HACCP is Critical to Food Safety Follow these 6 Steps to get it Right

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INTRODUCTION

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is a critical part of food safety. Below is a best-practices approach to building your HACCP plan, along with the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) functions that help simplify the process.

1. Conduct a Hazard Analysis

Through the use of a hazard analysis, stakeholders identify points in the production process where a risk could occur, determine the severity of the risk, and identify control measures for any significant risk.

Technology Consideration: Risk Management

Using an FSMS that will outline the process steps for each product and incorporate risk-based technology enables stakeholders to identify potential hazards for each process step. The ability to track the type of hazard, identify the roles involved, and determine the type of control needed to mitigate any hazard is key to providing safe, quality food.

A flexible GMP system will allow you to easily configure keywords, logins and pages as you'd like. Basically, it's the ability to make the software your own, without the need for IT assistance. For instance, graphical tools like drag and drop will allow the user to make changes to the look and feel of the system, without the need for programming knowledge. This in itself is a key part in making the user comfortable with the system.

2. Identify CCPs and Establish Critical Limits

When a hazard analysis determines that there is a significant risk in the process that requires control, a Critical Control Point (CCP) may be needed.

Technology Consideration: Risk Management and Document Control

Using intelligent automated Decision Tree technology, an FSMS can guide users through the process of determining if a hazard requires a CCP and provide a revision controlled environment that will establish the conditions for CCPs. The FSMS will document CCPs by describing the process steps, the critical limits, the monitoring procedures involved, the frequency at which it is being monitored, and any related corrective actions. Any records such as procedures, work instructions, or specification(s) related to CCPs should be automatically linked to the plan. These records should reside in a revision controlled Document Control system. Anytime a CCP is reviewed or is revised, any affected documentation can also be reviewed for change management.

3. Establish Monitoring Procedures

Monitoring procedures are used to allow visibility into whether all CCPs are under control and will provide stakeholders with a verification record for future use.

Technology Consideration: Nonconformances

Should a CCP result in a failure, an automated FSMS should have the ability to automatically generate a nonconformance, look for any deviations, and recommend action based on the data. This could result in product being discarded, reworked, approved for one-time use, and in some instances, could generate a corrective action to investigate the event.

4. Establish Corrective Actions

A critical part of a FSMS is the ability to initiate a corrective action for a process or product deviation. The goal of corrective action is to bring the process back to a controlled state and investigate the root cause with the ultimate goal of taking action to eliminate the cause. Corrective action is key in implementing a continuous improvement program.

Technology Consideration: Corrective Action

The FSMS can streamline and simplify the process through the use of a Corrective Action module. This system will route all events through review, root cause, corrective action taken, and verification stages, and will generate reports automatically, which will provide an effective method for tracking the source and cost of all adverse events. Implementing Risk Management with the Corrective Action system will allow stakeholders to effectively determine the risk level of the event and set the priority based on the risk, allowing stakeholders to handle the most critical Corrective Actions first.

SaaS is ultimately a low maintenance approach to deploying a GMP system—the cloud saves you the cost of traditional deployment methods, without sacrificing the system's value.

5. Establish Record-Keeping and Documentation Procedures

Record-keeping procedures are required to ensure that the HACCP system is following the HACCP plan and that the plan is satisfactory. All of the support documents from the HACCP plan development should be stored for the required amount of time and be accessible for review.

Technology Consideration: Document Control, Deviation and Change Management

An FSMS should have a Document Control system in place, which manages the creation, approval, distribution, revision, and archiving of all documentation within the FSMS. Look for a Document Control system that links to the PRPs and has the ability to execute change requests across multiple documents. The benefit is that when a food safety process is audited and needs to be changed, all affected documents can also be a part of that change.

Truly automated systems provide a significant level of document traceability within the processes that they automate, whether by a well defined audit trail, revision control, or corrective action histories. Companies are able to draw on this historical data to improve for the future and maintain well-documented processes. Through use of an automated Deviation module, organizations can identify deviations, develop a deviation plan with target completion dates, approve proposed deviations, and verify the completion of deviations that are in process. Continuous improvement is a critical part of the success of any organization, and having procedures in place for change management is a key feature in a FSMS. The Change Management system will provide a repository that shows what steps to follow when making changes to both processes and products, and provides a clear definition of how to execute such changes.

6. Establish Verification Procedures

Verification procedures are procedures, methods, tests, and audits that are conducted to ensure compliance to the HACCP plan and to determine whether any modification or review is needed. Examples of verification activity could include equipment calibration and process audits to ensure manufacturing processes are under control.

The FSMS should be able to assist stakeholders in each of these areas.

Technology Consideration: Audits and Change Management

An Audits system will automate the process of auditing the HACCP plan and other food safety programs. The FSMS will allow stakeholders to schedule system audits on a regular basis. The Auditing system should be flexible enough to cover everything from PRPs to CCPs, and even affected documentation. The FSMS can also automatically generate comprehensive audit reports that provide evidence of how the HACCP plan is being controlled.

An automated Change Management system will provide a repository that shows what changes were made to the prerequisites or HACCP plan, why the change(s) was made, and what resulted from each change.

CONCLUSION

Following the right food safety processes while establishing your HACCP plan will help ensure that you provide consumers with a safe, high quality product, while reducing risk.

ABOUT VERSE

Quality and compliance management software is becoming a growing requirement in businesses today. With the speed of the market ever-increasing, companies need solutions that will allow them to manage and track quality and compliance processes, while automating processes efficiently. VERSE was developed to enable organizations to gain these valuable tools in a cost-effective manner. VERSE has all the key quality processes such as document control, corrective action, audits, and training in a dedicated cloud environment. This means you have an enterprise quality management system in your own personal cloud. VERSE means versatility; quality management software for all.