

## CHAPTER 15

# Managing Suppliers of Inputs and Services



# 15

# Overview

Inputs and service providers are potential sources of contamination. Specifications for inputs and services should be agreed with suppliers, documented and checked for compliance.

Inputs and services are potential sources of contamination. Hazard assessments should be conducted for inputs such as containers, packaging materials, equipment, vehicles, water, chemicals and planting materials. Examples of services that can create hazards include pest control, labour, maintenance contracting and transport.

If significant hazards are identified, measures should be taken to reduce or prevent their potential risk. Inputs or services should be clearly specified, agreed with the supplier and clearly documented. All inputs and services should be sourced from an approved supplier and inspected against a specification on delivery. A list of approved suppliers and their mode of approval should also be kept and reviewed annually.

Purchase records should be kept for inputs or services that may introduce a hazard. These should include a description of the goods or services, name of supplier and date of purchase, as well as a record of input or service inspections.



**Image C15:1 |** Conduct visual inspection of incoming goods at delivery, including packaging, labelling and temperature (if applicable) to verify input safety.



**Image C15:2 |** Review supplier documentation, such as Certificate of Analysis (COAs) to verify raw materials and inputs meet food safety requirements.

## 15.1 Chemical contamination via planting materials

Planting materials, such as seeds, seedlings, runners and cuttings can be a source of chemical contamination from the pesticides used to treat pests and diseases during their production.

To prevent residues in the produce from exceeding the maximum residue limits (MRLs), particularly relevant for baby leaf crops, all chemicals should be applied to planting materials in accordance with legislation in the destination market and the directions on labels or off-label permits.

Some chemicals have long withholding periods, so these should be checked before application, especially if they are applied to crops with a short cropping cycle. Records of chemical treatments during the production of planting material should be kept to verify that chemicals have been used correctly.

Suppliers of planting materials (e.g. vegetable seedlings) should disclose any chemical treatments that could result in residues exceeding MRLs in the harvested product.

## 15.2 Good practice for managing suppliers of inputs and services

Table C15:1 | Summary of good practices for managing suppliers of inputs and services.

Aspect of supplier approval	Good practices
Identifying inputs and services that have food safety, quality or authenticity significance.	<p>Food safety and quality hazards related to the material or service.</p> <p>Significance to final produce safety.</p> <p>Quantities sourced.</p> <p>Related authenticity and food fraud concerns [refer Appendix 1]. Authenticity being the extent to which a food product is genuine and matches its description, ingredients and origin, without substitution, mislabelling or adulteration.</p> <p>Examples of food safety evidence for inputs could include seed lot documentation, chemical labels and SDS, supplier certificates, product specifications or declarations of compliance.</p>
Specification documentation for inputs and services that have food safety, quality or authenticity significance.	<p>Specifications to be agreed, documented and accessible to team members responsible for procurement and receivals.</p>
Identifying and approving suppliers that present elevated risks to food safety, quality or authenticity risks.	<p>Where applicable, supplier confidence may be supported by accreditation (e.g. ISO accredited laboratory), certification (e.g. to a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) recognised assurance programme such as SQF or BRCGS), or registration (e.g. regulatory body register of approved agrichemicals) [refer Appendix 2].</p> <p>Supplier audits should be conducted for suppliers that do not have a recognised approval. These supplier audits should ideally cover food safety, quality, authenticity, food defence and traceability.</p> <p>Additional considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supplier's reputation</li> <li>• supplier's historical performance</li> <li>• other supporting evidence may include third-party audit reports, regulatory compliance records (e.g. registration status, declaration of conformance or completed supplier questionnaires).</li> </ul>
Receiving of inputs and services.	<p>To ensure specifications are met, inputs and services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be sourced from approved suppliers that demonstrate compliance with the specification</li> <li>• inspected/assessed against the specification and a record of inspection kept</li> <li>• in some cases, depending on the input or service, the supplier may provide a Certificate of Analysis (CoA) with each batch to demonstrate compliance with the agreed specification.</li> </ul>
Record keeping.	<p>Maintain purchase records for inputs and services that may pose a food safety risk. Records include the name of supplier, date of purchase and inputs or service supplied.</p> <p>It is good practice to keep an up to date list of approved suppliers and their method of approval and to review this list regularly, ideally annually.</p>