

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 1 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE
2. SCOPE
3. BACKGROUND
4. DEFINITIONS
5. ACRONYMS
6. RESPONSIBILITY
7. PROCEDURES
8. RELATED DOCUMENTS (Includes References, Attachments)
9. EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED
10. SAFETY
11. CIRCULATION
12. APPROVAL/DOCUMENT HISTORY

1. PURPOSE

This procedure describes the process used to implement the Food Innovation Team (FIT), a subcommittee of the Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force (FSDTF).

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to FIT members, FSDTF members, staff of the Food and Feed Safety Division (FFSD) of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), and others as defined in Section 6 – Responsibility.

3. BACKGROUND

Most food businesses in Minnesota receive a license to do business from the MDA, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), or their delegated agencies (DAs) with relative ease. However, some food business owners (FBOs) may encounter delays in licensing, or determination of exemption or exclusion from licensing due to a number of factors that may not be easily solved without assistance. The FSDTF is statutorily responsible (MN Statute 28A.21) for a number of duties related to assisting FBOs including providing advice and coordination to state agencies and serving as a source of information and referral for the public concerned with food safety. The FSDTF created FIT to help answer questions and assist FBOs in navigating Minnesota’s food licensing and regulatory environment.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 2 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

4. DEFINITIONS

Data Privacy Tennessee Warning – A warning or notice provided to individuals when an entity collects information from them.

5. ACRONYMS

DA – Delegated Agency

FBO - Food Business Owner

FFSD – Food and Feed Safety Division of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture

FIT - Food Innovation Team

FSDTF – Food Safety and Defense Task Force

PSIF - Pre-Screening Intake Form

MDA – Minnesota Department of Agriculture

MDH – Minnesota Department of Health

MFMA - Minnesota Farmers Market Association

MISA - Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

RTC - Renewing the Countryside

6. RESPONSIBILITY

The roles defined in this section are in reference to and are further described in the Procedures section below.

FIT Membership - may ask a Food Business Owner (FBO) to fill out the Pre-Screening Intake Form (PSIF) to start the data collection process. FIT members will contribute to the finalization of FIT meeting agendas, request the presence of ad-hoc experts to assist in answering questions during meetings, make recommendations to the FSDTF regarding applicants for FIT membership, aid the FIT Chair in reviewing and generating recommendation reports, and aid the FIT Chair in establishing a reasonable case review timeline.

FIT Chair – will facilitate a recommendation from FIT, ensure data that is collected is recorded in an appropriate repository, ensure that individuals participating in FIT – including in FIT meetings – are aware of the Data Privacy Warning for information that

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 3 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

is shared, develop agendas, distribute reports to interested parties, and schedule FIT meetings.

FIT Meeting Attendees & Ad-Hoc Experts – may be called upon on occasion to help clarify food safety issues. Meeting attendees and ad hoc experts will be made aware of the Data Privacy Warning for information that is shared in the FIT process.

FSDTF Chair – will communicate vacancies in FIT to applicable entities and will approve new FIT members.

FSDTF Membership – Serve as advisory body for FIT, make recommendations as necessary to the Governor’s office.

MDA Food & Feed Safety Director or Designee – may request the presence of an ad-hoc expert(s) in FIT meetings on behalf of MDA, MDH, or DAs. Will convene FIT meetings on behalf of MDA, MDH, or DAs (upon their request) and aid the FIT Chair in developing the agenda. Will facilitate staff availability to assist in generating and distributing recommendation reports, aid the FIT Chair in developing a timeline, and will provide available resources necessary to accomplish this task. Will maintain FIT content on the FSDTF website including meeting announcements, posting of agendas and minutes, and publishing updated documents and reports.

MDA/MDH/DA Supervisors - may ask a FBO to fill out the PSIF to start the data collection process.

Members of food maker organizations - members of organizations such as the Minnesota Farmers Market Association (MFMA), Renewing the Countryside (RTC), the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), and others may ask a food business owner to fill out the PSIF to start the data collection process.

FBO - may request a FIT meeting and may request the presence of a particular ad hoc expert or individual(s) to be present during the FIT meeting.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 4 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

7. PROCEDURES

7.1 Membership

- 7.1.1 If no current FIT members exist, candidates will be recommended and screened by the FSDTF chairs.
- 7.1.2 Initial membership will be approved by the chairs of the FSDTF.
- 7.1.3 When vacancies occur, individuals interested in becoming a FIT member will fill out a membership application. Applications will be reviewed by the FSDTF chairs.
- 7.1.4 Candidates may be recommended by current FIT members.
- 7.1.5 FIT members must fit these categories:
 - 7.1.5.1 MDA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.2 MDH staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.3 MDA DA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.4 MDH DA staff (1)
 - 7.1.5.5 Local food maker community (1)
 - 7.1.5.6 Local food farming community (1)
 - 7.1.5.7 Local/regional food systems expert or college/university-based (1)
 - 7.1.5.8 Food safety expert, non-agency (1)
- 7.1.6 FIT members receive no compensation
- 7.1.7 FIT members serve for two years. FIT members may re-apply for another two-year term.

7.2 Meetings

7.2.1 Meeting Requests

- 7.2.1.1 When an FBO has encountered a barrier to licensing, or to operating with an exemption or exclusion from licensing, that has not been able to be resolved through regular channels, the FBO may submit a request to the FFSD Director or their designee to convene FIT to review the case in an attempt to clarify regulatory requirements and assist in identifying potential resolutions.
 - 7.2.1.1.1 FBOs may also request a FIT meeting through FIT members, who will then forward the request to the FFSD Director or their designee.
- 7.2.1.2 MDA, MDH, or DAs may request a review by FIT to ascertain if, in fact, the FBO is unable to be licensed or to operate under

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 5 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

an exemption or exclusion from licensing; or if there are other unexplored avenues to legal operation.

7.2.1.3 FIT meetings are called at the discretion of the FFSD Director or designee; with input from MDH, DAs, or local food organizations such as MFMA, RTC or MISA.

7.2.2 PSIF Completion

7.2.2.1 Once a decision to convene FIT has been made, the FBO will fill out a PSIF (which will include a Data Privacy Warning about the data they choose to provide) with assistance from a FIT member. The information on the form contains details about their business model and product process.

7.2.2.2 The Chair of the FIT sub-committee will review the form for completion.

7.2.2.3 The PSIF will be used to develop an agenda as described in Section 7.3.

7.2.2.4 Data collected using the PSIF will be recorded for future reference and analysis.

7.3 Agenda Development

7.3.1 After a FBO fills out a PSIF and is approved for consideration by the FIT, the FIT Chair, in conjunction with the MDA Director or their designee, will develop a preliminary agenda.

7.3.2 The agenda will be developed to address issues raised in the PSIF.

7.3.3 The agenda will be circulated to FIT membership for additions/corrections/etc.

7.3.4 The draft agenda will be finalized at least 24 hours before a scheduled FIT meeting.

7.4 Meeting Logistics

7.4.1 Since FIT meetings are open to the public, an announcement of an upcoming FIT meeting will be made via approved channels, including the FSDTF website.

7.4.2 FIT meetings may take place in person or via conference call or web-enabled video call.

7.4.3 Meetings will take place in connection with meetings of the FSDTF (typically earlier on the day of regularly scheduled FSDTF meetings). FSDTF and FIT meetings will typically take place on the third

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 6 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

Tuesday of every other month starting in January of a calendar year. However, FIT meetings may take place as needed under extenuating circumstances.

7.4.4 The FBO or FIT members may request to the FIT Chair that an ad hoc expert attend a particular meeting.

7.4.4.1 A list of ad hoc experts from each meeting will be maintained by the FIT to refer to for future meetings when their expertise is needed.

7.5 Data Privacy

7.5.1 Anything discussed during a FIT meeting would be subject to open meetings laws and will be open to the public. Note that recipes are not needed in most circumstances. If for any reasons the recipes for a particular food product is needed, the recipes will not be recorded.

7.5.2 Those attending a FIT meeting (members of the FIT, regulators present, ad-hoc meeting attendees present, and any others) will be required to sign-in.

7.5.3 All involved parties in FIT, the FBO, and meeting attendees will be provided with a Data Privacy Tennessee Warning that informs the person that any information they choose to share will be used and shared with those that are involved in the FIT process and are public records.

7.6 Recommendation Reports

7.6.1 At the conclusion of a FIT meeting, a recommendation report will be generated by the FIT chair (with assistance from other FIT members and FFSD Director's staff).

7.6.2 The Task Force will then review and discuss the recommendation report.

7.6.2.1 The FIT chair or designee will provide a summary of the case and recommendations at the Task Force meeting.

7.6.2.2 A FSDTF chair will then open the floor to discussion of the recommendation.

7.6.2.3 FSDTF members can propose any further actions to be taken by the Task Force, including but not limited to creating an ad hoc subcommittee to explore further actions, sponsoring

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 7 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

education, and training opportunities, or making recommendations for changes to Minnesota laws.

- 7.6.3 The report will be sent by the FIT chair to the FBO within two weeks of the FIT meeting.
- 7.6.4 The report will be sent by the FIT chair (with assistance from other FIT members and FFSD Director's staff) to the various regulatory agencies and organizations that participated in the FIT meeting.
- 7.6.5 The information in the report will be used to build a database/repository for future reference.
- 7.6.6 The information in the report may be used to develop guidance documents for reference by FBOs.
- 7.6.7 The nature of the recommendations included in the recommendations report may include the following:
 - 7.6.7.1 FIT may suggest modifications to a FBOs business model in keeping with safe food practices. Regulatory agencies will only participate in these types of discussions if allowed by their internal policies.
 - 7.6.7.2 FIT may suggest or request interpretations of Minnesota Statute or Rule.
 - 7.6.7.3 FIT may suggest changes to Minnesota Statute or Rule to the FSDTF.
 - 7.6.7.4 FIT may recommend business resources to the FBO.
 - 7.6.7.5 FIT does not guarantee licensing or determine if or when a specific license may be issued.

7.7 Timeline for Case Review

- 7.7.1 The PSIF shall be submitted by the 15th of the month preceding a regularly scheduled FIT meeting in order to be considered for the upcoming agenda.
- 7.7.2 Once the FBO submits the PSIF, the form will be reviewed by the MDA FFSD Director or designee. The FBO will be contacted within two weeks to notify the FBO of their place on the next regularly scheduled FIT meeting.
- 7.7.3 The recommendation report and referral to an appropriate licensing authority will be generated by FIT members and will be provided to the FSDTF at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 8 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

recommendation report will be offered to the FBO within two weeks after the conclusion of the FSDTF meeting and will also be made available online at the FSDTF website.

7.7.3.1 The recommendation report findings will be used to identify trends, information gaps, and to identify training needs that the FSDTF may help to provide.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS (includes References, Attachments)

- Attachment 1: Data Privacy Tennessee Warning
- Attachment 2: Pre-Screening Intake Form
- Attachment 3: FIT Membership Application
- Attachment 4: FIT Meeting Sign-In Sheet
- Attachment 5: Recommendation Report Template

9. EQUIPMENT/MATERIALS NEEDED

N/A

10. SAFETY

N/A

11. CIRCULATION

This document will be circulated to the following: MDA FFSD Division Director and applicable FFSD staff; MDH Food, Pools, and Lodging Division Director and applicable MDH staff; FSDTF members; and FIT members. The current version will be stored electronically on the FFSD document control site and a current copy will be maintained on the FSDTF website.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Food Safety and Defense Task Force
Food Innovation Team Subcommittee**

Document: MNTF.SOP.10.01	Page 9 of 8
Version #: 1.2	Effective Date: 03/16/2021
Title: Minnesota Food Safety & Defense Task Force - Food Innovation Team	

APPROVAL/DOCUMENT HISTORY

Document History		
Version #	Status (I, R)	Change History
1	I	Updated section 7.4.3 meeting logistics, and section 7.7.1 timeline for case review.
1.2	R	Updated section 7.6 recommendation reports. Updated section 3 to include determination of exclusion or exemption from licensing.
Approved By:		Date:
FIT Membership		03/16/2021
Approved By:		Date