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- Human resources and health, safety and well-being in the food sector



# Introduction



Managing employees' health and well-being is the responsibility of any responsibly business in the food sector. UN Sustainable Development Goals three and eight address health, well-being and productive and decent employment for all.<sup>1</sup> All organizations have an obligation to support the good health and well-being of its employees. Progress over the past three decades has been made but continuous improvement, which is the intent of all management systems, is fundamental to continue the food sector's progress towards improving employees' lives.

Health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"<sup>2</sup>. ISO 45003:2021 Occupational health and safety management – Psychological health and safety at work, further articulates the concept of wellbeing at work by defining it as the 'fulfilment of the physical, mental, social and cognitive needs and expectations of a worker related to their work.' Integrating both definitions into an organization's occupational health, safety and well-being strategy can help and support the health and well-being of all employees working in the food sector and nurture their talent.

# ● The food industry is taking action

The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), a leading global alliance of consumer goods companies including many of the world's leading food organizations, works hard to drive positive change through its Health and Wellness pillar. One of the CGF's key commitments is to "Expand awareness and delivery of employee health and wellness programmes to promote a healthier workforce."<sup>3</sup> In a 2019 report published by the CGF and Deloitte, 85% of CGF's members reported that they had implemented relevant health and well-being programs, up from 78% in 2017 and a 55% improvement from 2015. Even more encouraging, nearly half of the companies surveyed said their programme offerings are extended to the families of employees.

Three specific examples of programmes rolled out by CGF members are:

- Unilever's Lamplighter employee health program addresses the top four health risks across the business: physical health, exercise, nutrition and mental resilience. In 2017 75,000 employees from 74 countries were enrolled in the programme.
- Of 50 Danone subsidiaries, 48 had an active "Health@Work" programme at the end of 2017. Almost 63,000 employees had access to it, representing 81% of total staff.
- PepsiCo's well-being program, Healthy Living, is designed to help employees and families improve their physical, financial and emotional health. Employees can choose from a variety of programmes to help them "Be Well", "Find Balance", and "Get Involved".<sup>4</sup>

Increasingly food businesses are working on and implementing health and well-being programs for their employees and their families. Progress is being made.



<sup>1</sup> [sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals)

<sup>2</sup> [www.who.int/about/governance/constitution](https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution)

<sup>3</sup> [www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/health-wellness/healthier-lives/commitments/](https://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/health-wellness/healthier-lives/commitments/)

<sup>4</sup> [www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/consumer-industrial-products/deloitte-au-health-wellness-progress-report-2019-120319.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/consumer-industrial-products/deloitte-au-health-wellness-progress-report-2019-120319.pdf)



# ● Challenges at different stages of the food supply chain



The food sector continues to be extremely diverse across the globe, from subsistence farmers to large international food businesses. Key challenges affecting the health, safety and well-being of food workers across the entire supply chain – from farm to fork – continue to persist. Some examples:

**US food industry:** A thorough study published in 2015 by Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine in the US found that “though occupational fatalities are relatively rare events, the overall food industry mortality rate is high when compared to the occupational mortality rate for non-food private industries, with the exception of food service industries. The fatal injuries in food production and food processing industries are largely the result of transportation incidents, assaults, and exposure to toxic substances or environments.”<sup>5</sup> This is concerning and demonstrates that, across the entire supply chain, the food sector has work to do in comparison to other sectors.

**Farming:** From subsistence farming to large scale farming operations, key challenges such as hard physically demanding work, seasonality of work, availability of labour, living wage and the complex corresponding social challenges that come with these, need to be addressed. Across the world issues persist and more work is necessary.

**Food manufacturing:** Physical accidents, general ill health and even fatalities in food production facilities continue. Significant strides have been made but they continue to be a problem. For example, according to the Health & Safety Executive, in 2019/2020 in the UK alone, of workers in the manufacture of food and drink:

- 3,370 suffered from ill health
- 1,330 had musculoskeletal disorders
- 1,430 suffered from stress, depression or anxiety
- 2,840 suffered non-fatal injuries<sup>6</sup>

These numbers are better than a decade ago and, year on year, the industry is improving. But until accidents and ailments are eliminated, the work is not done. Efforts made by food organizations will, as outlined by the UN, be rewarded with not only healthy workers, but that healthier employees will lead to a healthier business.

Despite the challenges faced across the supply chain, making the lives of everyone in the food sector safer and healthier must continue to be prioritized.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4494896/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/industry/manufacturing.pdf>

# ● Workplace psychosocial factors

Traditionally, psychosocial factors impacting employees were often either overlooked, or worse, ignored. Although companies continue to become more conscious of psychosocial aspects impacting their workforce more can still be done. It starts with recognizing that they have an impact and there is room for improvement.

According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, psychosocial risks arise from poor work design, organization and management, as well as a poor social context of work. This may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as work-related stress, burnout or depression. Some examples of poor working conditions leading to psychosocial risks are:

- Excessive workload
- Conflicting demands and lack of role clarity
- Lack of involvement in making decisions that affect the worker and lack of influence over the way the job is done
- Poorly managed organizational change, job insecurity
- Ineffective communication, lack of support from management or colleagues
- Psychological and sexual harassment, third-party violence<sup>7</sup>

To address these, companies need to recognize that the problems exist, identify root causes – both on an organization-wide and individual level – and then adapt and change their methods to strengthen the culture within the organization. Implementing a plan to achieve this can be a struggle for some organizations. ISO 45003 on psychological health and safety at work, provides practical guidance and examples for managing psychosocial risks that can be applied to businesses of all sizes.



<sup>7</sup> <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>

# ● Organizational culture



Managing, supporting and protecting the physical, mental and financial health and well-being of employees should be a fundamental part of any food business' culture. Today food safety culture is generally recognized as a fundamental requirement for driving a robust food safety culture; and that the heart of an organization's food safety culture is people. To ensure the best possible relationship between a company and its employees, organizations need create a culture of trust, which focuses on:

- Collaborative, communicative, emotionally intelligent leadership
- Diverse, inclusive and ethical workplace relationships based on respect and fairness
- Opportunities for lifelong learning and employability
- A balanced effort and reward ratio
- Work and workplaces that prevent physical and mental harm and promote good physical and psychological health
- Creating workplace and community social capital

Developing a culture of trust within an organization will help drive improvement in the overall health, safety and well-being of employees. For organizations that are truly committed to their people, programmes like [BSI's Prioritizing People Model®](#), set out best practice in creating a culture of trust; one that will create the right conditions for individual fulfilment (well-being) and organizational resilience.

A strong organizational culture that focuses on the health, safety and well-being of its employees will flourish. Employees take care of customers who ultimately help drive the long-term financial success of any company.



# Standards

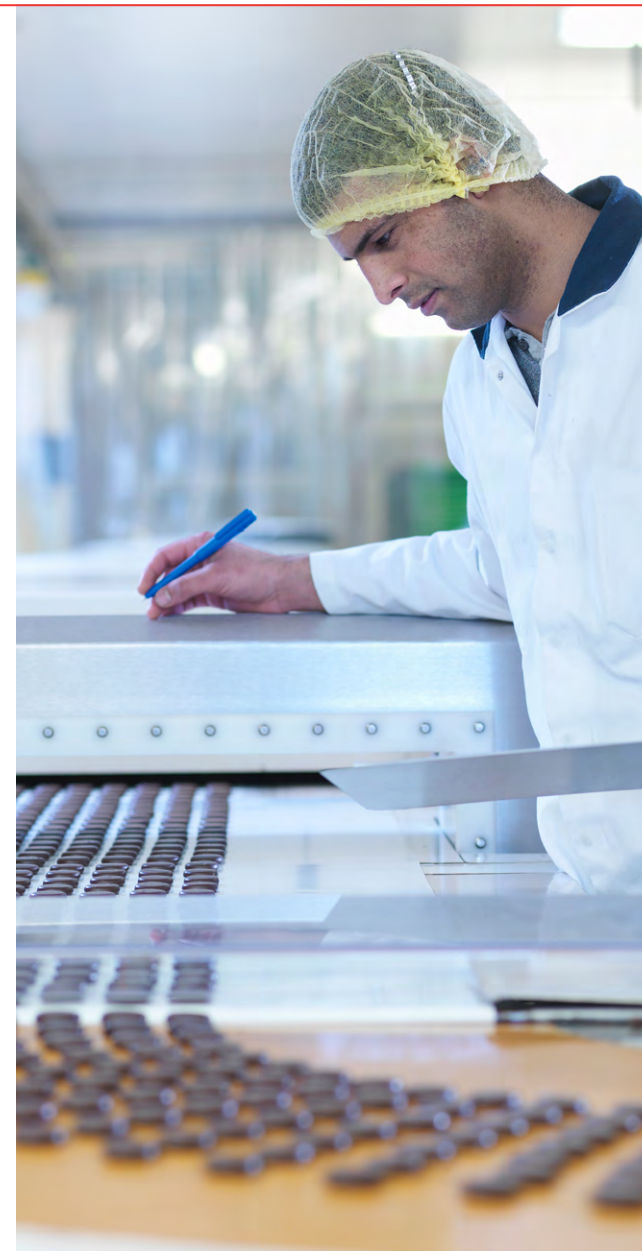
Standards can help play a key role in managing employee health and well-being. Over the years BSI has been a leader in quantifying and codifying global best practice and helping food businesses improve the health and well-being of employees through the use of standards such as:

- Occupational health and safety (ISO 45001)
- Psychological health and safety at work (ISO 45003)
- OHS safe working guidelines during COVID-19 (ISO/PAS 45005)
- Diversity and inclusion (ISO 30415)
- Human resource management (ISO 30414)
- Human-centered organizations (ISO 27500)
- Recruitment (ISO 30405)
- Smart Working (PAS 3000)

Implementing standards starts with understanding not just the content of the standard but also how the standard fits within an organization. It isn't simply about implementing and getting audited to have a certificate on the wall or be able to sell product to customers.

For a food business to be successful it first needs to establish goals for the organization based on its values and beliefs that also align with the business' objectives. Then select the standard that best helps meets those goals before implementation. Standards can strengthen any food business to better manage employee health, safety and well-being, provided the appropriate standard is applied and implemented correctly.

Standards are an excellent tool to help strengthen a food business' organizational resilience, but selecting the appropriate standard is critical.



# Talent management



The stability and growth of any food business comes from the talent they have and the talent they will be able to retain and attract. Like with many other sectors, the food industry relies heavily on people. The organizations that are able to attract, develop and retain the best talent are more likely to succeed.

Therefore, it's imperative that, within food businesses, the leadership of the business (i.e. c-suite level) focuses on the talent connecting them to the overall vision, culture and strategy of the organization.

Connecting talent to the strategy and the belief systems of the business will help give employees purpose and help organizations retain the best talent. The diagram opposite demonstrates how a business can grow the more it focuses on its talented people across the entire organization.

The resilience of food organizations is determined by the resilience of their workforce. Increasing focus on and nurturing of a workforce better positions both parties to thrive and succeed.



## Functional HR

Reactionary recruitment, payroll processing, labour relations, training and induction

**Control**



## Strategic HR

Development planning, recruitment, service centre (health, well-being, risk assessment, work environment, etc)

**Systemization**



## Integrated talent management

Commitment, succession planning, integrating talent management with the organizational strategy

**Leadership support**



## Full strategic alignment

Talent segmentation, data-driven predictive analytics of key talent, implementation of global trust practices

**Driving for the future**



# Why BSI?



BSI believes the world should be supplied with safe, sustainable and socially responsible food. We offer a broad range of certification and risk management services to help all organizations improve performance.

Our solutions for the food sector include certification, training, assessment, supply chain software and capacity-building services, to enable food organizations to build trust and resilience in:

- Food quality and safety
- Environmental sustainability
- Occupational health, safety and well-being
- Information security

Talk to us about food safety management:  
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Read more about our services and products on our website  
[bsigroup.com/en-ZA](https://bsigroup.com/en-ZA)