

Strengthening Food Safety Culture

Organized by: IAFP's Food Safety Culture (PDG)

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Strengthening Food Safety Culture

Webinar March 2025

Better Food. Better Health. Better World.



Agenda

- Introduction
- Food Safety Culture
 - Elements of food safety culture
 - Reflection on daily practice
 - Measuring food safety performance
 - General areas to work on

Introduction

Team for today



Sabahnur Demirci

Vice President, Expert Partners
- North America



Geert-Jan Rens

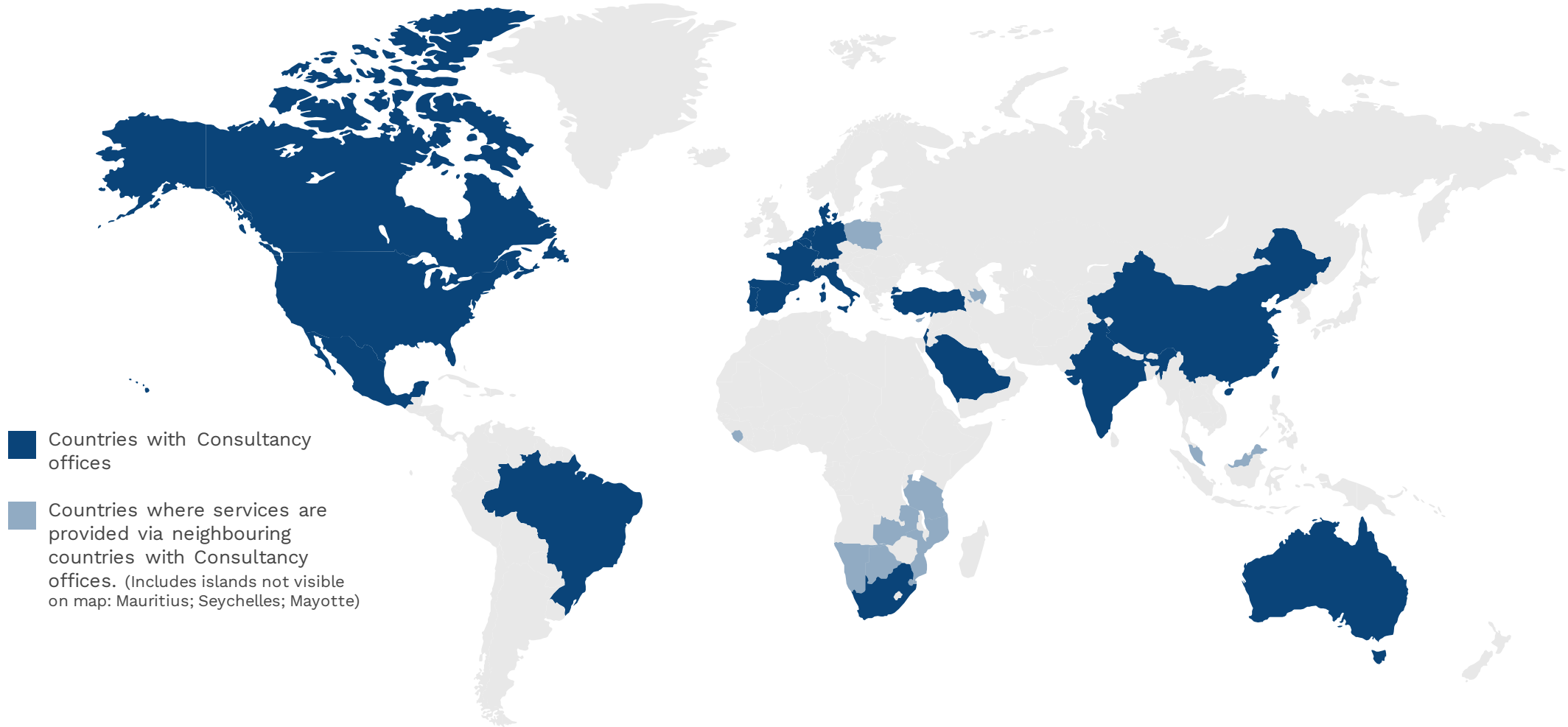
Principal Consultant Business Assurance
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Expert Partners Europe



Tim Coeck

Food Safety Consultant & Quality
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Expert Partners Europe

Consulting – Global Network of Experts



Food Safety Culture

Introduction

Different stages of improving food safety



Poll:

Has your organization implemented a food safety culture system ?

- No, we haven't taken any steps yet.
- Yes, we discuss it but haven't formalized anything.
- Yes, we've started some initiatives.
- Yes, we have a documented system in place, with actions taken and regularly reevaluated.

GFSI position paper

- At the end of 2018, GFSI wrote a position paper on food safety culture to support companies in defining and improving their culture.
- This topic is then included in the various food standards.



Definition Food Safety Culture

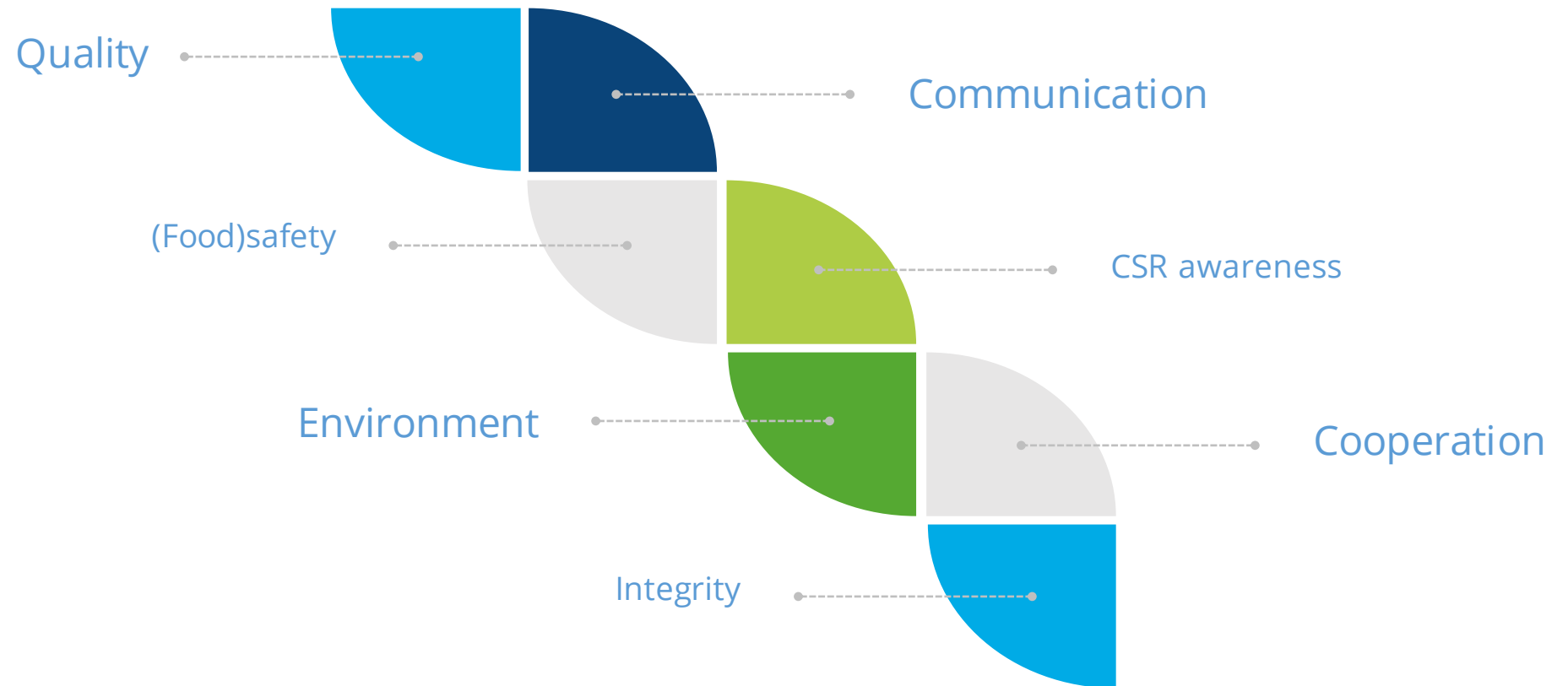
- shared values, beliefs and norms that
- affect mindset and behaviour toward food safety
- in, across and throughout an organization.”

In other words:

The behaviour that all employees in the company naturally exhibit without supervisor supervision

Alignment with company culture

Food safety is an important aspect of business operations



Culture Elements

Elements of food safety culture



Leadership

- Setting out KPIs and policies and boundaries
- Taking the lead
- Providing guidance needed to staff
- Role model for proper behaviour
- Approachable and present
- Opportunities for continuous improvement
- Allocating right resources for food safety and quality initiatives



Communication

- Clear communication of roles and responsibilities
- Food safety on the agenda of a meeting
- Who communicates what in which meeting (issues, complaints)
- Discussing the “correct behaviour” in meetings, training, videos, ...
- Bring food safety behaviour to the attention
- Use of bill boards, new letters, TC screens



Involvement

- Basic condition for discussing Food Safety Culture
- Connected to the company and its purpose
- Interest in well being of the coworker
- Advises others to work for the company
- Demonstrating the right behaviour when there is no control, willingness to make it right!

Commitment to Food safety

- Employee motivation to work in a food safe manner
- Employee awareness to respond immediately to opportunities and threats
- Employees show the desired behaviour
- Employees recognize problems and are committed to continuous improvement

Resources

- Time to do the work (properly)
- Number of employees
- Proper tools and equipment
- Protective clothing
- Cleaning tools
- Workplace equipment
- Information



Risk awareness

- Knowledge of the risks present in the company;
- Awareness of one's own impact on preventive and corrective actions
- Discussing risks, evaluation working methods
- Training on food risks



Poll 2

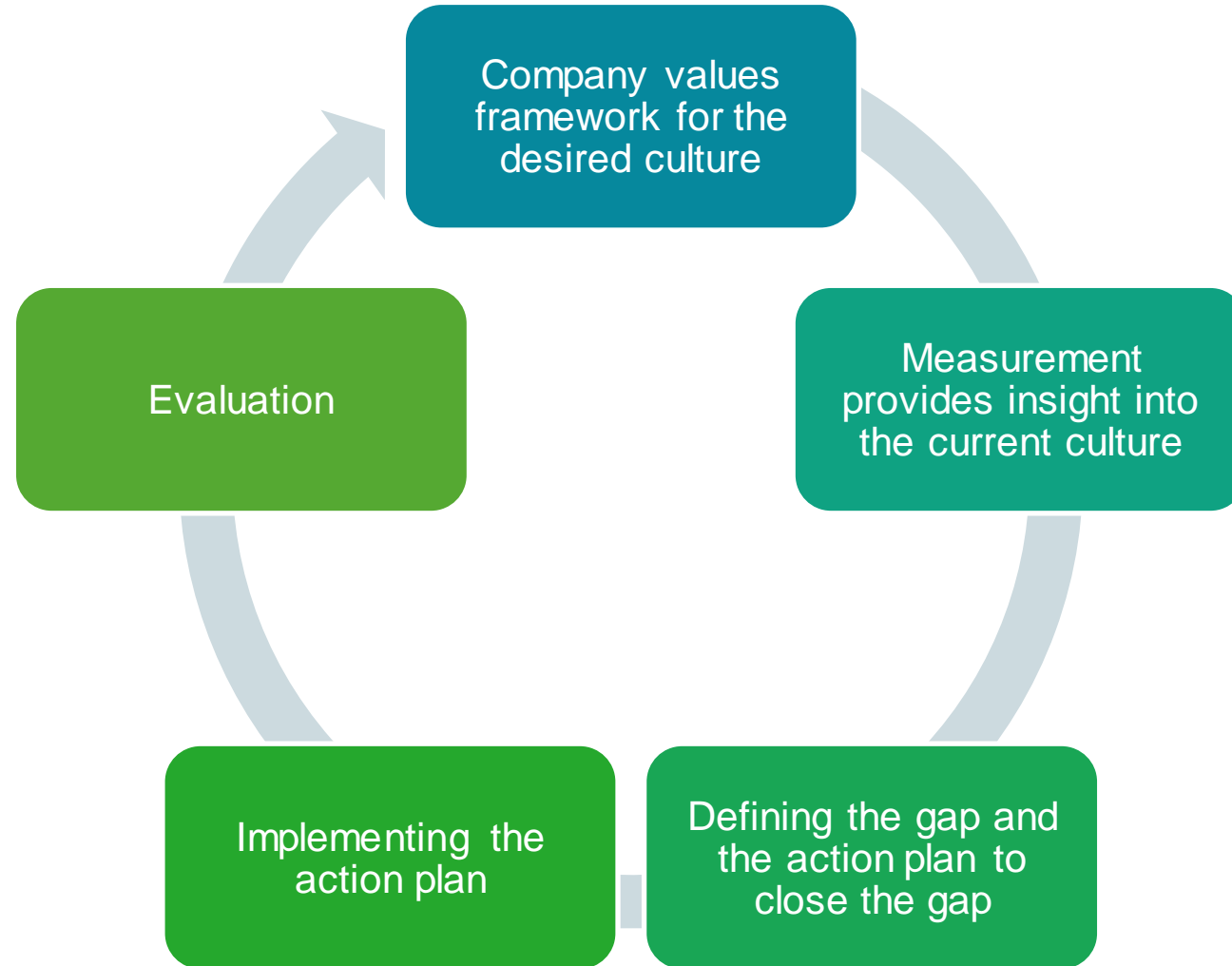


Which element is the most challenging in your organization?

Reflection on daily practice

What activities are in place to improve culture

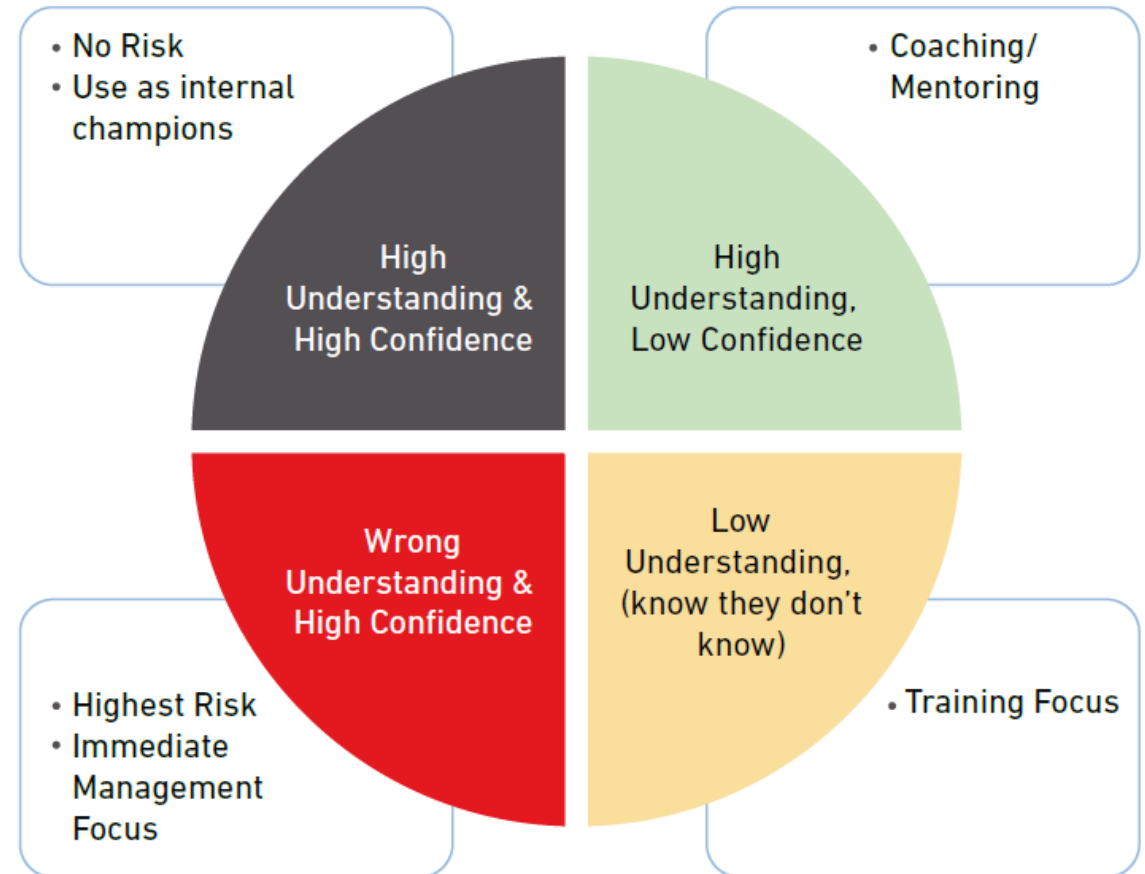
Improving food safety culture



Improving food safety culture leadership

- Develop and implement
- Coaching/supporting
- Train
- Direct/control

GFSI position paper



Improving food safety culture

Improvement is a Choice!

- ❑ **Scenario:**
Tired of reminding your teenager to close the door?
- ❑ **Solution:**
Install a door closer!



Actions to improve leadership

- Make safety and quality everybody's responsibility
- Training leadership for operational managers (shift leader, team leaders)
- Stressing the importance of food safety related to occupational health and safety and production performance
- Setting clear goals on Food safety performance
- Presence of the shop floor, monitoring and discussing behaviour
- Telling stories of proper behaviour (during a recall, incident)
- Implementation of sanction management

Safety First

Food safety and
Product Quality
Second

Operational
Excellence
Third

Actions to improve communication

TALK ABOUT FOOD SAFETY

- On the agenda of every daily work meeting and the weekly planning meeting
- KPI measures on management boards
- Inspiring people on importance during company townhall meetings
- Sharing information on issues, complaints, recalls and its improvement measures

Actions to improve risk awareness

- Training on HACCP
 - According to the standard once a year is sufficient, but...
 - Follow up training
- Use of toolboxes, short training
 - Alignment with trainings on occupational health and safety
- Discussing proper behaviour in the team
 - Be clear of the guidelines, rules,
- Training for external staff (for instance technical engineers)

Actions to improve resources

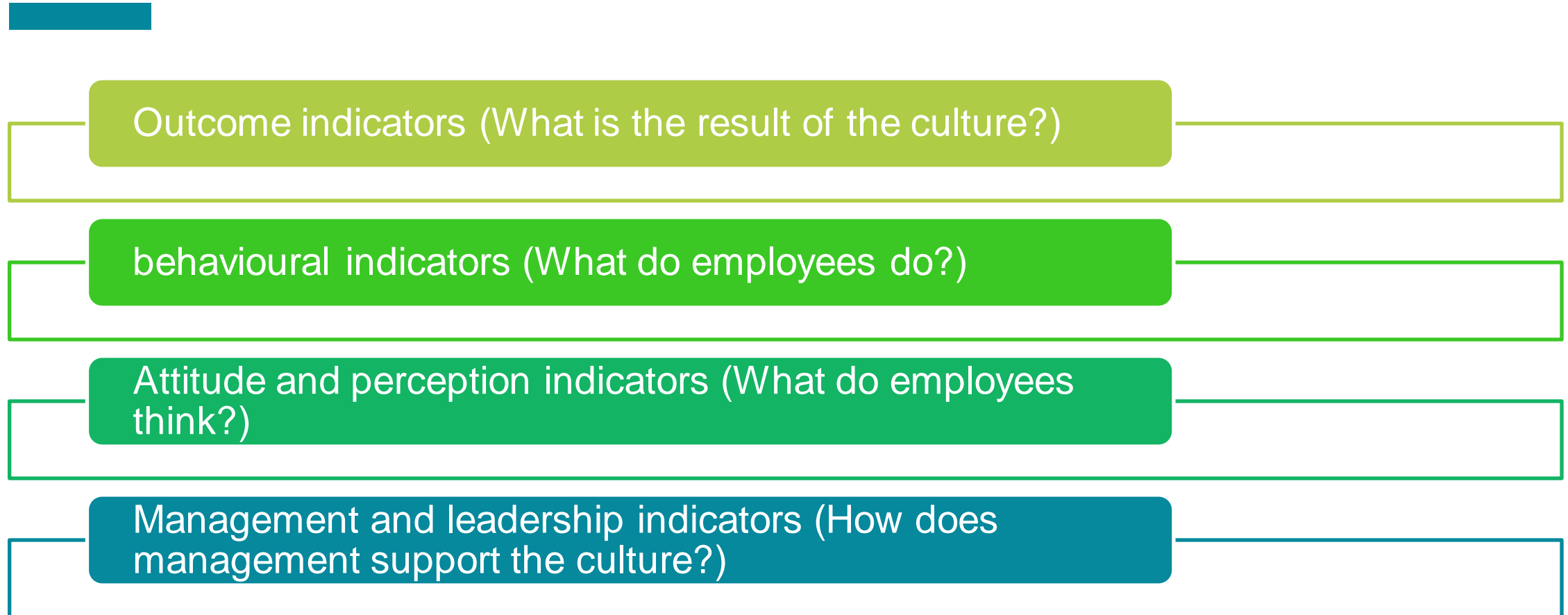
- Clothes of the company: availability, size, clean, with company logo
- Hygiene locks
- Number of staff in the different departments (QA/QC/Technical department)
- Condition and maintenance of the building and installations
- Speed at which issues are picked up and resolved

Actions to improve Involvement

- Training leadership for operational managers (shift leader, team leaders)
- Appreciation and recognition
- Involvement in changes, improvements
- Listening to suggestions, issues
- Assessment of the composition of the team, the level of the division
- An eye for the differences between people!

Measuring food safety performance

Back to the basics: we want food safe



Outcome indicators (What is the result of the culture?)

- Results of inspection and other rounds
- Audit results and compliance – Are there any trends in internal and external audit scores?
- Number and severity of blockages, recalls and customer complaints – Are there any improvements?
 - Root cause investigation and improvements implemented
- Turnover and absenteeism – A poor food safety culture can contribute to a stressful work environment, leading to higher turnover and absenteeism.

Behavioural indicators

- Number and type of reported incidents (issues and deviations) – Provides insight into openness and risk awareness.
- Enforcement of hygiene and safety protocols – For example, through observations or audits on hand hygiene, allergen management, etc.
- Response to food safety issues – Are deviations reported and followed up immediately?
- Use of checklists and forms – Are they completed correctly and on time or only used as 'checklists'?

Attitude and perception indicators (What do employees think?)

- Employee engagement in food safety – For example, measured through surveys or interviews.
- Level of risk awareness – Can employees identify the biggest food safety risks? For example, measured during audits or training
- Feedback culture – Do employees feel safe to report mistakes or concerns without fear ? For example, measured through surveys or interviews.

Management and leadership indicators (How does management support the culture?)

- Number and quality of food safety training – Are they repeated periodically? How many employees do they actually follow? What do people think of the quality of the training? Is the training followed up and/or supported by other training activities (toolbox, one-point lessons)
- Frequency of communication about food safety – Is food safety actively discussed in meetings, which ones and when? Is there an issue, reporting, dash board to discuss
- Budget and resources for food safety – How much does the company invest in this compared to other aspect (Efficiency, H&S, Sustainability)?
- Leadership engagement – Do managers visit the workplace and actively address employees about food safety issues? Do they lead by example?

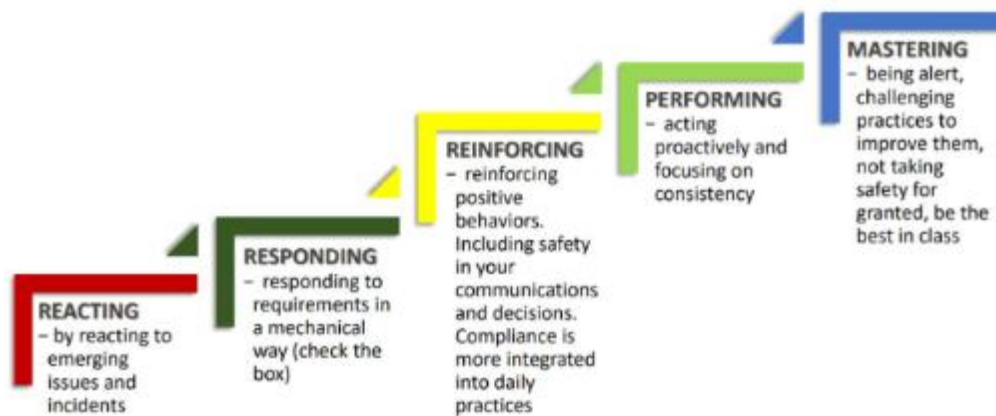
General areas to work on

Next steps



Development of maturity model

Maturity model



- Maturity description of GFSI position paper

Appendix 4: Education and Training Maturity Model

Education and Training Maturity Model		Maturity Model Phases				
		1	2	3	4	5
Senior Management	Maturity Characteristics	No recognition from executives that training for this population is necessary. Food safety seen as Quality Assurance issue only. Training materials non-validated or poorly produced, content weak. Does not target specific company. Training not always required, no performance evaluation. Executives delegate food safety responsibilities to Quality Assurance and Quality Control. Limited or no communication between the two groups. Food safety concept not universally understood among senior management levels. Training materials, if existent, focus primarily on personal hygiene. Senior management does not monitor money spent on food safety training programs.	Company operates in reactive mode regarding food safety issues, no action other than in response to customer's recall or other regulatory results. No formal system for training exists. Some senior executives construct, not all senior management attend. No formal training of competence and understanding. Senior management may understand food safety, but consider it the responsibility of the Quality Assurance and Quality Control teams. Information regarding food safety is obtained sporadically to specific occasions, generally regarding a crisis. Lack of foundational information creates a wall for product decision-making and limits ability to affect positive change and continuous improvement. Training materials go beyond personal hygiene, but are more rules-focused without addressing risks.	Beginning of systems development to provide training, manage information and record performance. All executives receive food safety training and achieve a clear understanding of their own food safety program components. Additional training for critical food safety personnel. Customer satisfaction mechanism established to keep executives updated on food safety program status. Senior management begins to engage with food safety issues and support the Quality Assurance and Quality Control teams.	Proactive food safety management incorporated into regular communications from senior management. Formal system of management training in place and implemented. Senior management comfortable discussing key risks and control measures. Has system in place to evaluate employee understanding and performance. Food safety data and communication shared with senior executives routinely and discussed for increased food safety comprehension within the team. Key business decisions considered with food safety in mind. Training materials highlight food safety's importance for personnel and facility, including equipment and routine practices, risks, and possible consequences. Senior management strongly supports Quality Assurance and Quality Control teams, and food safety results are followed systematically. Senior management looks to middle management for specific regarding food safety training's return on investment (ROI).	Food safety training integral to senior management roles, tailored to specific areas but all executives can explain key risk areas, controls and why food safety culture is essential across the organization. Executive view food safety as fundamentally important and potentially a business differentiator. Executives keep current on food safety issues across the industry, and actively question performance training materials to emphasize the importance of food safety for personnel and facilities. Attention given to equipment and routine practices, risks, possible consequences, to stimulate proactive and predictive actions. Senior management strongly supports the Quality Assurance and Quality Control teams. Incentivizes them to promote continuous improvement via graduation courses, participation in external continuing seminars, etc. Senior management understands return on investment (ROI) of training programs.





—
Thank you

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