How to fill FoodChain-Lab backward and forward tracing templates?

The FoodChain-Lab (FCL) data collection templates follow a **stepwise data collection approach** ("one step back, one step forward") in a **lot-based manner**.

A tracing investigation is initiated using the **start templates** (always use latest version available at https://foodrisklabs.bfr.bund.de/template-for-data-collection/) which are **provided for** both **forward and** for **backward tracing investigations**. **See section "Start template"** for guidance on how to complete these templates. Fill in the upper-part of the template, then send the data collection templates to the competent authorities or directly to the inquired food business operator to have the lower part of the template filled.

To continue the tracing investigation one step forward or one step backward along the supply chain, use FCL Desktop to generate **prefilled follow-up templates** (backward tracing template, forward tracing template). Send these prefilled data collection templates to the competent authorities or directly to the inquired food business operator(s) to have them filled. **See section "Follow-up template"** for instructions on how to fill out the backward and forward tracing templates.

Start template:

Upper part: Fill in the **information about the inquired company** — this may be a food business operator linked to confirmed disease case(s), a food business operator with food item(s) testing positive for the outbreak strain, or, in some cases, a confirmed disease case. Use a **separate start template for each company** you intend to investigate.
Also, provide **details on the product(s) in focus**, such as food item(s) consumed by confirmed disease case(s) or those that tested positive during sampling. Enter **each product on a separate line**. Send the data collection templates to the competent authorities or directly to the inquired food business operator to have the lower part of the template filled.

Lower part: Provide **detailed information for all products in focus**, including supplier details (for backward tracing) or recipient details (for forward tracing). Enter **each product on a separate line**. If a product has multiple lots within the relevant sales period, list **each lot on a separate line**.

Hints: Leave fields blank if the information is unavailable. Use two-letter country codes. Enter dates in the format DD.MM.YYYY, unless otherwise specified.

Food business operator linked to confirmed case(s) or food item(s) testing positive for outbreak strain

Food item(s) consumed by confirmed disease case(s) or tested positive in sampling

Detailed information on product(s) and supplier(s)
→ **to be filled by competent authority or by food business operator**

To start a **backward** or **forward tracing investigation**, please use *Start_Tracing_Backward.xlsx* or *Start_Tracing_Forward.xlsx*.

Please **always use the latest version** of the templates available for download at: https://foodrisklabs.bfr.bund.de/template-for-data-collection/

Filled example for a backtracing investigation starting from a company (restaurant at Hotel Any) with positive food samples taken from strawberry cake and chocolate cake:

Enter the **details of the inquired company** (Hotel Any) **and the products in focus** (strawberry cake, chocolate cake) **in the upper part** of the data collection sheet.
In the lower part, provide **delivery information for the suppliers of these products** (Any Bakery, Another Bakery).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	**Inquired Company:**		**Hotel Any**			**123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ**					**UK**		**Restaurant**
2			For questions please contact the FoodRisk-Labs team via foodrisklabs@bfr.bund.de										
3	**Products in Focus:**	**Relevant period of sale:**	**Onset of disease:**										
4	**Strawberry cake**	01.03.-02.03.2025											
5	**Chocolate cake**	01.03.-02.03.2025											

6 **Information to complete the sheet:**

7 Please record all received products that match the specified product descriptions and were sold during the relevant period, ensuring the information is documented in a lot-based manner.

8 If further backtracing information is available - maybe up to the producer of the product - please put this information into an additional line of this sheet and make a meaningful note in the comments field.

	Supplier				Product		Lot Information		Delivery				Comments
	Name	**Address (e.g. Street, ZIP, City)**	**Country**	**Type of Business**	**Name**	**EAN**	**Lot Number**	**Best Before Date or Use-by Date**	**Delivery Date**			**Amount (e.g. 45 kg)**	
									Day	Month	Year		
12	Any Bakery	123 Sesame street, Any City AB1C 2DE	UK	Bakery	Strawberry cake		004	02.03.2025	2	3	2025	2 Cakes	
13	Another Bakery	4 Baker street, Any City BC1D 2EF	UK	Bakery	Chocolate cake		654	02.03.2025	1	3	2025	3 Cakes	
14	Another Bakery	4 Baker street, Any City BC1D 2EF	UK	Bakery	Chocolate cake		345	03.03.2025	2	3	2025	2 Cakes	
15													

Callouts:
- Use two-letter country code
- Do not change table headers
- Use two-letter country codes
- Leave fields blank if the information is unavailable
- Enter dates in the format DD.MM.YYYY
- If needed, additional columns can be added on the right side but they are not automatically read in by FCL

The completed template can now be imported into the FCL Desktop application to visualize the data and generate two prefilled follow-up data collection templates, allowing the investigation to continue at Any Bakery and Another Bakery.

Backward tracing template
Continuation of a backward tracing investigation

Forward tracing template
Continuation of a forward tracing investigation

Send the two prefilled data collection templates to the competent authorities in Any City — or directly to the respective food business operators — to gather information on Any Bakery and Another Bakery.

Follow-up templates:

Backward tracing template:

As this is a backtracing investigation, the **outgoing product(s) of the inquired company** are already known and are prefilled by FoodChain-Lab in the grey area **in the upper part** of the template.

For each of the outgoing products, now **list the respective incoming product(s)/the ingredient(s) in the lower part of the template** in a lot-based manner. Starting in Column A, **enter the line number or the lot number** (which ever suits best for the current situation) of the outgoing product to which the ingredient belongs. Then, complete the relevant details in Columns B and onward. **For each of the ingredients** of the first outgoing product, **use a separate line**.
Once all ingredients of the first outgoing product are listed, proceed to **assess** and document **the next outgoing product(s) in the same way** using separate lines.

Hints: Leave fields blank if the information is unavailable. Use two-letter country codes. Enter dates in the format DD.MM.YYYY, unless otherwise specified.

Details of the of the **inquired company** (automatically **pre-filled** by FoodChain-Lab)

	A	B	C	D	E							M	N
1	Inquired Company:		Another Bakery		4 Baker street, Any City BC1D 2EF				UK			Bakery	
2	For questions please contact the FoodRisk-Labs team via foodrisklabs@bfr.bund.de												
3	Outgoing Goods												
4		Product			Lot Information		Delivery				Recipient		
5		Name	EAN	Lot Number	Best Before Date or Use-by Date	Delivery Date			Amount (e.g. 45 kg)	Name	Address (e.g. Street, ZIP City)	Country	Type of Business
6						Day	Month	Year					
7		Chocolate cake		345	03.03.2025	2	3	2025	2 Cakes	Hotel Any	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Restaurant
8		Chocolate cake		654	02.03.2025	1	3	2025	3 Cakes	Hotel Any	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Restaurant
9													

(Row 5/6 header also includes "Comments" in column N)

Details of the **outgoing product(s)** of the inquired company (automatically **pre-filled** by FoodChain-Lab)

10 Information to complete the sheet:

11 Fill in outgoing goods which are already known (see grey fields

12 Please keep track of the ingredients of all sent products - do it in a lot-based manner.

13 In Column A starting with Line Number 21 please enter the line number of the outgoing good being the product of this ingredient. Afterwards, enter the r

14 Please repeat the outgoing good as often as necessary in order to capture all its ingredients.

15 Then, please assess the data for the next outgoing good(s) accordingly.

To ensure structured data collection, **use the FoodChain-Lab Desktop application to generate** a backward or forward tracing **template which is automatically pre-filled** with the details of the product(s) to be traced at the inquired company.

	A	B	C	D	E							M	N
17	Incoming Goods - lot-based Ingredient List												
18	Line Number or Lot Number from Outgoing Goods	Ingredient			Lot Information		Delivery				Supplier		
19		Name	EAN	Lot Number	Best Before Date or Use-by Date	Delivery Date			Amount (e.g. 45 kg)	Name	Address (e.g. Street, ZIP City)	Country	Type of Business
20						Day	Month	Year					
21													
22													
23													

(Row 19 header also includes "Comments" in column N)

Assignment of the ingredient(s) to the respective outgoing product(s) via line number or via lot number

Enter detailed information on **incoming product(s)/ingredient(s)** and their **supplier(s)**

Forward tracing template: In case of a forward tracing investigation, the forward tracing template would be completed in a similar manner, but with a focus on collecting information on outgoing product(s) and recipient(s), rather than incoming product(s) and supplier(s).

Filled example of a backtracing follow-up template: (Continuation of backtracing investigation at Any Bakery)

The **upper prefilled part** of the data collection sheet (grey area) gives the **details on the inquired company** (Another Bakery) **and the products in focus** (chocolate cake lots 345 and 654). In the **lower part**, fill the delivery information for the **ingredients** and the **suppliers** of these products – starting with all ingredients for chocolate cake lot 345 in separate lines. Then, list all ingredients for chocolate cake lot 654 in separate lines. Use either **line numbers or lot numbers** to connect the outgoing goods (upper grey table) with their ingredients (lower table).

	Inquired Company:		Another Bakery			4 Baker street, Any City BC1D 2EF			UK		Bakery		

For questions please contact the FoodRisk-Labs team via foodrisklabs@bfr.bund.de

Outgoing Goods

	Product		Lot Information		Delivery			Recipient				Comments
	Name	EAN	Lot Number	Best Before Date or Use-by Date	Delivery Date		Amount (e.g. 45 kg)	Name	Address (e.g. Street, ZIP City)	Country	Type of Business	
					Day	Month	Year						
7	Chocolate cake		345	03.03.2025	2	3	2025	2 Cakes	Hotel Any	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Restaurant	
8	Chocolate cake		654	02.03.2025	1	3	2025	3 Cakes	Hotel Any	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Restaurant	

Information to complete the sheet:

Fill in outgoing goods which are already known (see grey fields above).

Please keep track of the ingredients of all sent products - do it in a lot-based manner.

In Column A starting with Line Number 21 please enter the line number of the outgoing good being the product of this ingredient. Afterwards, enter the requested information into columns B onwards.

Please repeat the outgoing good as often as necessary in order to capture all its ingredients.

Then, please assess the data for the next outgoing good(s) accordingly.

> Do not change table headers

Incoming Goods - lot-based Ingredient List

Line Number or Lot Number from Outgoing Goods	Ingredient		Lot Information		Delivery			Supplier				Comments
	Name	EAN	Lot Number	Best Before Date or Use-by Date	Delivery Date		Amount (e.g. 45 kg)	Name	Address (e.g. Street, ZIP City)	Country	Type of Business	
					Day	Month	Year						
7	cocoa powder	12345	444	31.12.2025	15	2	2025	50 kg	Dry Stuff Inc.	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Wholesaler	
7	eggs		1 NL 234567	15.03.2215	27	2	2025	100 eggs	Greggs Eggs Ltd.	67 Market Square, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Packer	
7	Miller's Finest flour	567890	333	31.09.2025	24	2	2025	100 kg	Miller's Mill	123 Miller street, Miller City XY1Z 3YZ	UK	Mill	
8	cocoa powder	12345	444	31.12.2025	15	2	2025	50 kg	Dry Stuff Inc.	123 Any street, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Wholesaler	
8	eggs		1 NL 345678	20.03.2025	28	2	2025	50 eggs	Greggs Eggs Ltd.	67 Market Square, Any City XY1Z 2YZ	UK	Packer	
8	eggs		1 DE 876543	21.03.2025	28	2	2025	50 eggs	Farmer Joe's Eggs Ltd.	45 Village street, Any Village AB1Z 3YZ	UK	Egg Producer	One-off purchase due to delivery problems of usual supplier
8	Miller's Finest flour	567890	333	31.09.2025	24	2	2025	100 kg	Miller's Mill	123 Miller street, Miller City XY1Z 3YZ	UK	Mill	

> Instead of line number 7 or 8, the respective lot numbers 345 or 654 could also be entered.

> Leave fields blank if the information is unavailable

> Enter dates in the format DD.MM.YYYY

> Use two-letter country codes

> If needed, additional columns can be added on the right side but they are not automatically read in by FCL

German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment

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