

SOP Template: Allergen Management and Cross-Contamination Prevention

This SOP details **allergen management and cross-contamination prevention** strategies, encompassing identification and labeling of allergens, segregation of allergenic ingredients, cleaning and sanitation protocols, staff training and awareness, monitoring and verification procedures, supplier control, and response plans for allergen exposure incidents. The objective is to safeguard consumers by minimizing the risk of allergen contamination throughout the production process, ensuring product safety and compliance with regulatory standards.

1. Scope

This SOP applies to all staff and processes involved in the procurement, storage, handling, production, packaging, and distribution of food products where allergens may be present.

2. Responsibilities

- **QA Manager:** Oversees implementation and compliance, reviews procedures, validates cleaning and testing protocols.
- **Production Staff:** Adheres to allergen handling and cross-contamination procedures.
- **Procurement:** Ensures supplier compliance and accurate labeling of allergens in raw materials.
- **Training Coordinator:** Delivers ongoing allergen awareness training to all employees.

3. Identification and Labeling of Allergens

- Maintain an up-to-date list of all allergens present onsite, based on regulatory requirements (e.g., milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, etc.).
- Review all incoming ingredients and finished products for allergen contents.
- Clearly label all raw materials, intermediate and finished products containing allergens.
- Ensure that allergen labeling on packaging meets all local and export regulatory requirements.

4. Segregation of Allergenic Ingredients

- Store allergenic ingredients in clearly designated areas with appropriate signage.
- Segregate allergenic ingredients from non-allergen ingredients during storage, processing, and packaging.
- Use color-coded containers and utensils to avoid mixing of allergens and non-allergens.
- If possible, use dedicated production lines for allergen-containing products.

5. Cleaning and Sanitation Protocols

- Develop and validate detailed cleaning procedures to eliminate allergen residues from equipment and surfaces.
- Document cleaning schedules and ensure verification after allergen handling (e.g., ATP or swab tests).
- Conduct periodic environmental monitoring for allergen residues.

6. Staff Training and Awareness

- Provide comprehensive training on allergen risks, cross-contamination, and SOPs for all employees.
- Refresh training annually or when changes in procedure occur.
- Display allergen awareness signage in critical areas.

7. Monitoring and Verification Procedures

- Perform regular audits of allergen control measures.
- Maintain records of allergen checks, cleaning validation, and training sessions.
- Establish a traceability system for allergen-containing materials and finished products.

8. Supplier Control

- Approve suppliers based on their allergen management policies and documentation.
- Require allergen declarations for all incoming ingredients.
- Review supplier allergen information periodically.

9. Response Plan for Allergen Exposure Incidents

- Immediately isolate affected products in case of accidental allergen exposure or contamination.
- Assess and implement product holds, withdrawals, or recalls as required.
- Investigate root cause and document corrective actions.
- Notify regulatory authorities and customers as necessary.

10. Record Keeping

- Maintain all allergen management records for a minimum of 2 years or as required by regulations.
- Ensure records are readily accessible for audit purposes.

11. Review and Revision

- Review this SOP annually or following allergen-related incidents, regulatory changes, or process modifications.
- Document and communicate any changes to staff promptly.