Dairy Laboratory Manager

Dairy quality and laboratory

Job title	Dairy Laboratory Manager
Department	Dairy quality and laboratory
Reports to	Quality Manager
Direct reports	Laboratory team leader, analysts and technicians
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Runs the site laboratory so that raw materials, in-process samples and finished dairy products are tested accurately and on time against specification. Leads the laboratory team, controls positive release and supports the Quality Manager in keeping the site compliant with food safety and quality standards.

Key responsibilities

Testing and product release

- Set sampling plans and testing schedules for milk, cream, whey, ingredients, packaging and finished products
- Run chemical, physical and microbiological testing using approved, validated methods
- Positively release raw milk and finished products against specification before use or dispatch
- Organise sensory grading of products against customer requirements
- Issue certificates of analysis to customers
- Send results promptly to production, planning and procurement so they can act on them

Methods and equipment

- Validate test methods and take part in proficiency testing schemes
- Keep all laboratory instruments calibrated, maintained and fit for purpose
- Arrange external testing with accredited laboratories, including pathogen testing for infant formula, and review the results
- Use statistical quality control to spot trends and drift in results

Food safety and non-conformance

- Carry out risk analysis so testing focuses on the highest hazards, such as Salmonella, Listeria and Cronobacter sakazakii
- Monitor results at critical control points and alert production when limits are breached
- Raise and manage non-conformance reports for out-of-specification material
- Investigate customer complaints and internal failures, find root causes and agree corrective and preventive actions

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- Recommend how non-conforming product should be reworked, diverted or disposed of

Suppliers and quality systems

- Audit suppliers and help maintain the approved supplier list
- Agree raw material and packaging specifications with suppliers and purchasing
- Run trials to approve new materials before use
- Keep laboratory procedures and records in line with ISO 9001 and ISO 22000
- Deputise for the Quality Manager when needed and join the management rota for weekend cover

Team and budget

- Recruit, train and develop laboratory staff and plan rotas to cover production hours
- Manage the laboratory budget, including staff, consumables and outside testing
- Promote safe working with chemicals, glassware and microbiological hazards
- Report laboratory performance weekly and monthly and contribute to management review

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Degree in food science, dairy science, chemistry, microbiology or a related subject
- Substantial practical experience in a food or dairy laboratory
- Experience of chemical and microbiological testing of dairy products
- Experience leading a laboratory team
- Sound understanding of dairy processing and product composition
- Working knowledge of HACCP, ISO 9001 and ISO 22000

Desirable

- Experience of infant formula or milk powder testing
- Experience of ISO/IEC 17025 laboratory accreditation
- Sensory evaluation training
- Supplier auditing qualification or experience

Skills and attributes

- Attention to detail and accuracy
- Statistical analysis of results
- Root cause analysis
- Team leadership and training
- Clear written and verbal communication, including with customers
- Planning and prioritising under production pressure

Measures of success

- Results delivered within agreed turnaround times
- Proficiency test performance
- Quality-related customer complaints and returns
- Non-conformances closed on time
- Laboratory spend against budget
- Laboratory accidents and incidents

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Working conditions and safety

Site-based laboratory role with PPE, hygiene and chemical safety rules in force. Includes a share of the site management weekend rota.

- Follow health and safety rules and safe systems of work, and wear the correct PPE
- Follow food safety, hygiene, HACCP and quality procedures at all times
- Report hazards, accidents, near misses and concerns promptly

This job description outlines the main duties of the role. It is not a complete list, and the employer may update it as the business changes, in consultation with the jobholder.

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