



A COMMON STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRIES

This document indicates the aims and objectives of a *Common Strategy* agreed between HSE's Food Section and member organisations* of the *Food Manufacturing Industry Health & Safety Forum*. The document highlights the actions each party will undertake to support of the Strategy.

1 The Challenge

1.1 In June 2000 the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and the Department of the Environment, Transport & Regions (DETR) launched a Strategy Statement '*Revitalising Health and Safety*'¹.

1.2 This set challenging targets to reduce, by 2010:

- working days lost from work-related injuries and ill health by 30%
- the incidence rate of fatal and major injury accidents by 10%
- the incidence rate of cases of work-related ill health by 20%.

1.3 In July 2000 the HSC launched a supplemental document '*Securing Health Together - a long term occupational health strategy for England, Scotland and Wales*'². This document set a strategy to achieve the targets in work-related ill health mentioned above.

2 Background and Progress so far

2.1 In 1991/2 HSE's Food Section, the Food & Drink Federation (FDF) and the main food industry trade unions (GMB, TGWU, USDAW, BFAWU) agreed a *Common Strategy* with actions to improve health and safety in the food industry.

2.2 By 2002/3, the overall injury rate in the food and drink industries had dropped by 21.5% (an average drop of 2% per year) and fatal injuries had reduced by 50%. Between 1996/7-2002/3 the 'major injury' rate had dropped by 14% (an average drop of 2.3% per year); data before this period is not comparable due to different reporting criteria.

2.3 With these successes already recorded, this third revision of the *Common Strategy* updates the earlier version and sets out actions for each party to undertake in order to carry the strategy forward.

3 Areas for Improvement

3.1 Injury rates in the food and drink industries are twice that of the manufacturing average; some 25% of all manufacturing injuries occur in the food and drink sectors. There is also a high incidence of occupational ill health, particularly musculoskeletal injury.

3.2 Whilst care must be taken in making such comparisons, given the characteristics of the industry, there needs to be more widespread recognition of the benefits of improved risk management in reducing injuries, ill health and costs.

3.3 The benefits of health and safety management auditing need to be recognised more widely and more auditing carried out.

3.4 The benefits of workforce participation need greater promotion.

4 Objectives

4.1 To raise awareness of the need to further improve health and safety performance - and the cost benefits³ in doing so.

4.2 To concentrate on the 'priority' health and safety issues set out in HSE's '*A Recipe for Safety*'⁴ and on the HSE Food Manufacture Website.⁵

4.3 To promote the importance of effective management of health and safety.⁶

4.4 To ensure a consistent message on Objectives 4.1- 4.3 emanates from HSE and Forum member organisations, with encouragement to employers, other trade associations and industry committees to pursue these objectives.

4.5 To monitor achievement until at least 2010.

5 Proposed action and targets

5.1 Agreed actions and targets are to:

w pursue the Objectives set out in paras. 4.1- 4.5

w concentrate on the Areas for Improvement set out in paras. 3.1-3.4.

♦ further reduce the overall injury incidence rate and hence reduce working days lost (*the injury incidence rate dropped 21.5% between 1991/2-2002/3, an average drop of 2% per year*)

♦ further reduce fatal/major injuries (*the major injury rate dropped by*

14% between 1996/7- 2002/3, an average drop of 2.3% per year)

- ♦ continue to reduce the incidence rate and time lost from work-related ill health, particularly arising from musculoskeletal disorders.

6 Actions to implement the Common Strategy

6.1 HSE's Food Section will assist industry by:

- ♦ continuing to raise awareness for the food and drink industries to improve health and safety performance, focusing on the management of significant risk areas
- ♦ promotion of the 'core' booklet '*A Recipe for Safety*' and other food and drink 'industry specific' or 'topic specific' publications
- ♦ updating and maintaining the HSE Food Manufacture website⁵
- ♦ ensuring HSE inspectors visiting food and drink factories are appraised of the significant risk areas to target, and the guidance and tools available to tackle these
- ♦ promoting the value of health and safety management auditing by companies
- ♦ promoting this Common Strategy to non-Forum member trade associations and other food industry health and safety committees and groups
- ♦ participating in food industry conferences and seminars and writing journal articles to promote the priority H&S issues
- ♦ participating in Forum member organisation's initiatives
- ♦ promotion of greater workforce involvement in the development of health and safety systems.

6.2 Forum member organisations will support the Common Strategy by:

- ♦ promoting the '*Recipe for Safety*' initiative and encouraging member associations and companies to take positive actions to pursue the main causes of injuries and occupational ill health
- ♦ encouraging companies to calculate the true costs of accidents and absence due to occupational ill health, particularly from musculoskeletal injury
- ♦ promoting the value of health and safety management auditing
- ♦ participating in conferences and events to promote health and safety priorities and promoting/introducing initiatives, eg contractors' passport scheme
- ♦ promoting health and safety issues through in-house journals and newsletters

- ♦ publishing health and safety guidance specific to risks in their industry, or the industries with which they are involved
- ♦ encouraging companies to carry out joint working on health and safety issues with their employees, their representatives and trade unions at local level
- ♦ discussing with HSE its proposed inspection programmes to ensure they are relevant and helpful and ensuring industry interests are represented
- ♦ participating in the preparation of HSE's guidance to industry.

6.3 Individual food / drink companies can assist by:

- ♦ costing the full impact of accidents and occupational ill health to their business to determine the potential for cost savings from good management of health and safety
- ♦ calculating their company's injury rate and comparing it with benchmarks given in '*A Recipe for Safety*' and elsewhere
- ♦ concentrating health and safety efforts on their main causes of injury and occupational ill health - in general these will be those highlighted in '*A Recipe for Safety*' with particular attention to reducing musculoskeletal injuries and slips injuries
- ♦ obtaining and implementing the specific health and safety guidance available for their industry and for the specific risks in their company
- ♦ carrying out health and safety management auditing to monitor and review prevention strategies implemented
- ♦ consulting and involving trade union safety representatives or employee representatives in health and safety issues and carrying out joint working with them at local level
- ♦ ensuring full involvement of the workforce in health and safety by training and effective feedback arrangements
- ♦ promoting health and safety issues in their Newsletters.

*** Forum member organisations:**

Food and Drink Federation
H&S in Bakeries Liaison Committee
Meat Joint Working Party
British Poultry Council
Dairy Industry Association Ltd
Agricultural Industries Confederation
British Beer and Pub association
British Soft Drinks Association
Scotch Whisky Association
USDAW
T&G
GMB
BFAWU
Health and Safety Executive (Agriculture and Food Sector)

Useful References:

- 1 'Revitalising Health and Safety - Strategy Statement' 2000 from DTLR, Free Literature Service, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire LS23 7NB Tel: 0870 1226 236
- 2 'Securing Health Together - a long term occupational health strategy for England, Scotland and Wales' MISC225 2000 HSE Books
- 3 'The Costs of Accidents at Work' HSG96 1997 HSE Books

'The Costs to the British economy of work accidents and work related ill health' 1999 HSG101 HSE Books
- 4 'A Recipe for Safety' TOP05(rev1) 1999 HSE Books
- 5 HSE Food Manufacturing Website – www.hse.gov.uk/food
- 6 'Successful health and safety management' HSG65 1997 HSE Books

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