

Priority Classification System

Version 5

September 2025



Introduction

The NSW Food Authority is responsible for regulating food at the NSW state government level.

The Food Authority was established by the *NSW Food Act 2003*.

The Act provides that a person in NSW must comply with all relevant requirements set out in the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) *Food Standards Code* (The Code). The Act allows the Food Authority to make regulations called 'Food Safety Schemes'. Food Safety Schemes are the mechanism by which NSW-only regulatory food safety risk management interventions, such as licensing and food safety programs (FSPs), are mandated in NSW.

Food safety programs and the *Food Act 2003*

The NSW Food Act 2003 (s93) requires that the Food Authority determine:

- a) *"the priority classification of individual food businesses for the purposes of the application of any requirements of the regulations relating to food safety programs, and*
- b) *the frequency of auditing of any food safety programs required to be prepared by the regulations in relation to the food business."*

Further:

"The determination must be made having regard to a priority classification system for types of food businesses approved by the Food Authority".

The Food Authority's Priority Classification System is documented on the following pages.

Priority classification

The Food Authority uses the national risk profiling tool, called the [Food Safety Risk Priority Classification Framework](#) (RPF) to priority classify NSW food businesses. The RPF comprises two decision trees; one each for primary production and food businesses. There are four (4) possible classification outcomes:

- Priority 1 (P1)
- Priority 2 (P2)
- Priority 3 (P3)
- Priority 4 (P4).

Businesses in the P1 tier represent the highest food safety risk and P4 businesses the lowest food safety risk. The risk status of P2 and P3 businesses are intermediate between these extremes. Some example classifications are provided in Table 1.

For businesses that handle many types of foods or undertake diverse processes the classification of the business is that of the highest classification applicable to any of the hazards associated with any of the products handled. For example, a caterer may prepare dry biscuits as an afternoon tea/dessert menu item which on its own would attract a P3 priority classification (RPF Pathway: FB 1a,b,2a,b,c,d,No). However, caterers are P1 because they also produce large volumes of high risk foods (RPF Pathway: FB 1a,2a,3a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,Yes).

NSW Food Authority food business priority classifications

The Food Regulation 2025 establishes a requirement for certain NSW food businesses to be licensed with the NSW Food Authority. Some of these businesses are also required to implement and maintain food safety programs. The Food Authority characterises the nature of food handling by licensed businesses via 'licence permissions'. The priority classifications for all licence permissions where a food safety program is required are provided in Table 2.

Table 1: Sample Risk Profile Framework (RPF) Priority Classifications

Business type	Hazard	RPF Pathway				Priority class	Rationale/comments
		PP/FB 1	PP/FB 2	PP/FB 3	PP4		
Whole grain farm	Pyrrolizidine Alkaloids	PP a,b	2,a,No	-	-	P4	Small seed size contaminants sieved out by food processors.
Pig farm	<i>Salmonella</i>	PP a	2	a,b, No	-	P3	Slaughtering less than 24 hrs off-feed minimises levels and is practical but is not critical for safety at consumption. Q3b – CCP is at processing and is supported by very low levels at retail (Coates <i>et al.</i> , 1997).
Baby formula processor	<i>Salmonella</i> & <i>Cronobacter</i>	FB a,b	a,b,c	a,b,c,d,e Yes	-	P1	Baby formula is specifically made for infants – vulnerable population – critical control is unreliable as evidenced by repeated problems with infant formula – e.g. <i>Salmonella</i> and <i>Cronobacter sakazakii</i> .
Canned food processor	Microbial	FB a,b	a,b,c,d,e	a,b,c, No	-	P2	Canned food by definition in Q2a are ‘PHF’ that is, can support microbial growth. Effective control can be had by packaging and retorting.
Caterer	Microbial	FB a	a	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h, No	-	P1	Unreliable as evidenced by outbreaks in the community in association with food manufactured for catering purposes.

Dry goods storage & transport	Microbial	FB a,b,c,No	-	-	-	P4	Low water activity.
Hospital	Microbial	FB a	a	a,b,c,d,e	Yes -	P1	Vulnerable clients.
Restaurant (express order)	Microbial	FB a	a	a,b,c,d,e,f,g	No -	P2	High risk foods, hot holding but small distribution.

Table 2: Priority classifications of food businesses licensed by the Food Authority

Licence permission	Priority classification
Dairy Food Safety Scheme	
Operate a dairy primary production business	P3
Operate a dairy processing business	P1
Operate a dairy processing business and a dairy primary production business	P1
Collect and transport milk and liquid milk products from a dairy primary production business to a dairy processing business	P3
Meat Food Safety Scheme	
Operate an abattoir, slaughtering non-red meat animals	P1
Operate an abattoir, slaughtering red meat animals	P1
Operate a game meat field depot	P2
Operate a game meat field harvesting van	P2
Operate a game meat primary processing plant	P2
Operate a game meat primary processing plant (manufacturing ready to eat meat products and/or uncooked comminuted fermented meat products)	P1
Operate a meat processing plant	P2
Operate a meat processing plant, including production of ready to eat products (and/or uncooked comminuted fermented meat products)	P1
Operate a meat retail premises	P2
Operate a meat retail premises, including production of ready to eat meats (and/or uncooked comminuted fermented meat products)	P1
Operate a rendering plant	P3
Seafood Food Safety Scheme	
Operate an aquaculture business, including the processing of seafood, but not including shellfish	P2
Operate an aquaculture business, including the processing of seafood and ready to eat products, but not including shellfish	P1
Operate a seafood processing business	P2

Operate a seafood processing business, including ready to eat products	P1
Operate a seafood processing business, including ready to eat products and shellfish wet storage	P1
Operate a shellfish depuration plant	P1
Cultivate and/or harvest shellfish	P1
Collect wild shellfish	P1
Operate a shellfish wet storage plant	P2
Plant Products Food Safety Scheme	
Operate a plant products processing business	P1
Operate a horticulture primary production business growing and/or harvesting leafy vegetables	P1
Operate a business that conducts washing, trimming, sorting, sanitising, storing, combining, packing or transporting leafy vegetables	P2
Operate a horticulture primary production business growing and/or harvesting melons	P1
Operate a business that conducts washing, trimming, sorting, sanitising, storing, combining, packing or transporting melons	P2
Vulnerable Persons Food Safety Scheme	
Food service to vulnerable persons	P1
Egg Food Safety Scheme	
Operate an egg primary production business (including washing eggs and/or examining eggs to detect cracks)	P2
Operate an egg processing business	P1
Operate an egg processing business and an egg primary production business	P1
All schemes	
Operate a cold food storage business (including storing meat products)	P2
Operate a cold food storage business holding Commonwealth export certification (excluding storing meat products)	P2

More information

- Visit www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- Email food.contact@dpird.nsw.gov.au
- Phone 1300 552 406

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