

A FRESH LOOK AT FOOD SAFETY

As the leading supplier of fresh produce in North America, SYSCO is dedicated to the discipline of food safety—and it shows. We start with the largest team of quality assurance professionals and technical services experts in the industry, all of whom are highly trained in every aspect of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and food safety. These experts partner with like-minded, industry-leading suppliers to implement a stringent quality-control regimen that ensures the highest safety standards from field to fork.

Supplier Accountability

SYSCO produce suppliers must meet specific guidelines for quality assurance by first passing an initial point-based audit that reviews physical, chemical and microbiological attributes of the facility. SYSCO verifies the supplier's Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures, Good Manufacturing Practices, Good Agricultural Practices, food-security programs and employee training. We also perform detailed reviews of adjacent land use, irrigation water quality, soil amendment testing and sanitation practices at fields, plants and coolers. Field specialists verify that Critical Control Points have been maintained, and SYSCO's Quality Assurance (QA) team conducts unannounced supplier audits and inspections. In addition, SYSCO requires independent third-party food-safety audits to verify and validate a supplier's food-safety performance and compliance to HACCP. SYSCO QA professionals personally follow up on any deficiencies that are uncovered by the independent audit.

Product Quality

SYSCO QA monitors SYSCO Branded produce throughout the distribution chain to ensure optimum quality. The QA team selects fields of produce, evaluating them each day and selecting the best product. Team members check the produce again in the cooler to ensure proper shipping temperatures.

In addition to these measures, SYSCO QA performs routine product evaluations and stringent finished-product inspections to help ensure produce meets or exceeds specification requirements for quality, count, weight, temperature and rotation. Suppliers of SYSCO Branded produce must also provide microbiological-sampling and sanitation-monitoring information to help reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Once the produce is harvested, it must be shipped within a specified number of days—sometimes as few as two. This allows SYSCO customers to receive the safest, freshest and highest-quality produce possible.



Product Recalls

If a product recall should become necessary, SYSCO is prepared to deal with it efficiently and effectively. SYSCO Branded product cases bear a code date for product traceability, and suppliers are expected to routinely conduct mock recalls to verify their ability to track product. In addition, SYSCO's QA Department has developed a recall communication system designed to quickly notify those involved of a product recall/withdrawal situation and of any responsibilities they may have in resolving it. Guidelines have also been developed to facilitate communication between the manufacturer or supplier and the SYSCO operating companies involved. This plan minimizes disruptions, describes step-by-step procedures to follow in the event of a recall, and helps protect our customers by ensuring the safety of every product SYSCO distributes.