Preparation of an audit tool for a Food Business Operator (FBO)

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Abstract:

This article describes how to prepare an audit tool for conducting an audit in a FBO and regarding the several guidelines mentioned by FSSAI that should be followed while preparing any checklists. It mentions about the marking system in a checklist for an effective audit and providing appropriate grading to FBO's as per the marks obtained, thus giving a clear idea about the industry and also the changes that needs to be implemented for the maintenance of Food Safety and Standards as per FSSAI regulations.

Introduction:

Food safety audit is a major subject area and unlike any other audit programs such as in management or finance; food safety auditing requires combined knowledge from various fields for an effective audit (i.e.) assessing the risk and to implement corrective actions in manufacturing, processing or distribution operation.

An audit is generally a systemic, independent and documented method for checking and maintaining food safety standards and certification. They provide reassurance and confirmations that the standards are being maintained in the FBO. It also improves transparency among suppliers and contractors across the supply chain and also serves as a medium to find out the level to which the audit criteria are fulfilled.

Audit tool:

An audit tool is any reliable tool (or data such as hardcopy) some checklist, which could be used to conduct an audit effectively as per the rules and regulations of FSSAI. In general it is a tool, frequently used by the auditors to complete an audit.

Audit tools are generally developed by auditors in Excel worksheets and workbooks that can be printed and used as checklists or any work papers to complete the audit (and stored as a hard copy or soft copy in some cases) for future reference purposes.

Developing checklists is a far more straightforward process and are very detailed which can be used to evaluate various processes or functions in any FBO. Hence excess care is recommended while

drafting an audit checklist. While there are various types of checklists used in the FBO, it all depends on the ease of handling for the auditor. The changes in the checklists can also be done by auditors as per the regulations in FSSAI, but needs to be cross checked and also verified by the senior auditor or supervisor. Supervisors need to spend more time in selection of the required type of audit checklist for a particular industry or an FBO as it determines the necessities and functions carried out for evaluation.

Use of a checklist to conduct an audit will be helpful in shaping the specific requirements of what needs to be looked for during an audit, how to calculate the results and also to provide a clear documented process of the completed audit.

For any audit, the auditors must first determine the type of FBO to be audited, and then plan how to successfully carry on the audit. It is mandatory to plan the outcomes that need to be achieved in the respective audit and also the appropriate person for completing the audit.

Preparation of an audit checklist:

Many tasks must be considered while preparing an audit checklist. The first step in this is 'Planning the audit schedule'. When preparing the audit schedule, certain qualities must be decided as when the audit will take place, what is the time period of the audit, what are the key factors and what methods will be used to check these criteria.

The checklist must be organized or prepared in a meaningful way to quickly help in planning, performing and documentation of the audit tests and reporting the results.

FSSAI has developed certain checklists to assist the Food Safety Officers to inspect any Food Business Operators; and these inspection checklists are based on the revised version of Schedule IV of the Food Safety & Standards (Licensing & Registration of Food Business) Regulation, 2011.

The Food Safety Inspection checklists have been developed for the following sectors such as-

1. General Manufacturing
2. Milk Processing
3. Meat Processing
4. Slaughter house
5. Catering
6. Retail
7. Transport

Marking & Grading system in checklists:

The Inspection checklist has also been divided into five different sections such as-

I.   Design and facility
II.   Control of Operation
III. Maintenance and sanitation
IV.   Personal Hygiene
V.   Training and complaint handling

The Food Safety Officer / Auditor will inspect the various facilities of Food Business Operator as per the requirements as mentioned in the inspection checklist and will mark the findings as

- Compliance (C) – Yes, the requirement for a particular operation is fully implemented and documented with no major or minor conformance is observed.

- Non-Compliance (NC) – No, the requirement for a particular operation is not implemented and documented; also with a major non-conformance is observed.

- Partial Compliance (PC) – Requirement is partially implemented but not properly documented or partially documented but not properly implemented in an operation.

- Not applicable/ Not observed (NA) – Requirements are not applicable to FBO and are hence not observed by the FSO or an auditor.

And each finding should be awarded as per mentioned in the table below-

S.No.	Findings	Marks to be awarded	Marks to be awarded in * question
1	Compliance (C)	2	4
2	Non-Compliance (NC)	0	0
3	Partial Compliance (PC)	1	0
4	Not applicable/ Not observed (NA)	2	4

The marks are awarded sub-sequentially as per the findings and requirements in FBO, and then the total marks are calculated. Based on the final marks, the grading of an organization or any FBO is done. The grading of any FBO is generally divided into 4 different levels such as-

Grade	Status	Marks required
A+	Compliance - Exemplar	90 % & above
A	Compliance - Satisfactory	80% - 89%
B	Needs Improvement	50% - 79%
No grade	Non Compliance	Below 50%

References:

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