Introduction to MyHACCP

Background

MyHACCP is a web-based tool that has been developed to assist food business operators to comply with their legal obligation to have in place a permanent procedure based on “HACCP principles”. This obligation is based on Article 5 of Regulation (EC) 852/2004 [1]. MyHACCP will be of particular assistance to food manufacturers, but may also be helpful to other food businesses including larger catering operations such as central production units in hospitals, universities and similar.

The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system is a risk assessment method which helps food business operators to identify the points in their food activities which are critical to food safety and to take the necessary steps to ensure that these points are adequately controlled. There are 7 HACCP principles [2] which give structure to the risk assessment process.

The MyHACCP tool helps you undertake a detailed study of the food activities undertaken by your business to ensure that the food that you produce is both safe and legal. Some background knowledge of HACCP, food microbiology and food law are required in order to get the most out of MyHACCP. Our help pages [3] provide some background information on what HACCP is. We also have a PowerPoint presentation with audio narration [4], which offers similar basic information about HACCP in a different format. (The slides have text, but the audio narration is not subtitled. The whole presentation is in English.)

Preparing for your HACCP study

MyHACCP will guide you through the process of developing a HACCP system in a series of easy to follow steps. You may save your work at any time and return to it when it is most convenient for you. In order to start the process you need to have some basic information about your business and food activities to hand.

A common reason why HACCP plans are not completed by food businesses is that they do not reflect the "real world" and are academic rather than practical in nature. MyHACCP will help you to put together a HACCP plan that properly reflects the day to day operation of your business and includes practical and achievable steps that you and your staff should follow to ensure the safety of food products.
Before starting the MyHACCP study you need to identify members of your team who you would like to work with on this project. The team should include representatives from your business who know how your products are actually produced in practice. Depending on the size and scale of the business this task may be carried out by one or two people but in larger organisations might include buyers, production management, transport management, engineers, production operatives etc. The key is to keep the HACCP study real and to ensure that it is workable rather than producing an overly complex document that remains on the shelf. However, parts of the HACCP study require technical knowledge and so it may be necessary to enlist the services of an appropriate food safety consultant to help you. More information about selecting your team is available on the help page for Preparatory Stage D [5].

Another matter to consider early in your HACCP study is the scope of the HACCP plan [6]. You should be clear about which products are included and the start and end points of the study. For example, it may be possible to group similar products together where the process steps and hazards are identical. The start point of the study may be the purchase of raw materials and the end point may be the despatch of the product from the production unit or factory but these may vary depending on the nature of the business. For example it may be appropriate to consider the delivery of the product to the consumer.

It may be necessary for you to undertake analytical studies of your products to investigate the intrinsic aspects of the food such as salt content, pH and water activity. Understanding the physical and chemical properties of your food will help you to identify the likelihood that dangerous microorganisms will be able to grow or survive in the food and this in turn will help you to decide which microorganisms will need to be controlled.

You will also need to think about who your customers will be, how your products will be stored and distributed, whether they will be supplied to your customers ready to eat or whether further preparation will be necessary and what information will be provided to the consumer through labelling and other means.

All of these issues are important ingredients in the preparation of a HACCP plan that is fully relevant to your business and properly reflects the activities that you carry out. A thorough understanding of these will speed up the HACCP process and will also make the final HACCP plan an invaluable tool to both demonstrate compliance and also produce safe food.

**Prerequisites**

"Prerequisites" is the term given to the normal hygienic arrangements which should be in place in a food premises before a HACCP study is undertaken. For example, the design, layout and structure of the food premises should be adequate to permit good hygienic practices to be carried out; the staff should be adequately trained in the duties that they are required to perform; the water supply must be of a suitable quality and arrangements must be in place to ensure the adequate temperature control of foods.

MyHACCP will help you to consider all of these issues and to take them into account when designing your HACCP plan.
Management commitment

The preparation and implementation of a suitable HACCP plan is an essential element of every food business but to do so successfully requires both time and effort. MyHACCP can help you to put together your HACCP in a logical and systematic way that will save you both time and resources. Staff are more likely to engage in a process that has the full support of management and MyHACCP provides the opportunity for a statement of management commitment to be included in the plan.

Using MyHACCP

MyHACCP has been developed to assist you to put together a HACCP plan which you can download and implement in your business. It works by collating your responses to a series of questions and additional supplementary information.

Before starting work on the HACCP plan itself, there are a few preliminary steps to complete. These take you through the prerequisites and other preparatory steps as discussed above and are shown in diagram 1 below:

The stages are:

A. Prerequisites
B. Obtain management commitment
C. Scope of study
D. Select the team
E. Describe the product
F. Identify intended use
G. Flow diagram
H. Confirm flow diagram

Once these preparatory steps have been completed, you will be able to work through the 7 HACCP principles in a logical and systematic way as shown in diagram 2 below:

The principles are:

1.1 - Identify and list potential hazards
1.2 - Conduct a hazard analysis
1.3 - Specify control measures
2 - Determine CCPs (Critical Control Points)
3 - Establish critical limits
4 - Establish monitoring system
5 - Establish corrective action plan
6 - Validation, verification and review
7 - Documentation and record keeping

Once you have successfully completed all of the preparatory steps and HACCP principles, you will be able to download the relevant documents to help you to train your staff and implement the HACCP system. These documents will include suitable record sheets for you to record monitoring at critical control points. If you decide to use the MyHACCP tool to work through the HACCP principles only, it is very important that the preparatory steps are in place and fully effective to allow the successful application and implementation of the HACCP system.

If you need to change your plan some time later to accommodate new products or a change in processing method, simply log back into MyHACCP, call up your stored plan, amend it and print off once more if required.

MyHACCP Guidance

The "Help" section of this site [7] contains some additional guidance to help you to both navigate through the MyHACCP tool and also provide some useful reference material to assist in the development of your HACCP plan.

Source URL: https://myhaccp.food.gov.uk/help/guidance/introduction-myhaccp

Links