Interim Dairy Technical Manager

Dairy leadership and board

Job title	Interim Dairy Technical Manager
Department	Dairy leadership and board
Reports to	Site Manager, Operations Director or Managing Director, as sponsor of the assignment
Direct reports	Quality, hygiene and laboratory managers or supervisors, and technical staff
Location	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*
Contract type	*[Permanent / fixed-term / other]*
Salary and benefits	*[To be confirmed by the employer]*

Job purpose

Takes temporary leadership of food safety, quality and technical compliance at a dairy site or group for a fixed-term assignment, typically 3 to 12 months. Recovers certification or customer approval after an audit failure, regulatory action or complaint crisis, or covers a vacancy, and leaves a robust system and a capable team for the permanent Technical Manager.

Key responsibilities

Rapid assessment and recovery plan

- Agree the scope, deliverables, deadlines and exit criteria of the assignment with the sponsor
- Review audit reports, non-conformances, complaints, test results and regulator correspondence in the first days
- Carry out a gap analysis of the food safety management system against certification and customer standards
- Identify the root causes of failure, including culture, resources, plant and procedures
- Present a prioritised 30/60/90-day recovery plan with owners, dates and evidence required

Food safety and product control

- Confirm that HACCP plans, critical control points and prerequisite programmes are valid and working
- Strengthen controls for pathogens, allergens, foreign bodies, residues and chemical contaminants
- Review environmental monitoring, positive release and product hold procedures
- Tighten raw milk testing for antibiotic residues, hygiene and composition with the milk supply team
- Decide the disposition of held or suspect product on evidence and risk

Audit, certification and customer recovery

- Prepare the site for re-audits, unannounced audits and customer visits, and lead them on the day
- Close non-conformances with verified root causes and corrective actions within the required deadlines
- Rebuild the confidence of retail, food-service and export customers through transparent reporting and visits
- Deal openly and promptly with food safety regulators and certification bodies
- Make sure export certificates and destination-market requirements are met

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Incident management and reporting

- Lead investigations into contamination events, complaint clusters and out-of-specification results
- Test traceability, withdrawal and recall procedures, and act quickly when a product must be removed
- Coordinate the incident team and keep senior management informed throughout
- Report candidly to the sponsor and Board on food safety risk, even when the news is unwelcome

Culture, people and capability

- Lead and reorganise the technical team, filling critical gaps with clear roles and cover
- Train production, hygiene and engineering staff in food safety standards and their own responsibilities
- Build a food safety culture where staff report problems early and managers act on them
- Coach the technical team in internal auditing, root cause analysis and document control

Embedding and handover

- Embed verification, internal audit and management review routines so standards hold after exit
- Brief the permanent Technical Manager on open risks, commitments to customers and regulators, and next steps
- Hand over complete, current documentation and a clear action log at the end of the assignment

Qualifications and experience

Essential

- Degree or equivalent qualification in food science, dairy science, microbiology or a related subject
- Substantial experience as a technical or quality manager in dairy or food manufacturing
- Proven record of recovering certification or customer approval after an audit failure
- Expert knowledge of HACCP, food safety management systems and recognised certification standards
- Experience of leading incident investigations, withdrawals or recalls
- Experience of dealing directly with food safety regulators, certification bodies and major customers
- Availability to start at short notice for a fixed-term assignment

Desirable

- Advanced HACCP and lead auditor qualifications
- Knowledge of dairy microbiology, including pathogen and spore control in powders or cheese
- Experience of infant formula, nutritional or export-certified dairy products
- Previous interim or turnaround assignments in food manufacturing

Skills and attributes

- Rapid gap analysis and root cause analysis
- Sound, risk-based judgement on product safety
- Calm leadership in a crisis
- Influencing production and engineering teams
- Clear written reporting to boards, customers and regulators
- Training and coaching
- Integrity and independence under commercial pressure

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Measures of success

- Certification restored or retained, and customer approvals reinstated
- Audit non-conformances closed on time with verified effectiveness
- Customer complaint rate against target
- Product holds, withdrawals and recalls
- Environmental monitoring and finished product test results against target
- Agreed assignment deliverables achieved by the exit date

Working conditions and safety

Fixed-term interim assignment, typically 3 to 12 months, often on a day rate and starting at short notice. Site-based with PPE and hygiene rules in production areas, extended hours around audits and incidents, and travel or temporary accommodation near the site.

- Lead by example on health, safety, food safety and animal welfare
- Uphold the code of conduct and all legal and compliance requirements
- Raise concerns and report incidents 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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