



United Fresh
New Zealand Incorporated

***“Food safety culture in good shape but more to do”
April 2019***

The following is a brief summary of the New Zealand Food Safety and The Food Safety Assurance and Advisory Council research report on the culture of Food safety in New Zealand.

The full research report can be downloaded here:
<http://mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/29762/loggedIn>

The objective of this research was to gain a baseline understanding of how New Zealand food businesses are implementing and maintaining a food safety culture in the workplace and across their supply chain. There are many drivers for a food business to have a strong food safety culture such as best practice, accountability, social responsibility, investment, and government regulations.

This research into practices and perceptions helps to identify food safety areas where we as a country excel and areas where we can do better. The survey included businesses from the following sectors: horticulture, food manufacturers/processors, food retail/wholesale, and hospitality (cafes, restaurants, caterers, pubs/clubs, and takeaways).

Overall, the data gained from the 900 surveyed businesses, showed New Zealand food businesses have a strong commitment to food safety, with a sense of pride in what they produce, market and sell.

75% of employees said that their managers visibly show support for food safety by ‘walking the talk’. Only 3% of food businesses reported food safety performance back to their employees so there is still work to do to implement a strong food safety system which incorporates continuous improvement.

Businesses can build trust and support their employees through knowledge sharing, training and two-way communication to make sure all employees know their role and responsibilities and how they contribute to the wider food safety programme.

86% of respondents said even if nobody was looking, staff would still follow all the food safety rules. More than 70% of businesses had their staff trained internally or externally. However, only 40% of these businesses included training of their Directors.

Training is more common in larger businesses. Serious food safety incidents being one of the major drivers for investing in external training.

Businesses also need to consider how food safety incidents and the underlying catalysts can become opportunities for continuous improvement for their systems and that of the wider industry.

One third of businesses admit they have some staff who do not follow the rules, particularly businesses that have experienced a serious food safety incident in the past two years.

Attitudes towards third-party verifiers of food safety systems, need to shift to seeing opportunity to view the food safety systems with fresh eyes, and as an opportunity for ongoing continuous improvement.

The next step in strengthening the New Zealand food safety culture will be ensuring consistency across all types and sizes of food businesses across the supply chain, whether it's growing, harvesting, importing, processing, transporting, storing, exporting, or selling.

In summary, a food safety culture must be integrated in to business operations and not just a concept in a manual reviewed periodically. It must be championed from the management team down to the employees with a mechanism to set, monitor and review KPIs and provide feedback loops to ensure continuous improvement to allow the food safety culture to evolve.