



## Implementing Compliance Management Solutions to Enhance Food Safety Management

### Executive Summary

The food industry is a high-competition, low-margin market in which rising costs, exposure to risk and workload exert increasing pressure on food manufacturers. In response, businesses have implemented cost-reduction and efficiency measures, such as consolidation, downsizing and economising in order to minimise costs and maximise efficiency.

Food-specific quality assurance standards such as EFSIS, BRC and AIB require manufacturers to implement and maintain food safety management systems, with serious consequences for noncompliance. Within the food industry, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is internationally recognised for managing food safety.

## Impact on businesses

- Food safety systems must be independently appraised and audited regularly
- Businesses must identify any stage critical to food safety
- Businesses must implement, maintain and review adequate safety procedures
- Businesses must support safety procedures with documentation and records
- Businesses can incur serious consequences for non-compliance

## Impact on industry

- Regulatory compliance requires the implementation of food safety systems and is reinforced by legislation
- Regulators recommend HACCP as the most effective method by which businesses can manage food safety
- HACCP is a key component of food industry standards such as EFSIS, BRC and AIB
- Regulatory compliance is increasingly difficult to demonstrate with paper-based systems

Food safety management systems such as HACCP ensure that food manufacturers can maintain regulatory compliance as well as satisfy customer demands for quality and safety. Implementing traditional food management systems to maintain and review food safety systems leads to increasing costs and workload, reducing efficiency and the effectiveness of resources.

As the importance of regulatory compliance increases, food manufacturers are implementing compliance management solutions to manage the maintenance and review of food safety systems, enhancing resource effectiveness, reducing exposure to risk and increasing system efficiency.



## **Food Safety Management - An Introduction**

For food, drink and related companies in today's global marketplace, the food industry is a highly competitive market: oversupplied, running over capacity and leading to low margins and a tough low environment for manufacturers.

Following a steep decline in British export that resulted in the closure of export departments at many companies, the food industry is only now beginning to chart an incline. In response to the recent economic downturn, manufacturers have worked to reduce costs, including consolidating, downsizing and rationalisation. In addition, rising costs, exposure to risk and workload exert increasing pressure on food manufacturers to reduce costs in order to survive, resulting in redundancies and reductions in employee overtime.

In recent years the UK food industry has experienced an ongoing period of consolidation, with many industry sectors requiring to buy out competitors, merge or fail, such as the snacks and oils and fats sectors. Food manufacturers are returning to nurture their core business, selling assets and shedding non-viable business through rationalisation.

The global food industry is currently experiencing an unprecedented level of scrutiny as a result of changing legislation and the increasing importance of food-specific quality assurance standards such as EFSIS, BRC and AIB.

Within the UK food industry, legislation such as the 1990 Food Safety Act and the 1995 Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations states that businesses must identify any stage critical to food safety, to ensure that adequate safety procedures can be implemented, maintained and reviewed. Failure to comply with this legislation can incur an unlimited fine, up to 2 years' imprisonment, or both.

With the introduction of similar legislation in Europe and North America, members of the global food industry are now legally required to demonstrate the efficient and effective management of food safety. The ISO 9000 series of standards for Quality Management Systems enables global food and drink manufacturers to demonstrate a defined quality management system that has been independently appraised and is regularly audited to customers, legal and regulatory authorities.

Within the global food industry, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system has become the internationally recognised methodology for managing food safety, as well as a key component of food industry standards such as EFSIS, BRC and AIB. In addition, regulators such as the UK's Food Standards Agency and Ireland's Food Safety Authority advise implementing HACCP as the most effective method by which food businesses can safeguard consumers.

According to the core principles of HACCP, in implementing a HACCP system, manufacturers must establish:

- Procedures to monitor the Critical Control Points (CCP)
- Corrective actions to be taken if a CCP is not under control
- Documents and records to demonstrate the effective application of the above measures
- Procedures to verify whether the above procedures are working effectively

However, traditional food safety management systems are often very resource-intensive, requiring a great deal of time and effort to ensure that they are maintained effectively.

The harsh reality of food safety management is often:

- Management time wasted on compliance audits
- Management frustration
- Decision-making process hindered
- Unable to demonstrate compliance on demand and at point of need
- Frantic information collation both before and during the audit
- Loss of credibility in front of customers and/or auditors
- Documented processes not adhered to
- Increased waste/non-conforming product
- Loss of production time due to process failures
- Non-conformances not closed on time
- Business issues remain unresolved
- Increased food safety risks
- Loss of accreditation, BRC, EFSIS etc.

With serious consequences for non-compliance, food manufacturers in today's global marketplace must comply with an increasing number of legal and regulatory requirements to demonstrate the efficient and effective management of food safety, as well as to achieve certification to food safety management standards.

However, the traditional approach to implementing and maintaining food safety management systems can result in increased exposure to risk, increased duplication of effort and increased compliance and operational costs. In addition, the traditional approach reduces ROI and increases costs associated with exposure to risk as well as compliance with future legal and regulatory requirements.

Solutions that enable food manufacturers to manage food safety management systems enable radical reductions in the time required to achieve certification to standards, and dramatically decrease the duplication of effort in complying with legal and regulatory requirements. By implementing a compliance management solution to manage food safety, compliance with standards, including HACCP, can be achieved, as well as enhancing the maintenance and improvement of food safety management.

## **Compliance Management Solutions in Managing Food Safety**

For the global food industry, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) System has now become generally accepted as the key safety management system. Food, drink and related companies are under increased pressure to implement a due diligence defence, whilst simultaneously maximising product and service quality and productivity, controlling costs and utilising resources efficiently.

Due diligence requires that food manufacturers implement and can demonstrate the effectiveness of food safety management systems and their consistent application. A legal requirement of the 1990 Food Safety Act, due diligence is an essential element of food production, distribution and retail. Food manufacturers require to ensure that they have exercised all due diligence and have followed all necessary procedures, recorded all necessary documentation and conducted all reasonable testing to ensure the quality and safety of their products.

In addition to offering a proven solution for management standards such as ISO 9001, 14001 and 27001, compliance management solutions facilitate HACCP activities. With a compliance management solution that enables the efficient and effective management of food safety, manufacturers can put effective systems and controls in place to:

- manufacture safe, legal and wholesome products to reduce regulatory exposure
- prevent legislative exposure through effective management of due diligence
- deliver organisational improvement through efficient regulatory compliance

By implementing a compliance management solution to manage food safety management systems, manufacturers can maintain and improve processes such as document control, corrective and preventive action, audits and management review.

### Controlling documentation

With a traditional food safety management system, document control cycle times can increase as a result of inactive and obsolete documents remaining in circulation, which can lead to employees following incorrect processes and can result in a drop in process efficiency. Employees are less likely to request changes to documents as they have limited access to the change control process and employee ownership is difficult to encourage. Document storage and disposal costs can also rise as the volume of paper-based documents increases.

A compliance management solution enables manufacturers to:

- access documents requiring formal control from a central repository at the latest revision in a protected format
- streamline document administration, reducing time spent on the change control process
- automatically notify relevant personnel of documents requiring review, enabling swift response to review dates
- control access to the management system, ensuring authorised personnel to view controlled documents, promoting security and control of quality systems and development of 'best practice'

## Verifying system effectiveness

Information in a traditional food safety management system takes a great deal of resources to gather and analyse, which can result in an increase in preparation time and a decrease in efficiency. Longer preparation times can lead to audit cycle times increasing and a lack of ownership can lead to employees overlooking an increasing number of audit findings.

A compliance management solution enables manufacturers to:

- demonstrate control of CCPs through regular verification, scheduling and performing audits against Critical Control Plans and Procedures
- reduce the administrative time and effort spent on every aspect of the entire audit programme
- implement corrective and preventive actions where risks are identified against CCPs to minimise food safety threat
- reduce the number of overlooked actions by notifying employees automatically by email

## Capturing corrective actions

The lack of tools for analysing corrective action information in traditional food safety management systems can make it difficult to find the root causes of incidents, and analysis requires greater resources, reducing the time available to resolve issues. Difficulties in identifying how and where resources should be allocated can lead to rising costs, waste and recurring issues. Ineffective communication and a lack of employee ownership can result in actions being overlooked by employees.

A compliance management solution enables manufacturers to:

- respond to all incidents, including CCP non-conformances and customer complaints with a formal methodology
- control CCPs and actions, enabling NC to be raised if CCP exceeds critical limit and process followed to bring CCP back within limits and actions taken with non-conforming product
- control CCPs exceeding critical limits by implementing appropriate actions
- automatically notify personnel responsible for tasks and actions related to incident management, ensuring that issues are resolved quickly

## Maintaining control of food safety activities

With a traditional food safety management system, it can be difficult to justify resource allocation and expenditure, as the visibility of resources is buried deep within the paperwork. This can result in approaching and overdue actions being overlooked by employees. Ineffective communication methods can also cause employees to overlook actions, resulting in employees being unable to take swift and decisive action on food safety issues, as key information is not available on demand.

A compliance management solution enables manufacturers to:

- maximise resource efficiency by offering quick and easy access to due and overdue actions
- increase visibility of resource allocation to justify the decision-making process
- ensure the right people are working on the right actions at the right time by automating communication and action visibility
- provide key information 'on demand' to detect, decide and deliver with confidence

## Analysing food safety incidents

Paper-based systems can lack effective tools for analysing information, leaving you unable to analyse food safety incidents by occurrence or cost and leading to rising costs and recurring failures. Without access to up-to-date information, it's difficult to identify key performance indicators and the lack of access to CCP exceptions or audits can result in the ineffective use of time during management reviews.

A compliance management solution enables manufacturers to:

- interrogate all food safety incidents, including CCP issues and safety audit findings, using a powerful graphical analysis tool to identify potential trends and to minimise reoccurrence
- identify improvement opportunities, reducing costs and repeat failures through trended root cause analysis
- provide KPI analysis 'on demand' with complete up-to-the-minute information
- enhance the efficiency of management reviews by enabling 'on demand' CCP exceptions and audit analysis

## Conclusion

The demand for safe food, produced to a consistent quality standard, and meeting all legal and regulatory requirements has necessitated formal quality management systems in the food industry. As with a quality management system, food safety management systems will generate an increasing amount of information, such as incident reports, audits, employee suggestions and defects. Developing systems to store, manage and analyse such information requires considerable resources to handle efficiently.

Within the food industry, the responsibility to ensure product safety is borne by manufacturers in order to encourage customer confidence, which is required to increase sales in a highly competitive industry. The implementation and auditing of food safety management systems such as HACCP are required to ensure that compliance activities are maintained and that manufacturers are able to meet the requirements of customers, certification bodies and regulatory authorities.

For food manufacturers, implementing a compliance management solution to manage food safety management systems helps promote and focus both responsibility and autonomy. Such solutions empower employee participation and are essential for efficiency and continuous improvement with cost reduction.

With a solution that enables the efficient management of food safety, manufacturers can put effective systems and controls in place to:

- manufacture safe, legal and wholesome products to reduce regulatory exposure
- prevent legislative exposure through effective management of due diligence
- deliver organisational improvement through efficient regulatory compliance

Contact us now on +44 1355 593 400 or at [foodsafety@gaelquality.com](mailto:foodsafety@gaelquality.com) to discuss how our compliance management solutions can add significant value to your regulatory compliance efforts.