



CUSTOM BRAND ASSURANCE PROGRAM: TILLAMOOK CREAMERY

Tillamook Creamery, an award-winning, farmer-owned dairy cooperative based in Tillamook, Oregon, looked to NSF International to build a custom brand assurance program that aligned with international best practices and regulatory requirements. An innovative leader in the dairy industry, Tillamook Creamery leveraged NSF's technical, assessment and sustainability experts to meet its intended outcomes.

PROBLEM: ADVANCING DAIRY QUALITY AND STEWARDSHIP

NSF International's mission and focus to protect and improve public health and the environment, and Tillamook Creamery's guiding principle of "doing things right by committing to a business model rooted in stewardship," fostered a natural fit to achieve shared quality and stewardship goals.

NSF works with leading retailers and foodservice and processing companies throughout the world, helping them manage their supply chain through scheme management, auditing and verification, second- and third-party supplier assurance audits in food safety, and in animal welfare, animal production, feed, pet food and sustainability requirements. NSF's sustainability consulting team serves as a strategic expert for companies striving to manage their social and environmental burdens and benefits at the product, project, facility and supply chain levels.

SOLUTION

Committed to sustaining the farming way of life in Tillamook County, Oregon, Tillamook Creamery is consistently in pursuit of new ideas and methods to achieve that mission.



To meet Tillamook's needs, NSF leveraged its unique global expertise into one cohesive team. Technical experts from NSF's animal services, agriculture and animal welfare programs, as well as environmental and responsible sourcing subject matter experts from NSF's sustainability team, created a dynamic and resourceful team that Tillamook could rely on to understand its needs and deliver a custom solution.

NSF drove progress to key milestones, providing streamlined project management and reviewing the existing Tillamook Creamery Member and Contract Supplier Handbook to identify evaluation criteria aligning the new brand standard with international best practices and regulatory requirements. NSF's cross-functional team worked with Tillamook to translate the member handbook into program criteria to use as the basis for a producer requirement manual and compliance assessment tools.

Additionally, NSF conducted an iterative pilot program with ongoing on-farm assessments paired with continual updates to the program criteria and documents; all while



working closely with the Tillamook field team, the board of directors and producer members. Throughout the year-long pilot phase NSF collaborated with Tillamook to educate producer-members on the new criteria, and to incorporate feedback and learnings gained from the gap assessments.

As part of this pilot phase NSF completed farm gap assessments with 88 member farms to identify the level of compliance and areas of non-compliance to the Tillamook Creamery compliance criteria, using the new tools as they evolved. These assessments were used to present information to the board, and to inform final decisions on the final report scoring format and the handling of non-conformances.

RESULTS

NSF's expertise in program development and partnership approach to stakeholder engagement helped ease implementation barriers commonly experienced by producers transitioning to formalized food safety and animal welfare programs. The level of trust built between Tillamook and NSF's team of experts based on the depth and breadth of experience in the sector, along with the time taken to understand Tillamook's unique goals and challenges, enabled the program's success. NSF's innovative approach to management system verification allows Tillamook more control over the member program implementation with NSF providing that third-party verification to provide confidence.

At the end of the project, NSF provided Tillamook Creamery with four main deliverables:

1. INTERPRETATION GUIDE

NSF developed an interpretation guide to inform auditors and Tillamook Creamery staff. This guide provides definitions for each evaluation criteria or indicator finalized, and clarifies the evidence or observation requirements that demonstrate compliance.



2. SUPPLIER ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The supplier assessment tools specifically focus on the verification of compliance by prioritizing rigor and efficiency, and leveraging existing audit and/or compliance procedures on participant farms. These tools include a compliance assessment process document to articulate the intent and process flow for assessment, auditor requirements, an assessment checklist and an assessment report template.

3. GAP ANALYSIS REPORTS

For each of the 88 farms audited, NSF completed standardized reports to pinpoint compliance and areas of gaps in compliance according to the Tillamook Creamery compliance criteria defined in the supplier handbooks. The gap analysis reports also included corrective actions and an associated timeline for submission. Where required, NSF also reviewed and approved corrective actions submitted by members after the gap analysis.

4. IDENTIFICATION OF ADDED VALUE OPPORTUNITIES

Upon completion of the gap analysis reports, NSF provided an overall summary of findings, including opportunities for data analysis and suggested insights Tillamook Creamery could act upon in the future.

For more information, visit www.nfsustainability.org or email sustainability@nsf.org.