

Code of Ethics for Food Science and Technology Professionals¹

Statement of purpose

Food Industry Professionals are present in Industry (large or SMEs), in Research, and in Services, with very different education backgrounds and job profiles. These are jobs usually within an institution and respond hierarchically to a director or board of directors. However, the ultimate responsibility of the food industry professionals (working in any job profile) is towards the consumers.

The product of the work of food industry professionals has a significant impact on the health of the consumers, on the preservation of natural resources, and even on the way the society is organized. It is thus very important that the professionals working in this industry conduct their activities following the highest ethical standards.

The code of conduct for the Food Professional is here proposed as a tool for:

- Making the Food Professionals aware of their duties to society.
- Increasing consumers trust in the food supply chain.
- Improve the social recognition of the profession.

This code can be adopted by any professional organization at international or national level.

Code of Ethics for Food Science and Technology Professionals

Food scientists, food technologists or food engineers (in the text thereafter, '*FST Professionals*') are professionals who have a broad and a deep understanding of food production with knowledge of the boundaries with food primary production (agriculture, animal husbandry and seafood), the distribution of food products and of consumers.

A *FST professional* is knowledgeable in the central core of food processing and food preservation. The professional has a strong background in food related disciplines: food chemistry and analysis, food safety and microbiology, physical properties of foods and transport properties (heat, mass and momentum), quality management and food legislation. The *FST professional* understands the effect of processing on the wholesomeness of food and the variables relevant for unit operations in food preservation; the impact of food manufacturing on environment and the wider community with reference to sustainability of food production and food security.

This knowledge can be acquired either by Higher Education studies, training, or job experience.

FST professionals feed directly into the food and drink industry workforce, but can also work in related industries or services.

¹Adapted from the *Code of Ethics for Food Science and Technology Professionals*, developed under the project Track Fast: Training Requirements and Careers for Knowledge-based Food Science and Technology in Europe. FP7 KBBE 227220 <https://www.trackfast.eu> (last accessed 11/2017)

Considering that:

- Food consumption has a direct effect on individuals health and well-being, and hence on the national economies.
- There is a growing need to inform the public on safety, quality, wholesomeness and nutritional value of modern food supplies.
- Professionals in the food chain (Food Science and Technology Professionals) have an increased social responsibility towards the consumers.

In the practice of their professions, FST Professionals shall take into consideration the following duties:

Duties of integrity, independence, dignity, honesty and diligence

- Behave as to reflect credit upon the profession.
- Behave as to comply with the duties of honesty, dignity and decorum.
- Exercise the profession without regard to gender, religion, race, social class or political ideology.
- Perform their duties with honesty, fairness and diligence.
- Maintain their professional and scientific independence, refraining from any pressures of stakeholders. Therefore, refuse any favours or gifts that might prejudice professional judgment, nor offer such favours or gifts.
- Declare any conflict between their professional duties and personal interests.

Duty of confidentiality

Unless for reasons of food safety or criminal acts:

- Respect the confidentiality of information gained in the course of professional activity.
- Maintain the secrecy and confidentiality of information that also relates to prospective or former customers and to his staff and employees and all persons who cooperate in the performance of professional activity.

Duties to the consumers

- Protect the public interest in the wholesomeness and safety of any food or drink with which they are concerned.
- Take legitimate steps through proper channels to ensure (or assist in ensuring) the wholesomeness of any food with which he or she is concerned.
- Contribute to the improvement of public knowledge of the basic facts of food safety and sound nutrition.
- Contribute to the provision of scientific input to the further development of legislation in the public interest.
- Report to the competent authorities situations that compromise the quality and safety of foods or represent a hazardous to consumer's health.

- Enforce the provisions of regulations on food and other requirements applicable to the sector, providing appropriate explanations about the content, scope and advising the proper steps to be taken.
- Promote the development of local products and crafts, and industrial development with innovative technologies, encouraging economic and socio-cultural growth. Use production methods in any way to guarantee the sanitary safety and health of the consumer.
- Recognise his/her responsibility towards the environment, contributing actively to the maximization of natural resources and minimum waste of foodstuffs.

Duties to the profession

- Recognise responsibility to maintain and enhance professional competence by continuing updating and improving his/her knowledge and proficiency in its application.
- Maintain professional competence by continuing awareness of relevant new information and developments.
- When accepting a particular professional task, assure that all necessary skills to accomplish the specific task are used, and hence involve others when necessary.
- Act in accordance with the food-related legislation of the country where the profession is exercised, that of any trading partners and international legislation where this is relevant.
- Assist in the maintenance of professional standards and the extension of their usefulness and sphere of influence.
- Uphold the traditional values of science and the standing and dignity of the profession of food science and technology.
- Recognise his/her responsibility for the professional guidance and training of subordinates under his or her immediate control.
- Recognise his/her responsibility towards student's development.

FST Professionals, during the course of their professional activities must mediate their relationships with different stakeholders following the guidelines set forth below:

Relationship with colleagues

- Maintain an attitude towards colleagues of kindness and loyalty, in order to claim a professional identity and a common culture in the different areas where the profession is divided.
- Respect all members of the profession giving due recognition to the work of others without distortion or discrimination.
- Avoid unwarranted statements that reflect upon the character or integrity of other members of the profession.
- Refrain from any conduct that may be defined as "unfair competition".
- Not take advantage of information about clients or other colleagues to take advantage of joint positions in order to gain customers.

- Support other professionals who may find themselves in difficulties on account of their adherence to this Code.

Relationship with collaborators

- Respect human dignity and strive to provide an environment that encourages employees to realize their full potential.
- Honour contractual obligations to their collaborators whether written or inferred from the laws or customs of their own countries.
- Not prejudice the interests of their employers by failure or delay attributable to negligence or carelessness.
- Declare any conflict of interest while acting as consultants.
- Provide all information to the client and return any documentation upon request.
- Terminate the professional relationship when a conflict of interests arises, where there are any grounds of incompatibility and when the will of the contracting authority may lead to actions contrary to the applicable laws or to this code.
- When terminating a professional relationship, take all reasonable actions and steps to prevent undue damage to the client

Relationship with the media

- Pursue by every ethical and practical means the improvement of public knowledge of the basic facts of food safety and sound nutrition.
- Ensure the integrity of their professional publications whether through the medium of the spoken, written or printed word, or by radio or television broadcasts or by any other means.
- Avoid unethical exploitation of their professional status by endorsement of misleading or fraudulent advertising or product certification.
- When acting or making statements or recommendations in a professional capacity to do so objectively and fairly.
- Use criteria of balance and measure in statements and interviews, both in respect of the duty of discretion and confidentiality to clients and to avoid competitive attitudes towards colleagues.



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