

PEP-SBF AWARDS 2023

PRO-ENTERPRISE TRANSFORMATION (PET) AWARD - BRONZE

Name of Initiative

Strengthen Singapore's Food Resilience through Supporting Food Businesses in Export and Transshipments of Food

Agency

Singapore Food Agency (SFA)



Summary of Initiative

The food industry is a complex one with overlapping food standards, both at the international and local level. To support the export, transshipment, and re-export needs of the food industry, SFA has launched initiatives such as the (i) Library of Export Market Requirements; (ii) SFA Laboratory Recognition Programme; (iii) SFA Food Cargo Inspection Body Recognition (IBR) Programme; (iv) SFA Auditing Organisation Recognition (AOR) Programme; and (v) Export Health Certificate for Imported Food Products. These initiatives have helped the industry capture about 150 new re-export trades of meat, seafood, and dairy to previously untapped markets such as India, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. Despite a 28% increase in food samples collected in 2022, these initiatives ensured that SFA maintained an efficient testing process.

Lastly, it has reinforced Singapore's reputation for food safety by aligning with international standards and having our regime recognised by reputed overseas counterparts such as the EU and New Zealand. These new initiatives have empowered and enabled food businesses to make progress in food export market access, food cargo transit operations, and food regulatory compliance. As such, there are new business opportunities created for both food establishments as well as food service partners in the Testing, Inspection and Certification sector, to build a more resilient food ecosystem.

What was the impetus behind this project/initiative?

Our food supply is increasingly affected by poor harvests due to climate change and supply chain disruptions from geopolitical events. To ensure a supply of safe food and help Singapore-based food traders establish themselves in the global marketplace, SFA and food traders will need to be able to navigate such a contested space with agility.

From interactions with the private sector such as Singapore Food Manufacturers Association (SFMA) and public agencies such as EnterpriseSG and Ministry of Trade and Industry, SFA has identified three pain points faced by companies:

1. Knowledge gaps in food regulatory compliance, resulting in challenges navigating regulations imposed by foreign jurisdictions,
2. Increasing need for establishments to be audited and conduct lab tests on consignments, as part of importing country's requirements, and
3. Measures needed to ensure food safety and traceability during transit operations.

To address these pain points and support Singapore's position as a food hub, SFA has developed those initiatives to enhance regulatory connectivity and grow exports. The aim was to (i) help companies understand overseas importing requirements; (ii) speed up audits and lab test results for companies; and (iii) create guidelines for private sector to inspect food cargo and introduce new certification for easier transshipment trade.

What challenges did you/your team encounter, how did you/your team overcome them?

To help the industry grow and make the export process easier for them, we consulted the industry widely. At the same time, the team had to ensure our initiatives were aligned with requirements from local and overseas regulators.

We worked with major food exporters and associations such as SFMA and leading food exporters to develop the Library of Export Market Requirements. For the AOR and IBR programmes, SFA has worked with the Singapore Accreditation Council to review and adopt the accreditation criteria to support aspiring food audit certification bodies.

We also worked closely with overseas counterparts such as the European Union's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety and New Zealand's Ministry of Primary Industries to assure them that Singapore's food exports continued to meet high food safety standards.