

Checklist to Meet HACCP Certification Requirements

HACCP is a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product. HACCP Certification is an internationally recognized approval system that verifies and acknowledges a food facility has successfully developed, documented and implemented systems and procedures in accordance with HACCP. In accordance with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences recommendation, the HACCP plan must be developed by each food processing facility and tailored to its individual product, processing and distribution conditions. The following guidelines will facilitate the development and implementation of effective HACCP plans and the acquisition of HACCP Certification.

1. Assemble the HACCP Team: The first task in developing a HACCP plan is to assemble a HACCP team consisting of individuals who have specific knowledge and expertise appropriate to the product and process. It is the HACCP team's responsibility to develop and implement the HACCP plan. The team should be multi-disciplinary and include individuals from areas such as production, sanitation, quality assurance, engineering and food microbiology.

2. Describe the Food, its Distribution, Intended Use and Consumers: The HACCP team must first describe the food. This consists of a general description of the food, ingredients, and processing methods. The method of distribution should be described along with information on whether the food is to be distributed frozen, refrigerated, or at ambient temperature. The normal expected use of the food must be described. The intended consumers may be the general public or a particular segment of the population.

3. Develop and Verify the Process Flow Diagram: The purpose of a flow diagram is to provide a clear, simple outline of the steps involved in the process. The scope of the flow diagram must cover all the steps in the process which are directly under the control of the facility. The HACCP team should perform an on-site review of the operation to verify the accuracy and completeness of the flow diagram.

4. Development of the HACCP Plan: The HACCP team must develop the HACCP plan in accordance with the seven basic principles of HACCP. These principles include hazard analysis, critical control point (CCP) identification, establishing critical limits, monitoring procedures, corrective actions, verification procedures, and record-keeping and documentation. Under such systems, if a deviation occurs indicating that control has been lost, the deviation is detected and appropriate steps are taken to reestablish control in a timely manner to assure that potentially hazardous products do not reach the consumer.

5. Conduct a Hazard Analysis: The HACCP team must conduct a hazard analysis and identify the appropriate control measures. The purpose of the hazard analysis is develop a list of the food safety hazards reasonably likely to cause injury or illness if not effectively controlled and identify the preventive measures the establishment can apply to control those hazards.

6. Identification of the Hazards: The HACCP team must develop a list of potential biological, chemical or physical hazards which may be introduced, increased, or controlled at each step in the production process. If the hazards warranting control within the HACCP system are not identified, the plan will not be effective regardless of how well it is followed.

7. Hazard Evaluation: The HACCP team, with assistance of experts, evaluates and decides which potential hazards must be addressed in the HACCP plan. During this stage, each potential hazard is evaluated based on the severity of the potential hazard and its likely occurrence. For example: Physical: metal contamination from equipment; Biological: Salmonella, Escherichia coli, Staphylococcus aureus.

8. Determine Critical Control Points (CCPs): The HACCP team must identify the Critical Control Points (CCPs) in the food production process. A Critical Control Point is defined as a step at which control can be applied and is essential to prevent or eliminate a food safety hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level. The potential hazards that are reasonably likely to cause illness or injury in the absence of their control must be addressed in determining CCPs. For each food safety hazard that is reasonably likely to occur, you must identify a CCP to control that hazard either at the step at which the hazard is identified or at a later step in the process.

9. Establish Critical Limits: The HACCP team must establish Critical Limits for each CCP. A Critical Limit is defined as a maximum or minimum value to which a biological, chemical or physical parameter must be controlled at a CCP to prevent, eliminate or reduce to an acceptable level the occurrence of a food safety hazard. Critical limits are the parameters that indicate whether the control measure at the CCP is in or out of control and are the boundaries of safety for preventive measures put in place at CCPs.

10. Establish Monitoring Procedures: The HACCP team must establish monitoring procedures for the measurement of the critical limit at each CCP to determine whether the critical limits are being met. Monitoring is defined as conducting a planned sequence of observations or measurements to assess whether a CCP is under control and to produce an accurate record for future use in verification. Monitoring procedures should describe how, when and how frequently measurements will be taken.

11. Establish Corrective Actions: The HACCP team must establish corrective actions to be taken when monitoring shows there is a deviation from a critical limit. Corrective actions must specify the procedures followed when a deviation occurs and who is responsible for implementing them. Corrective actions should identify and eliminate the cause of the deviation, ensure the CCP is under control after the corrective action, establish measures to prevent recurrence, and ensure no product affected by the deviation is shipped.

12. Establish Verification Procedures: The HACCP team must establish verification procedures to ensure the HACCP system has been validated and is working correctly. Validation is defined as that element of verification focused on collecting and evaluating scientific and technical information to determine if the HACCP plan, when properly implemented, will effectively control the hazards. Verification of the HACCP system should include an initial validation, ongoing verification and documented periodic reassessment.

13. Establish Record Keeping and Documentation Procedures: The HACCP team must establish effective record keeping and documentation procedures regarding the operations that can be used to trace the production history of a finished product and determine whether the product was produced in a safe manner. These records should include a summary of the hazard analysis, the HACCP plan, documentation such as validation records and daily operational records generated during the operation of the HACCP plan.

14. Implementation and Maintenance of the HACCP Plan: The HACCP team must coordinate the implementation of the HACCP plan which involves the continual application of the monitoring, record-keeping, corrective action procedures and other activities as described in the HACCP plan. Maintaining an effective HACCP system depends largely on regularly scheduled verification activities and provision of proper training to ensure people understand their role and can effectively fulfill their responsibilities.

15. HACCP Certification: HACCP Certification is an internationally recognized approval system that verifies and acknowledges a food facility has successfully developed, documented and implemented systems and procedures in accordance with HACCP. HACCP certification requires a rigorous review of a facility's HACCP Plan and HACCP system in order to verify it meets all compliance standards. A food facility must successfully pass a certification audit provided by a qualified independent third-party food safety auditor from a registered external certification body in order to obtain HACCP certification.