

Product Safety

Using our standards to make what matters, better

Our product standards are amongst the most robust in the industry. They reflect the enormous importance we attach to safeguarding product safety and quality for our customers. We are proud of the work that we and our suppliers do together to continuously improve standards for the benefit of our customers.

What's the scope of our standards?

We have a range of manufacturing and farming standards which cover both food and non-food products (includes clothing, general merchandise and formulated products). Our standards outline best practice in food safety, legality and quality and they cover the lifecycle of all products from ingredients through to the shelf edge.

Everyone at Tesco, from our technical team and our buyers to our in-store and distribution colleagues, shares a responsibility to ensure that the products we sell are of the highest and right quality for our customers.

Using our experts

The standards we apply to our products have been developed over a number of years through a process of continual review and improvement. We have a dedicated, highly trained technical team who work closely with our suppliers and guide them on how to achieve compliance with our standards. We pride ourselves on the strong relationships that our technical managers have with our suppliers. They are able to share their expertise and cross-industry experience and working together they continuously improve the processes and controls used to bring our great quality Tesco brand product offer to our customers. Our suppliers tell us that being approved to supply Tesco brand product is an indicator of success for them and often helps them grow their business with other customers.



Owning our safety and quality control processes and operating close to our suppliers means that we can be agile in responding to changing technology and emerging risks. We ensure our teams spend time on the factory floor to really see what is going on rather than focussing solely on paperwork and systems. A supportive and collaborative relationship with our suppliers ensures that our customers will receive the best quality products at the best price. Together we will make what matters, better.

A case study – Food products

Becoming a supplier of a Tesco brand food product

Before we start working with a new supplier we check that they are able to meet our standards. If they do not have the right knowledge and skills in place we will work with that supplier to understand how to build those to the right level. Then before we begin working together, a thorough on-site audit against our relevant standard is completed by our approved auditors. Any issues identified must be followed up by our technical team before the site can be approved to supply us.

In addition to a detailed site assessment, we undertake a series of additional tests and checks. We agree the exact specification for every product we sell with each of our suppliers in advance. Each specification has to be uploaded to our online database and, once approved, this specification is locked and cannot be changed by the supplier without our consent. For meat products for example, this includes among other things, the cuts of meat to be used and the country of origin of the meat, the quality grade, species, and microbiological criteria. Before any products reach our shelves we also conduct a series of tests to ensure the product meets our specification and is of the correct quality. We complete microbiological, nutritional and shelf life trials, undertake factory production trials, and agree labelling and packaging. This is how we make sure that what's on the label is in the pack

Ongoing checks and processes for food supply



Once a supplier has been approved, we have an ongoing programme of site visits, audits and product surveillance to ensure our standards are being maintained. These processes are in addition to those carried out by the relevant food authority and the suppliers themselves.

All our audits are completed by approved auditors. All non-conformances are followed up with the supplier by our technical team. Audit frequency is determined by the level of risk associated with the product and the on-going performance of the supplier. If at any point significant failings are detected at a supplying site, production will be suspended until the issue is resolved. In addition to our ongoing site audits, we have a comprehensive program of product testing and surveillance. Our product testing can be broadly split in to four categories:

1. Chemical and microbiological testing – measuring compliance against the product specification and good manufacturing processes
2. Authenticity testing – designed to make sure that what’s on the label is in the pack
3. Contaminants testing – designed to identify natural, process linked or industrial contamination of food
4. Quality testing – by trained customers against our selected benchmarks

Our testing programmes are risk-based and cover all products. They include routine surveillance and monitoring as well as projects set up in response to emerging issues identified from our horizon scanning programmes, incidents or investigations.

Protecting our product through our distribution networks and stores

Making sure all the food that Tesco sells is safe is an integral part of the way that we do business. We are committed to comply with all relevant food safety laws and achieving the highest standards. We do all that is possible to preserve the safety and quality of all products from the moment we receive delivery from the supplier right through to when we deliver it to our customers.



We have a well-established and comprehensive food safety management system within our stores and distribution centers. We ensure that our store colleagues understand what good looks like and the key principles of food safety and hygiene. They undertake a comprehensive induction, as well as an ongoing training programme that is refreshed on a routine basis.

Thorough daily checks ensure that the quality and safety of our food is maintained. These checks are recorded, then inspected and signed off routinely by our senior retail management team, as part of our strict governance process.

We have a rigorous store audit programme which looks at temperature control of our products, management of cross contamination risks, maintenance of personal hygiene standards, management of cleanliness of our stores and equipment, pest control measures, stock rotation and labelling procedures, the delivery of food hygiene training and management of waste.

To support our commitment to food safety and hygiene we have a team of highly experienced Food Safety Risk Managers, who have post graduate qualifications in food safety risk management and manage and implement robust food safety policies and procedures.