



Food Chain Traceability

All players in the food chain want to demonstrate their commitment to food quality and safety, and assure reliability of their supplier. Food traceability standards are technical tools to comply with specific regulations or other objectives.

They are applicable to document the history or location of a product, or the relevant components, either inside an individual company or in a coordinated food chain system.

A safe food product is the result of all the processes and handling activities carried out through the entire food chain. Furthermore, requirements for product identification, which are applicable in the case of non-GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) products, organic products, or certification of product origin, demand a secure product identification system and reliable retrieval of related product information. Last but not least, in the case of an incident, an efficient, fast, and precise withdrawal or recall system is needed.

Food traceability certification supports all aspects and encompasses the activities of all the production companies involved in bringing a food product from farm to fork.

What are the standards?

Traceability is a key item both in food legislation (e.g. E.U. Reg. 178/2002) and in food safety voluntary standards (e.g. ISO 22000).

The International Standardization Organisation (ISO) and the Italian National Standards Body (UNI) provide these technical standards to enable a harmonised approach to the traceability systems in accordance with the available best practices:

- ISO 22005: Traceability in the feed and food chain. General principles and basic requirements for system design and implementation.
- UNI 10939: Traceability system in agricultural food chain. General principles for design and development.
- UNI 11020: Traceability system in agri-food industries. Principles and requirements for development.

Why is certification good for my business?

Food chain traceability certification makes individual company processes more visible and reliable, allowing you to communicate a message of trust and accountability.

The standards provide a framework to establish an effective and flexible traceability system to meet different objectives, such as:

- Supporting food safety or quality objectives.
- Documenting the history or origin of the product.
- Facilitating withdrawal and/or recall of products.
- Identifying responsible parties in the feed and food chain.
- Facilitating verification of specific information about the product.
- Communicating information to relevant stakeholders and consumers.

How can I prepare for certification?

Traceability is a tool that should be coordinated within the context of a broader management system, and should result from balancing the different requirements, the technical feasibility, and the economic acceptability.

To design and implement an effective traceability system you have to define the traceability system objective(s), and then determine which information is to be:

- Obtained from your suppliers (and/or from the individual players in the coordinated food chain).
- Collected concerning the process history (in your own company and/or from the other individual players in the coordinated food chain).
- Provided to your customers (and/or to the individual players in the coordinated food chain).

The main planning process includes:

- Defining the product and/or the relevant ingredient(s).
- Defining the lot.
- Identifying the lot.
- Documenting the flow of materials, including the media for documentation.
- Managing the data.
- Retrieving the information for communication.

This process entails managing detailed tracking and tracing reports on the flow of the raw material, the accountability of all parties involved in the process, and proof of application of a management system regime.