately and honestly.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Corrective actions address the real cause of the issue rather than only the immediate symptom.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Verification activities are meaningful and confirm that controls remain effective.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Recurring food safety issues are treated as system failures that require deeper review.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 5. Sanitation, environmental monitoring, and hygienic conditions

**What this section measures:** Whether sanitation expectations are practical, understood, verified, and strong enough to support hygienic control and environmental risk management.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Cleaning and sanitation tasks are clearly defined, verified, and completed to standard.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. The environmental monitoring program is understood	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
and supported by the teams involved.						
3. Swabbing, inspection, and sanitation findings are trended and used to improve hygienic control.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Employees understand why hygienic zoning, traffic control, and equipment condition matter.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Sanitation findings are acted on promptly when they indicate elevated risk.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. The condition of equipment and facility surfaces supports effective cleaning and food safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 6. Supplier, material, and change risk awareness

**What this section measures:** Whether the site considers food safety risk when managing suppliers, incoming materials, process changes, and operational adjustments.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. The site treats supplier and incoming material issues as food safety risks, not only purchasing or scheduling issues.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Teams understand how changes to ingredients, equipment, process flow, packaging, or staffing can affect food safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Food safety implications are reviewed before major operational changes are implemented.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Temporary process adjustments are controlled and communicated so they do not weaken food safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Material or supplier problems are escalated quickly	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
enough to protect product and process integrity.						
6. People understand that undocumented or poorly controlled change can create food safety risk.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

### Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 7. Accountability, learning, and continuous improvement

**What this section measures:** Whether the organization learns from complaints, audits, near misses, and deviations - and turns them into sustained improvement.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Internal audits evaluate real practice and behavior, not just documentation quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Customer complaints, deviations, and incidents are reviewed for learning opportunities.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. The site uses trends, metrics, and recurring themes to drive food safety improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Employees receive feedback on what was changed after issues were raised.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Management review includes meaningful discussion of culture, performance, risk, and improvement needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Improvement actions are tracked until effectiveness is verified.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

## Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## 8. Food defense, food fraud, and overall system vigilance

**What this section measures:** Whether the site promotes awareness of intentional threats, suspicious behavior, and broader system risk that could affect product safety and integrity.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Employees understand the importance of reporting suspicious behavior, tampering, or unusual events.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. Access controls and restricted-area expectations are understood and followed.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Food fraud vulnerabilities are treated as part of the broader food safety conversation when relevant to the site.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Personnel understand that intentional and economically motivated threats can create product risk.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. The site reinforces vigilance without creating confusion or alarm.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. Security, integrity, and food safety responsibilities are coordinated when issues arise.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

## Open-response prompts

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What is working well in this area?	
Where does this area break down under pressure, during change, or on off-shifts?	

Open-response prompt	Notes / examples
What one improvement would most reduce risk in this area?	

## Red-flag statements for leadership review

Use these as escalation indicators. Agreement with these statements should trigger management review, root cause analysis, and direct follow-up.

## Red-flag risk indicators

What this section measures: High agreement here is more important than the average score. These items should not be normalized away by strong scores elsewhere.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Production pressure sometimes leads people to take shortcuts that could affect food safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
2. People avoid raising issues because they believe nothing will change.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
3. Some employees complete records based on what should have happened rather than what actually happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
4. Temporary staff or new hires are sometimes expected to work before they fully understand food safety expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5. Corrective actions are sometimes closed before the problem is truly solved.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
6. The site becomes much more focused on food safety right before audits than during normal operations.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

## Scoring, interpretation, and action planning

**Recommended scoring method.** Average each section separately. Convert the 1-5 average to an overall interpretation, then review low-scoring statements, open comments, and red-flag items together before deciding actions.

Score band	Meaning	Suggested response
4.5 - 5.0	Strong / mature	Maintain discipline, verify consistency across shifts, and capture best practices for replication.
3.5 - 4.4	Functional but uneven	Target weak areas, improve supervisor follow-

		through, and close communication or training gaps.
2.5 - 3.4	Vulnerable / reactive	Prioritize structured actions, direct leadership engagement, focused retraining, and stronger verification.
Below 2.5	High risk	Escalate to leadership immediately. Reassess resource constraints, behaviors, accountability, and management support.

**Interpretation tips**

- A strong average score does not cancel out high-risk red-flag responses.
- Repeated comments about pressure, incomplete training, poor follow-through, weak sanitation discipline, or fear of reporting usually indicate system-level risk.
- High N/A rates can reveal unclear wording, poor relevance, or a training/communication gap.
- The best use of this tool is trend review over time, supported by observations, audit data, CAPA trends, complaints, and management review.

**Action planning worksheet**

Key finding / risk	Owner	Due date	Status	Effectiveness check

**Alignment note:** This questionnaire is designed to support SQF Edition 10 expectations that sites document, implement, maintain, and review a food safety culture assessment approach with communication, training, feedback, and measurement components, and that results are used for continuous improvement.

# Section Scoring Summary

Food Safety Culture Questionnaire | SQF Edition 10 aligned

How to score: For each section, add up all numeric responses (1–5) and divide by the number of answered statements. Skip N/A responses. Record the average in the "Section Average" column, then select the result band.

Section	Sum of Responses	Statements Answered	Section Average	Result Band
1. Leadership Commitment & Resource Support				
2. Communication, Speak-Up Culture & Engagement				
3. Training, Competency & Applied Knowledge				
4. Hazard Control Discipline, Verification & Response				
5. Sanitation, Environmental Monitoring & Hygienic Conditions				
6. Supplier, Material & Change Risk Awareness				
7. Accountability, Learning & Continuous Improvement				
8. Food Defense, Food Fraud & Overall System Vigilance				
<b>Red-Flag Statements (review separately — do not average)</b>				

## Overall Site Average

Add all section averages (excluding red-flag) and divide by 8.

Overall Average:

## Result Band Reference

Score	Meaning	Suggested Response
4.5 – 5.0	<b>Strong / Mature</b>	Maintain discipline. Verify consistency across shifts. Capture best practices.
3.5 – 4.4	<b>Functional but Uneven</b>	Target weak areas. Improve supervisor follow-through. Close training gaps.
2.5 – 3.4	<b>Vulnerable / Reactive</b>	Prioritize structured actions. Direct leadership engagement. Stronger verification.
<b>Below 2.5</b>	<b>High Risk</b>	Escalate immediately. Reassess resource constraints, behaviors, and accountability.

**Red-Flag Statements:** Do not average into the overall score. Any agreement (scores 4–5) on red-flag items should trigger direct leadership review, root cause analysis, and follow-up — regardless of how strong other section scores appear.