

# How Whole Foods transformed their food safety certification process with StateFoodSafety

*To remain a global leader in environmental stewardship and rigorous quality control standards, Whole Foods Market turned to StateFoodSafety.*

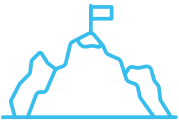


## The situation

Launched in 1980 with fewer than 20 team members and just one location, Whole Foods Market has quickly become one of the largest certified organic grocers in the world, with a global footprint that spans more than 500 locations and over 91,000 team members. While its size has changed, its mission remains the same: providing its health-conscious customers with the freshest, most responsibly sourced food possible. To do that successfully and consistently, the specialty supermarket chain must provide initial and ongoing training and learning opportunities to its tens of thousands of staff, ensuring they're trained and certified in how to handle produce, meats, and poultry safely.

But to maintain its reputation as a global leader in environmental stewardship and rigorous quality control standards — and to grow at the same time — Whole Foods Market needed a comprehensive and more efficient food training regimen that would help them set a new standard of excellence in food safety compliance management. They had already worked with StateFoodSafety on past training and were pleased by the results, so they turned to StateFoodSafety once again to take their training to the next level.





## The challenge

While the supermarket chain now has stores in 43 states (at the time of publication), Whole Foods began as a regional franchise, opening several stores in Texas only a few short years after their first in Austin. Initially expanding in certain parts of the country before going nationwide, Whole Foods had adopted a regional approach to many of their work processes — which included food safety training.

But with health departments in each state using different variations of food safety regulations — and team members frequently changing locations, often to other states — there were some inherent weaknesses in this regional approach.

*To achieve their goals and better streamline their training program, Whole Foods wanted to standardize processes so that all locations, associates, and food managers could adopt the same quality standards to optimize monitoring, compliance, consistency, and simplicity. Whole Foods wanted StateFoodSafety to help them put the new program together.*





## Making the change

Shifting from a regional approach to a global one required putting the right pieces and best practices in place, one of which was Food Handler training. Government-approved and accessible on any device, StateFoodSafety's Food Handler training program leverages the very latest instructional design techniques that help associates not only obtain the necessary certification and training that health boards and agencies require for workers to handle food, but to fully understand the material so it becomes second nature. In doing so, trainees become armed with the practical skill sets and knowledge needed to prevent illness through proper food preparation, cleanliness, temperature control, and the ability to identify the signs that may be indicative of contamination.

Another program StateFoodSafety helped Whole Foods establish was a Food Manager Certification & Training program. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires supermarkets to have at least one certified food manager present in a store at all times. While staffing at Whole Foods wasn't an issue, certification requirements varied regionally, which made this process more complicated and tedious than it needed to be (especially since certifications must be renewed periodically).

*Food Manager Certification & Training from StateFoodSafety centralizes food manager training so it can be done from anywhere. It also includes the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited certification exam that food managers must take to remain current.*



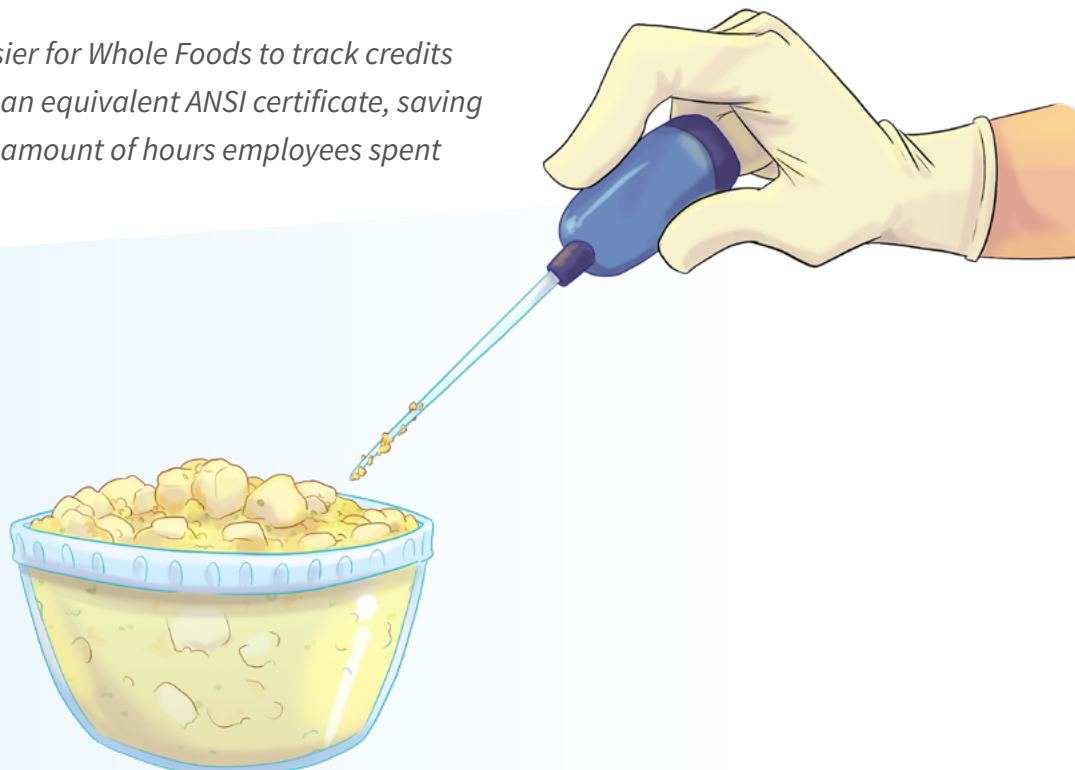


## The results

Several years removed from these rollouts, Whole Foods is now in a more advantageous position than they were previously, from compliance management and performance tracking to certification monitoring to overall process efficiency. There are many examples. For instance, with the fully automated Food Manager and Food Handler training programs up and running in several of their locations, management teams no longer have to guess or question whether transferring team members are up to speed on the protocols and procedures regarding food safety in the state. That's because everyone now goes through the same centralized program and draws from the same learning activities and curriculum.

Additionally, the grocer is now better able to manage expiring certifications. Just as food safety regulations vary, so do certification requirements and renewal cadence. Whole Foods' partnership with StateFoodSafety has made tracking these certifications — and when they're due to lapse — seamless, thanks to the process being fully automated. And since an ANSI-accredited exam is included in Food Manager Certification & Training online program, workers and/or managers who need to re-test can do so whenever they're ready, without having to worry about scheduling an appointment or dealing with the other administrative hassles that come with certification.

*The custom program made it easier for Whole Foods to track credits when team members completed an equivalent ANSI certificate, saving time and money by reducing the amount of hours employees spent retaking courses.*



Whole Foods Market grades itself on its food safety practices on a regular basis. In the past, however, they struggled to keep Food Manager Certification levels up to par; as a result, they saw some violations. Since the implementation of the StateFoodSafety training programs, the company has seen a drop in violations related to Certified Food Managers.

As one of the largest standardization events Whole Foods Market has ever implemented in over 40 years of operation, there was potential for error during the rollout of this initiative. But with staff members lauding the turn key nature of StateFoodSafety's training programs — and the ease with which the company was able to integrate training content into their own learning management system — the grocer's only wish is that it had standardized its compliance management processes sooner.

*For results-driven training and superior value, StateFoodSafety is your one-stop solution. We have a proven track record of satisfied customers and ensure your employees get the training they need conveniently and effectively, maximizing your return on investment.*

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