

ANNEX AF.1 GLOBALG.A.P GUIDELINE | RISK ASSESSMENT - GENERAL**Introduction to Risk Assessment**

In the GLOBALG.A.P IFA Standard a number of risk assessments are required in order to facilitate food safety, workers health and safety and environmental protection. This guidance document provides assistance to producers.

Five steps to risk assessment

A risk assessment is an important step in protecting the products, workers and business, as well as complying with GLOBALG.A.P requirements and the law. It helps you to focus on the risks that really matter in the workplace – the ones with the potential to cause real harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can readily control risks, for example ensuring spillages are cleaned up promptly so product cannot be contaminated. For most, that means simple, cheap and effective measures to ensure that the products, the environment and workers are protected.

It is not expected that you eliminate all risk, but you are required to protect your products and workers as far as 'reasonably practicable'. This guide tells you how to achieve that with a minimum of fuss.

This is not the only way to do a risk assessment, there are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, we believe this method is the most straightforward for most organisations.

What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to the product, environment and workers, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Workers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.

Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and affect the business too if output is lost or you have to go to court. Producers are legally required to assess the risks in their workplace so that a plan to control the risks can be put in place.

How to assess the risks in your enterprise

Step 1 Identify the hazards

Step 2 Decide who/what might be harmed and how

Step 3 Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Step 4 Record the findings and implement them

Step 5 Review the assessment and update if necessary

Don't overcomplicate the process. In many enterprises, the risks are well known and the necessary control measures are easy to apply. Check that you have taken reasonable precautions to avoid contamination and injury.

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember:

- a **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders etc;
- the **risk** is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

Step 1 Identify the hazards

First you need to work out how product, environment or workers could be harmed. Here are some tips to help identify the ones that matter:

- Walk around the workplace and look at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm.
- Ask the workers (if applicable) or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious to you.
- Check manufacturers' instructions or data sheets for chemicals and equipment, as they can be very helpful in spelling out the hazards and putting them in their true perspective.
- Have a look back at incidence and accident records – these often help to identify the less obvious hazards. Remember to think about long-term hazards to health (e.g. high levels of noise or exposure to harmful substances) as well as (food) safety hazards.

Step 2 Decide who/what might be harmed and how

For each hazard you need to be clear about who or what might be harmed; it will help to identify the best way of managing the risk.

Remember:

- some activities have particular requirements, e.g. harvesting. Extra thought will be needed for some hazards;
- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers etc, who may not be in the workplace all the time;

Step 3 Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Having spotted the hazards, you then have to decide what to do about them. The law requires you to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm. You can work this out for yourself, but the easiest way is to compare what is being done with good practice.

So first, look at what you're already doing, think about what controls you have in place and how the work is organised. Then compare this with the good practice and see if there's more you should be doing to bring yourself up to standard. In asking yourself this, consider:

- Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
- If not, how can I control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

When controlling risks, apply the principles below, if possible in the following order:

- try a less risky option (e.g. switch to using a less hazardous chemical);
- prevent access to the hazard (e.g. by guarding);
- organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard ;
- issue personal protective equipment (e.g. clothing, footwear, goggles etc); and
- provide welfare facilities (e.g. first aid and washing facilities for removal of contamination).

Improving health and safety need not cost a lot. For instance, placing a mirror on a dangerous blind corner to help prevent vehicle accidents is a low-cost precaution considering the risks. Failure to take simple precautions can cost you a lot more if an accident does happen.

Involve staff (if applicable), so that you can be sure that what you propose to do will work in practice and won't introduce any new hazards.

ENGLISH VERSION

Step 4 Record the findings and implement them

Putting the results of the risk assessment into practice will make a difference when looking after food safety, workers health and safety and your business.

Writing down the results of the risk assessment, and sharing them with your staff, encourages you to do this.

When writing down the results, keep it simple, for example 'contamination at harvest: hand-washing facilities at the field.

It is not expected that the risk assessment be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. You need to be able to show that:

- a proper check was made;
- you asked who or what might be affected;
- you dealt with all the significant hazards,
- the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low; and
- you involved your staff or their representatives (where applicable) in the process.

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things such as:

- temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place;
- long-term solutions to those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill health;
- long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences;
- arrangements for training employees on the main risks that remain and how they are to be controlled;
- regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place; and
- clear responsibilities – who will lead on what action, and by when.

Remember, prioritise and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan.

Step 5 Review the risk assessment and update if necessary

Few enterprises stay the same. Sooner or later, you will bring in new equipment, substances and procedures that could lead to new hazards. It makes sense, therefore, to review what you are doing on an ongoing basis. Every year formally review where you are, to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

Look at your risk assessment again:

- Have there been any changes?
- Are there improvements you still need to make?
- Have your workers spotted a problem?
- Have you learnt anything from incidences or near misses?
- **Make sure your risk assessment stays up to date.**

When you are running a business it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment – until something has gone wrong and it's too late. Why not set a review date for this risk assessment now? Write it down and note it in your diary as an annual event.

During the year, if there is a significant change, don't wait. Check the risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you're planning a change – that way there is more flexibility.

Source: Five steps to risk assessment, Health and Safety Executive; www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf