



New training program joins the attack against food waste

The first industry-wide training program aimed at improving the credentials of those responsible for the integrity and safety of Australia's chilled and frozen food supply goes live from 1 February 2021.

The program, the Cold Chain Professional Development Series, is in response to cold chain losses from temperature abuse which have been identified by recent national studies sponsored by the Commonwealth Government.

The AFCCC, with input and the support of kindred organisations with stakes in the cold chain, has taken the lead by producing the first of five Cold Food Codes, and following this with the first online training program of its kind for those who work at the many levels in the cold chain, in transport, distribution centres, loading docks, food industries and retail outlets.

The first training program in the Cold Chain Professional Development Series deals with the humble thermometer. This was chosen because temperature management is the most misunderstood and misused aspect of cold chain food management and delivery.

AFCCC research shows that quality management systems which demand temperature validation through a series of refrigerated events in the cold chain are not being followed or even taken seriously by many companies involved in the delivery and management of cold food. This abuse is leading to massive food wastage, estimated to be costing the country \$20 billion every year.

The first training course, **Thermometers and the cold chain practitioner** is now live on the website of the Australian Food Cold Chain Council (<https://afccc.org.au/training.html>). The Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP) and the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) will also host the course on their website training pages. Others are expected to follow soon.

The AFCCC is proceeding with the development of four more Cold Food Codes, eventually covering the entire cold chain including all facets inbound and outbound from the grocery and retail environment. Training modules will follow each Code release.

Leading players in Australia's fight against food waste have applauded the initiative. The respected special adviser to the Fight Food Waste CRC, Mark Barthel said of the online training modules, *'...a great job of encapsulating all of the information required for a practitioner to understand the importance of an integrated cold food chain and the use of the most appropriate thermometer technology'*.

The training is aimed at two audiences – the cold chain practitioners, those who work at the coalface of the cold chain and most likely to need thermometers in their hands, and managing practitioners, who are responsible

for overseeing a compliant critical control point and ensuring that the right thermometers are used and understood for the job at hand.

The training modules go back to the basics of what a thermometer does, how it should be maintained, calibrated and used on a variety of packaging and produce. It outlines the range of thermometers used in the cold chain, including thermistors, thermocouples, resistive temperature detectors, infrared thermometers and bimetallic devices. These technologies are applied across four types of thermometers – probe, infrared, time temperature recording devices and single use temperature indicators.

The Code spells out the advantages and disadvantages of each, plus their response speed, sensitivity and stability.

The online courses can be done in a practitioner's own time and will earn them qualifications that can enhance their professional skills in an industry that desperately needs such talents.

The AFCCC was formed in mid 2017 by a cross section of industry leaders covering manufacturing, food transport, refrigeration and cold chain services. The Council encourages innovation, compliance, waste reduction and safety across the Australian food cold chain. The Council is not about promoting an industry – it wants to change the industry for the better. It acknowledges that Australia's track record in efficient cold food handling, from farm to plate, is far from perfect.

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