

## **Fact Sheet: Selecting a HACCP Consultant**

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The implementation of HACCP in your facility is a step towards implementing a food safety system that will help you prevent problems in food production, processing and handling. As with any new program, you must understand it fully, not just as a list of standards or requirements, but as a complete approach that shapes the way your facility operates. An outside consultant with expertise in implementing HACCP systems can be a valuable member of your team.

### **Why hire a consultant?**

A consultant brings expertise and experience to your project and assists you by:

- Providing technical support as you create and document your HACCP system
- Providing training in HACCP at an introductory level so that you understand the reasons and rationale of the HACCP approach
- Providing feedback on your specific HACCP system and suggesting improvements
- Assisting with HACCP documentation and record keeping
- Assisting with HACCP training
- Assisting with HACCP auditing and certification
- Assisting with HACCP program maintenance and upkeep

### **What should you expect from a consultant?**

- Technical knowledge of the food production and processing and its associated hazards
- Clear understanding of HACCP
- Qualifications and experience in implementing HACCP
- Willingness to provide support and training, as required, to both management and staff members directly involved in the HACCP system
- Willingness to work with plant personnel to ensure a well-designed system

### **How do you find and select a consultant?**

Although there is currently no directory of HACCP consultants, food production facilities can seek advice from their industry associations. Undertaking a rigorous selection process will ensure that you know exactly what the consultant is expected to deliver.

A potential consultant should be able to answer questions such as:

- What are your qualifications?
  - *The expert must be able to demonstrate a high level of technical knowledge and skill relating to the food production and/or processing industry.*
- What experience do you have in implementing HACCP systems?
  - *This is your opportunity to explore the consultant's background specific to HACCP implementation. Asking for examples of documentation from other projects gives you an idea of the quality of the supplier's work.*
- Can you provide references and samples of previous work from previous clients?
  - *References allow you to assess the credibility of your potential consultant.*
  - *Samples allow you to assess how user-friendly their procedures and records are*
- Are you willing to spend time on site, identifying the specific needs of my company?
  - *An effective facilitator will make it clear that s/he intends to spend time with you, listening to your concerns and explaining the best way to meet your needs. Consultants will need to have an in-depth understanding of your facility and operations to be able to provide sound advice on the development of a specific HACCP system.*
- What will you provide by way of follow-up support, once the system is implemented?
  - *The process of implementing your HACCP system may take time. Is the consultant prepared to offer ongoing support once the system is in place? Will training be part of the process?*

### **What details should you and your consultant agree on in a contract?**

Once you are satisfied that you and your consultant are able to work together towards meeting your company's needs, you should finalize specific details in a contract. Issues that need to be addressed include:

- How long will the project take? What is the breakdown of tasks and how long will it take to complete each one?
- What are the deliverables? This may include items such as meetings, on-site observation, production of documents, training, and follow-up calls.
- What is the projected cost, and what are your payment options?
- What material must remain confidential?

## **Working with a HACCP Consultant**

The process involves both you and the HACCP consultant, working together towards successful implementation.

- You might rely on the consultant's suggestions and advice, but your direct involvement in the implementation is still essential.
- Plant personnel familiar with operations should review and test proposed procedures and documents developed by a consultant to ensure they are feasible and effective
- You must ensure that you and/or your staff are fully familiar with all procedures before s/he is finished.

**A carefully chosen consultant, whose experience and expertise match the needs of your company, can be a valuable tool in the implementation of an effective HACCP system.**