Strengthening the Food Production Process through HACCP

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INTRODUCTION

Within the food production process there are critical points along the way that can easily introduce unwanted hazards to food consumers. With the incidence of foodborne illness increasing throughout the world, customers need to be assured their food consumption is safe (1). It is the foodservice manager's responsibility to make sure these unwanted hazards are kept under control. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) is intended for this particular purpose and provides customers with the assurance they need about the safety of their meals.

HACCP is a systematic safety approach that allows foodservice workers to recognize opportunities for pathogens as well as other harmful objects that make their way into the food production process. Once these critical control points are identified, HACCP encourages individuals to minimize the risks and perform corrective actions before the food reaches the plate of the consumer. When a food production manager uses HACCP and its principles, HACCP will strengthen the foodservice organization by increasing the safety of the employees and customers.

HACCP

Importance of Food Safety

The foodservice industry is one of the most controlled industries in the United States because of the threat it can potentially create for the public (2). Possible mechanisms of contamination must be continuously monitored in order to prevent unwanted consequences, including customer dissatisfaction, food-borne illness outbreak, and even broken legal regulations. Every year, more than one million people throughout the world become sick from diseases related to food-borne illness (3). It is important to recognize that these diseases come as a result of improper cleaning of hands and equipment, cross contamination, and improper

cooking and cooling temperatures (4). These critical points are the main steps in the food

production process that should be monitored to maintain a safe foodservice operation. It is

important to understand how foodservice workers can think and act proactively in protecting

themselves and their customers within these areas. It is a foodservice manager's responsibility to

reduce food hazards and control the food production process by recognizing what these

contaminants are, where they come from, and how to stop them.

<div align="center">**Purpose of HACCP**</div>

Foodservice managers need to recognize opportunities for food to become unsafe and

work together with foodservice employees to prevent these conditions from arising. The HACCP

program was created by the Pillsbury Company Aeronautics and NASA in order to provide safe

foods for astronauts to consume (5). This idea to produce safe foods for astronauts has expanded

to foodservice operations throughout the world because of its effectiveness. One of the key

differences between HACCP and other approaches to food safety is that HACCP aims to prevent

while other approaches aim to correct what has already been done. Food hazards would not need

to be corrected in the first place if the situations were eliminated through proactive actions with

the assistance of HACCP. For example, when concerns of infectious disease breakouts occur

throughout a geographical area, HACCP protects against further spread by locating the critical

control points where harmful contaminants could make their way onto the plates served (6). This

protective effect can be achieved by acknowledging the three main critical control points to

watch over in the food production process: improper heating of food, cross contamination, and

improper hygiene (7). The purpose of HACCP is to actively prevent food hazards by locating

these specific steps along the food production process in order to increase the safety of food.

Strengthening a Foodservice Organization

Although most current foodservice employees have been trained about the overall importance of food safety, compliance to the HACCP will help further strengthen a foodservice organization by helping employees recognize potential mishaps in the workplace (4). Although the FDA does not require retail compliance to HACCP, strong benefits for the foodservice organization have been demonstrated. Researchers assessed the safety of foods that were produced as a result of the HACCP guidelines. During the study, the foodservice employees constantly revised the food procedures and recipes of the foodservice organization to lower the risk of possible hazards. These employees planned for potential complications in their food production process and manipulated any critical control points that could potentially cause harm. The researchers found that the foodservice organizations that focused on HACCP were at a significantly lower risk for food-borne illnesses. These organizations were able to easily identify areas of concern and focus on changing the trouble spots into strengths (8).

Some may view HACCP as a burden to their food production system because of its time consuming nature. Writing a HACCP plan specific to an organization requires a great deal of attention; however, it will only serve as a benefit throughout the years to come. HACCP improves the overall products of a foodservice organization by eliminating microbial contents through improved production procedures. Product improvements, made through the assistance of HACCP, increase sales by upholding a high reputation that maintains existing customers as well as attracts a variety of new customers (9). With customer satisfaction increasing, HACCP also assists in protecting a foodservice's organization from any possible business liabilities (1). This simple act of controlling potential hazards within a foodservice system increases revenue and saves money by encouraging returning customers and avoiding potential lawsuits. These benefits

to the foodservice organization can be accomplished by looking for opportunities to improve the production process and will save time and money in the end. HACCP is an essential food safety system that all foodservice organizations should emphasize in their training and daily activities of production to help strengthen their foodservice organization.

CONCLUSION

Food safety is critical within the food production process. Foodservice managers need to enforce proper food safety training in order to protect their employees, their customers, and their reputations. Alongside HACCP's principles, foodborne illness breakouts can be significantly reduced through proper employee education and continual management of the food production process. Although HACCP may initially be time consuming, its benefits strengthen an organization because of the assurance it gives the organization and its customers.

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