ROBUST FOOD CONTROL SYSTEMS
Principles and Key elements
• **OBJECTIVE OF A NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM:**
  To protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade;

• **NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM**
  - well structured, effective and efficiently administered
  - should cover all food produced, processed and marketed within the country, including imported Food (farm-to-table approach)
5 Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

• Food Legislation
• Food Control Management
• Food Inspection
• Food Control Laboratories
• Information, Education and Communication
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

• **Food Legislation**

  Development of relevant and enforceable food laws and regulations is an **essential component**.

**Important aspects:**

- provide a high level of health protection;
- clear definitions to increase consistency and legal security;
- based on high quality and transparent;
- independent scientific advice following risk assessment, risk management and risk communication;
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):  

• **Food Legislation**  
  - provision for the use of precaution and the adoption of provisional measures where an unacceptable level of risk to health has been identified and where full risk assessment could not be performed;  
  - provisions for the right of consumers to have access to accurate and sufficient information;  
  - tracing of food products and for their recall in case of problems;
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

- **Food Legislation**
  - clear provisions indicating that primary responsibility for food safety and quality rests with producers and processors;
  - obligation to ensure that only safe and fairly presented food is placed on the market;
  - transparency in the development of food law and access to information.
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

• **Food Control Management**

Effective food control systems require **policy and operational coordination** at the national level.

Core responsibilities include the establishment of regulatory measures, monitoring system performance, facilitating continuous improvement, and providing overall policy guidance.
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

• **Food Inspection**

The administration and implementation of food laws require a qualified, trained, efficient and honest food inspection service. **Responsibilities** of the inspection services include:

• Inspecting premises and processes for compliance with hygienic and other requirements of standards and regulations;

• Evaluating HACCP plans and their implementation;

• Sampling food during harvest, processing, storage, transport, or sale to establish compliance, to contribute data for risk assessments and to identify offenders;
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

**Food Inspection-Responsibilities:**

- Recognizing different forms of food decomposition by organoleptic assessment; identifying food which is unfit for human consumption and taking the necessary remedial action;
- Recognizing, collecting and transmitting evidence when breaches of law occur, and appearing in court to assist prosecution;
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

**Food Inspection - Responsibilities:**

- Encouraging voluntary compliance in particular by means of quality assurance procedures;
- Carrying out inspection, sampling and certification of food for import/export inspection purposes when so required;
- In establishments working under safety assurance programmes such as HACCP, conduct risk based audits.
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):  
- **Food Control Laboratories**

Food Monitoring and Epidemiological Data
Main pillar of food control (elements of a NFCS):

• **Information, Education and Communication**

  - the provision of balanced factual information to consumers;
  - the provision of information packages and educational programmes for key officials and workers in the food industry;
  - development of train-the-trainer programmes;
  - provision of reference literature to extension workers in the agriculture and health sectors.
PRINCIPLES
OF A NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL SYSTEM
PRINCIPLE 1: PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS
NFCS should be designed, implemented and maintained with the primary goal to protect consumers. In the event of a conflict with other interests, precedence should be given to protecting the health of consumers.

PRINCIPLE 2: THE WHOLE FOOD CHAIN APPROACH
NFCS should cover the entire food chain from primary production to consumption.
PRINCIPLE 3: TRANSPARENCY

All aspects of a NFCS should be transparent and open to scrutiny by all stakeholders. Transparency considerations apply to all participants in the food chain and this can be achieved through clear documentation and communication.
PRINCIPLE 4: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- Clearly defined specific roles and responsibilities

• FBOs have the **primary role** and responsibility for managing the food safety of their products and for complying with requirements relating to those aspects of food under their control.
• The national government (and in some cases a competent authority) has the role and responsibility to establish and maintain up to date Legal requirements.
• The competent authority has the **responsibility to ensure the effective operation** of the NFCS.
• **PRINCIPLE 4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

• Consumers also have a role in managing food safety risks and Where relevant should be provided with information on how to Achieve this.

• Academics and scientific institutions have a role in contributing to A NFCS as they are a source of expertise to support the risk based and scientific foundation of such a system.
• **PRINCIPLE 5: CONSISTENCY AND IMPARTIALITY**

All aspects of a NFCS should be applied consistently and impartially.

The competent authority and all participants acting in official functions should be free of improper or undue influence or conflict of interest.

• **PRINCIPLE 6: RISK BASED, SCIENCE BASED AND EVIDENCE BASED DECISION MAKING**

A competent authority should make decisions within a NFCS based on scientific information, evidence and/or risk analysis Principles as appropriate.
• **PRINCIPLE 7: COOPERATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN MULTIPLE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES**

The competent authorities within a NFCS should operate in a cooperative and coordinated manner, within clearly assigned roles and responsibilities, for the most effective use of resources in order to minimise duplication and/or gaps and to facilitate information exchange.

• **PRINCIPLE 8: PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

To prevent and when necessary to respond to food safety incidents a NFCS should encompass the core elements of prevention, intervention and response
• **PRINCIPLE 9: SELF ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW PROCEDURES**

NFCS should possess the capacity and capability to undergo continuous improvement and include mechanisms to evaluate whether the system is able to achieve its objective.

• **PRINCIPLE 10: RECOGNITION OF OTHER SYSTEMS (INCLUDING EQUIVALENCE)**

Competent authorities should recognise that food control systems or their components although designed and structured differently may be capable of meeting the same objective. This recognition can apply at the national and international level. The concept of recognition of systems, including equivalence, should be provided for in the NFCS.
• PRINCIPLE 11: LEGAL FOUNDATION

The government within each country should have in place fundamental legal structures to enable the establishment of food laws and competent authorities, so that they can develop, establish, implement, maintain and enforce a NFCS.
• **PRINCIPLE 12: HARMONISATION**
When designing and applying a food control system, the competent authority should consider Codex standards, recommendations and guidelines whenever appropriate as elements of their NFCS to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade. Standards, recommendations or guidelines from other international intergovernmental organisations whose membership is open to all countries may also be useful.

• **PRINCIPLE 13: RESOURCES**
NFCS should have sufficient resources to enable it to meet the system’s objectives.