

CITY OF BULAWAYO



Health Services Department
BULAWAYO

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FOOD HYGIENE

Food hygiene refers to all measures necessary to ensure the safety, soundness and wholesomeness of food at all stages from its growth, production or manufacture until its final consumption.

Food hygiene therefore, seeks to exclude contaminants from entering food. The contaminants can be broadly categorized into:

- i) chemical hazards
- ii) physical hazards
- iii) biological hazards

Contaminants cause food spoilage and food borne illnesses. Food borne illnesses and food borne injuries are at best unpleasant, at worst they can be fatal. Consequences of these are far reaching, outbreaks of food borne illnesses can damage trade and tourism and can lead to loss of earnings, unemployment and litigation. Food spoilage is wasteful.

The Health Services Department through its Environmental Health practitioners regularly conducts inspections in food premises in order to safe guard public health.

In as far as food hygiene is concerned the Environmental Health Practitioners use largely the following pieces of legislation. Public Health Act Chapter 15.09, Food and Food Standards Act Chapter 15.04, Bulawayo (public Health) and (Registration of Premises) By laws.

Bulawayo (Registration of Premises) By laws stipulates the minimum requirements for various food premises. It deals with the design and fittings in food premises amongst other requirements. This piece of legislation aims to ensure that all food premises have the necessary facilities for the hygienic preparation of food.

The Bulawayo (Public Health) By-law has provisions which deal with how food premises are to be maintained and how a food handler should conduct himself/herself in food premises. According to this legislation all people working in food premises (food handlers) have to be medically examined. This is done to exclude people who are carriers of pathogenic micro organism from working in the food preparation area. When a food handler is suffering from

cholera, shigella, flu, septic sores to name but a few they are not allowed to prepare food for the public.

Food and Food Standards Act and all the regulations made under it seek to ensure that the public gets to buy food which is wholesome and sound. Under this Act food has to be properly labeled. It has to have a physical address of where it is manufactured, ingredients, best before date and the wording on the label should not be misleading.

Furthermore this Act deals with:

- a) Adulteration or false description of food
- b) Control of sale, importation and manufacture of food
- c) Control of mixed or compounded foods
- d) Control of blended food.

Food Sampling

The department also does food sampling to ascertain food quality either chemically or bacteriologically and normally a Food Technician would buy food samples from retail outlets and the samples are taken for analysis at the laboratory to ascertain if the physical, chemical or bacteriological parameters of that sample fall within the legal limits. Should they fall outside the legal limits the issue will be taken up with the manufacturer of that food with the view of taking remedial action or prosecution if warranted for.

Food samples can also be taken in cases of suspected food borne illnesses or outbreaks.

A Food Technician is further tasked with taking microbiological swabs from food handlers palms, under the finger nails, working surfaces, cutlery and plates. The results of these bacteriological swabs help the Environmental Health Officer to assess the food hygiene standard within the food premises.