

FOOD SAFETY MANAGEMENT

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Recent peanut butter salmonella outbreaks, e. coli contaminated-vegetables, listeria-tainted cheeses, and the recent horsemeat scandal have raised critical concerns about the safety and quality of food products. Regulatory bodies have swung into action with stricter regulations and harsher penalties for non-compliance, while consumers have become more aware and vigilant about signs of unsafe food. This means that companies have to be extra careful about evaluating and monitoring food safety in every link in the food chain, from farm to fork[1].

Many food retailers insist that their suppliers comply with GFSI schemes, as well as food safety standards such as HACCP and ISO 22000. However, monitoring supplier compliance and performance can be a huge challenge especially when the supply chain is so vast, distributed, and complex.

The ISO 22000 family of International Standards addresses food safety management.

The consequences of unsafe food can be serious and ISO's food safety management standards help organizations identify and control food safety hazards. As many of today's food products repeatedly cross national boundaries, International Standards are needed to ensure the safety of the global food supply chain[2].

Hazard analysis and critical control points or HACCP is a systematic preventive approach to food safety from biological, chemical, and physical hazards in production processes that can cause the finished product to be unsafe, and designs measurements to reduce these risks to a safe level. In this manner, HACCP is referred as the prevention of hazards rather than finished product inspection. The HACCP system can be used at all

stages of a food chain, from food production and preparation processes including packaging, distribution, etc. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) say that their mandatory HACCP programs for juice and meat are an effective approach to food safety and protecting public health. Meat HACCP systems are regulated by the USDA, while seafood and juice are regulated by the FDA. The use of HACCP is currently voluntary in other food industries[3].

The solution of this problem is MetricStream Food Safety Management. MetricStream provides a single, comprehensive solution to manage all food safety requirements ranging from supplier management, to hazard analysis, to compliance management, audits and inspections, non-conformance management, complaints management, and recalls.

Using the solution, organizations can manage the entire process of onboarding suppliers, evaluating supplier compliance with food safety regulations/ policies, and monitoring supplier performance. The solution maps all suppliers to the relevant products/ ingredients, as well as the associated compliance requirements for complete traceability and transparency. It also maintains all supplier information (e.g. farm GPS co-ordinates), as well as product information (e.g. specifications, raw-materials, labeling requirements, and allergens) in a central repository for quick search and reference.

Through the solution, companies can plan, distribute, and manage compliance surveys and self-assessments.

Users can also streamline the entire food safety audits and inspections process. Any non-conformances or issues that arise can be routed through a systematic process of investigation, root cause analysis, and correction action.

The MetricStream also enables a systematic and transparent process for managing and tracking customer complaints based on food safety. If products are contaminated, the solution supports and automates the entire process of managing recall campaigns, and communicating with customers[1].

Provides a common point of reference to manage end-to-end food safety processes — ranging from supplier management, to hazard analysis, to compliance management, audits and inspections, non-conformance management, complaints management, and recalls

Strengthens compliance with food safety regulations, GFSI schemes, and standards through a federated approach; simplifies the tracking of regulatory changes through automated notifications and data feeds

Enhances communication of food safety policies, and co-ordination of compliance activities in the supply chain.

Provides a centralized and real-time view of food safety processes across the supply chain for complete transparency and accountability. Maps all food processes, products, and entities together, so that if a food safety issue arises, it can quickly be traced back to the source .

The food quality audit management is becoming increasingly challenging, given the growing complexity of businesses and the multitude of audits that need to be conducted. Any microscopic error in the audit process can lead to poor quality which can destroy brand image and shatter customer trust.

The traditional siloed approach and spreadsheet systems consume a lot of time and are prone to major errors. It also leads to duplication of processes and remedial measures[4].

To promote effective governance and to ensure food safety across the supply chain, food industry, regardless of its size, needs to incorporate an automated and comprehensive food quality audit management solution that can manage all food quality audits and product audits within the organization as well as audits of external entities such as suppliers, distributors, and contractors.

REFERENCES:

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