

Low-Acid Foods Regulations and Requirements in Australia & New Zealand

Low-acid foods (pH > 4.6 and water activity > 0.85) require strict microbial control. Australia and New Zealand enforce specific regulatory frameworks to ensure such foods are commercially sterile, traceable, and safe for consumption.

1. Regulatory Authorities

- Australia: Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), enforced by state/territory agencies
- New Zealand: Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)
- Both require compliance with food safety codes and risk-based systems (e.g., HACCP, Food Control Plans)

2. FSANZ Standards (Australia)

- Food Standards Code Chapters 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.1A
- Requires implementation of food safety management tools (e.g., HACCP)
- Hygiene and sanitation protocols mandatory
- Processors must meet state-level audit and licensing requirements

3. Food Act 2014 (New Zealand)

- Requires food businesses to operate under a registered Food Control Plan (FCP)
- Shelf-stable, low-acid products are considered high-risk
- Operators must identify and manage hazards through validated control steps

4. Thermal Process Validation

- Processes must be validated to demonstrate commercial sterility
- Critical parameters: F_0 value, temperature, pH, seal integrity, etc.
- Must be established by a competent authority and verified by records

5. Import/Export Requirements

- Australia: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
- New Zealand: MPI export requirements
- Products must comply with microbiological criteria and accurate food labelling

6. Facility & Documentation Compliance

- Maintain validated thermal process records
- Train operators in thermal processing and monitoring
- Ensure traceability, seal integrity checks, and deviation management
- Prepare for routine audits and inspections by FSANZ or MPI-aligned bodies

Meeting FSANZ and MPI requirements ensures food safety, regulatory compliance, and access to domestic and export markets for low-acid shelf-stable foods.

For expert assistance with process design, validation, or regulatory review:

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