

# Practitioner & Substitute Practitioner

## Definition

An SQF practitioner is an individual designated by a site to oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of the site's SQF System. The substitute practitioner is an individual with the same qualifications and experience as the primary SQF practitioner and who is available and capable of carrying out the functions of the primary SQF practitioner during an extended absence.

## Applicable Code Requirements

1. 2.1.1.2
2. 2.1.1.4
3. 2.1.1.5
4. 2.1.2.1
5. 2.1.2.2
6. 2.2.1.1

## Review Glossary Terms

1. SQF Practitioner  
(also SQF Quality Practitioner)
2. SQF System
3. Senior Site Management
4. HACCP Training

## Implementation & Audit Guidance

### What does it mean?

Senior site management are responsible for business operations within the site and for implementation and improvement of the food safety (and quality, if applicable) management system. This includes leading and supporting a food safety culture within the site and providing the commitment and resources to implement and manage the SQF system.

To assist in this regard senior site management designates an individual within the site to develop, validate, verify, and maintain the company's food safety plans, and oversee the daily operation of the SQF System. The SQF practitioner may engage the services of an SQF consultant to assist with the development of the SQF System, but overall responsibility remains with the senior site management through the SQF practitioner.

The requirements and qualifications of the SQF practitioner are clearly outlined in 2.1.1.4 and 2.1.1.5. Although SQF Systems training and examination is not mandatory for SQF practitioners, it is recommended, and SQF practitioners are required to understand and demonstrate knowledge of the current version of the SQF Code and its application within the site.

On occasions where the primary SQF practitioner is on extended absence due to vacation, training or illness, the substitute practitioner takes responsibility for the daily operation of the SQF System. The substitute practitioner is required to have the same qualifications as the primary practitioner and have a close working knowledge of the site's SQF System.

Some sites may have more than one SQF designated practitioner to cover additional shifts or departments, in which case the requirement for a substitute practitioner can easily be met. However, sites with a single SQF practitioner are required to have a substitute identified, trained and available to fill in for the primary practitioner when required.

Both the primary and substitute practitioner are individuals within the organizational structure with technical, quality, food safety and or operational knowledge, experience, and responsibility.

### Why is it in the Code & why is it important?

**This is a mandatory clause.**

The objective of the SQF System is not to pass an audit. It is a food safety management system integrated into the business operations and designed to protect customers and the business.

The role of the SQF practitioner is to represent senior site management and ensure the SQF system is working and effective 24/7. Where the primary practitioner is not available to do so due to planned absence, the substitute practitioner takes that responsibility to ensure the ongoing continuity of the SQF System.

The requirement for a substitute practitioner does not extend to the SQF Quality Code.

See RIO Chart on following page.

### RIO Road to Audits (Records, Interviews, and Observations)

Records	Interviews	Observations
<p>The following are examples of records and/or documents to assist in the implementation and review of this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organizational structure</li> <li>▪ Position descriptions (primary and substitute practitioner)</li> <li>▪ HACCP team and training records (primary and substitute practitioner)</li> <li>▪ Food Safety Plan and other documentation supporting the SQF System.</li> <li>▪ Records (sampled) of the daily operation of the SQF System.</li> <li>▪ Meeting minutes/communications between the senior site manager(s) and practitioner(s)</li> </ul>	<p>The following are examples of people to interview to assist in the implementation and review of this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Senior site manager(s)</li> <li>▪ Primary and substitute SQF practitioner</li> <li>▪ Line operators/technicians</li> </ul> <p>The following are examples of questions to ask to assist in the implementation and review of this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the SQF Practitioner/ substitute Practitioner knowledge and involvement of/in the SQF System?</li> <li>▪ What are the roles and responsibilities of the primary and substitute practitioners?</li> <li>▪ What is the frequency/ results / actions of the scheduled updates with practitioners and senior site manager?</li> <li>▪ What are the responsibilities of the SQF practitioner and substitute practitioner?</li> <li>▪ Name the occasions when the substitute has fulfilled the primary role?</li> <li>▪ Do the line operators/technicians identify and understand the role of the person responsible for food safety/ who to go to for food safety issues?</li> </ul>	<p>The following are examples of observations to assist in the implementation and review of this topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overview of the effective implementation of the SQF System.</li> <li>▪ Relationship between the practitioners and senior site management.</li> <li>▪ Relationship between the practitioners and line operators/technicians.</li> </ul>

### Additional References

- SQF Events and Training  
[https://www.sqfi.com/events-training/#categories=&tribe\\_events\\_cat=](https://www.sqfi.com/events-training/#categories=&tribe_events_cat=)
- SQF Online Training  
<https://www.sqfi.com/online-training/>