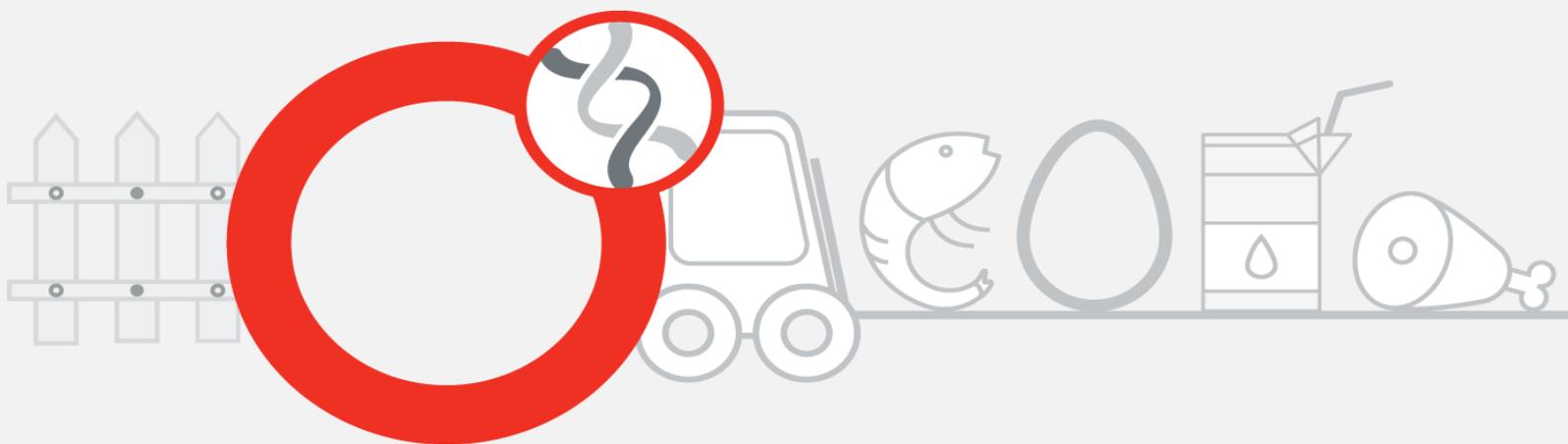

Financial Hardship Assistance Policy

Version 1

Publish Date
4 March 2025





Document Version

Version	Date Modified	Modified by	Date Approved	Approved by	Details
1	4 March 2025	Brian Witherspoon	4 March 2025	Jim Dodds	Initial Release

Approved by:

Jim Dodds
Chief Executive Officer
Safe Food Production QLD

Amendments

Date of Amendment	Section	Topic



1. Introduction and Purpose

Under the *Food Production (Safety) Act 2000* (the Act) and the Food Production (Safety) Regulation 2014 (the Regulation), Safe Food Production Queensland (Safe Food) implements a system of accreditation for persons or businesses who engage in the production and/or processing of primary produce that is intended for sale or supply for food. Safe Food also undertakes activities to verify compliance with food safety requirements.

This document outlines Safe Food's policy on providing assistance to accredited businesses that have indicated they are unable to pay the required annual accreditation fees or charges incurred relating to Safe Food's compliance activities due to financial hardship.

2. Accreditation Renewals

Under the Act, the accreditation holder is responsible for renewing their accreditation each calendar year. As a reminder, Safe Food provides renewal notices to all accreditation holders in at least one month in advance of the expiry date.

Accreditation holders must pay their accreditation renewal fee before the current accreditation expires. Once an accreditation has expired, accreditation holders can no longer legally conduct the activities previously approved under the expired accreditation.

3. Fees and Charges

Under the Act, Safe Food may charge an accreditation holder for certain verification activities undertaken by the agency. These activities include routine activities, such as food safety audits and assessments, and targeted verification activities, such as product testing.

Outstanding fees or amounts payable to Safe Food may result in the suspension or cancellation of an accreditation.

4. Financial Hardship

Safe Food recognises that financial hardship, due to factors such as natural disaster and personal circumstance, is a challenging experience that may make it difficult for accreditation holders to pay their fees and charges.

Safe Food is committed to regulating in a manner that supports industry growth. As retaining an accreditation enables businesses to trade and improve their financial status, this commitment extends to providing businesses with information and greater flexibility when paying fees and charges to assist during challenging times.

This commitment is demonstrated through Safe Food's values, Code of Conduct (which reflects the *Public Sector Act 2022*) and commitment to regulatory best practice. The Code of Conduct and other corporate publications and policies are available through Safe Food's publication scheme: <https://www.safefood.qld.gov.au/about-us/publications-scheme/>

5. Supporting businesses

Accreditation holders who are able to demonstrate on reasonable grounds that they are unable to pay their fees or charges within the allotted time frame due to financial hardship may be eligible for financial assistance.

Reasonable grounds include:



- the accredited business has been impacted by an adverse event, such as a natural disaster (flood, cyclone, fire) or biosecurity incident; and/or
- the accreditation holder has suffered a personal or financial hardship.

To assist businesses, Safe Food may provide:

- alternative payment arrangements and
- information on government initiatives which support businesses experiencing financial hardship.

Alternative arrangements include payment plans (paying through instalments) or an extended payment due date.

6. Applications for assistance

All applications for financial assistance due to hardship must be made in writing.

Successful applications for alternative payment arrangements must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer (or nominated delegate). The applicant must be advised in writing of the decision and its reasoning, and any approved terms and conditions relating to the arrangements.

If the application is refused, the applicant will be advised of this decision in writing, along with the reasons for the refusal and advice on how to appeal the decision.

All applicants will be provided with information on government initiatives and programs which support businesses experiencing financial hardship.