

Important Factors in Implementing an Effective Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)

Five common HACCP shortages and the strategies your food establishment can use to address them

According to the ICMR, approximately four out of six Indians are diagnosed with foodborne diseases each year. Out of this, about 300,000 are hospitalized, and as many as 8,000 lose their lives.

These sorry statistics show why food safety is paramount and why more effort should be put into reducing raw material contamination, improving storage standards, and putting better controls on food preparation and distribution. A good place to start is by implementing a properly thought-out hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) system.

Unfortunately, most food enterprises still don't truly understand the importance of having an organized HACCP plan in place. For others, the lack of funding, time, and expertise stops them from being fully HACCP-compliant.

In this guide, we take a look at five common HACCP shortages and effective strategies your food establishment can use to address them. Let's dive in!

Common HACCP shortages

HACCP is a resource-intensive process. Becoming fully compliant takes much effort and dedication. The five most common challenges that make it harder to implement HACCP plans, particularly for small and medium brands in the wider food and beverage industry, are:

- Lack of relevant HACCP expertise
- Limited funding
- Large range of products
- Lack of interest and knowledge
- Unclear plan for documentation and organization of internal processes

Lack of relevant HACCP expertise

Hiring a dedicated HACCP expert is out of reach for most food companies because they can't afford them. It takes a lot of time and money to adequately train existing staff, a risk most companies are not ready to take by diverting already scarce resources from other activities perceived to be more productive.

In the end, many food enterprises feel HACCP is unaffordable and decide against investing in HACCP expertise and knowledge.

Limited funding

Money is regarded as the No. 1 barrier to implementing food safety controls in most food businesses. Many small and medium businesses rely heavily on external funding from the government and private entities to run major processes such as HACCP.

If this support is not forthcoming or comes in limited quantities, then most end up not implementing HACCP and related plans.

In some cases, wide-scale upgrading of existing systems is required for a proper rollout of these processes. If there isn't sufficient funding for the needed changes, the entire process breaks down.

Large range of products

Another common barrier to the successful implementation of HACCP is when it involves a wide range of product types. In these cases, a single HACCP plan rarely works—especially if those products do not share similarities in processing systems and characteristics.

For example, the critical control points for a juice-processing plant will be vastly different from those for a dry-food store or restaurant. In the same vein, HACCP requirements vary a lot based on the product being manufactured.

For operations with an extensive range of products, multiple plans are needed, making the whole process more complex, costlier, and often unfeasible.

Lack of interest and knowledge

Quite a big portion of SMEs in the food and beverage industry show worryingly low levels of interest in HACCP and rarely invest in learning about it. For most, top management and other staff do not have a background in any food discipline.

When this is the case, HACCP implementation is treated as an afterthought, only getting the deserved attention when things go haywire.

Unclear plan for documentation and organization of internal processes

As with any major development in an organization, successfully implementing HACCP requires a clear course of action and unwavering commitment from management and everyone involved. In particular, poor planning is a huge challenge that many food establishments grapple with today.

Another issue some operations struggle with is keeping track of the extensive documentation produced in typical HACCP processes. The multiple phases and checks involved from start to finish leave behind a trail of paperwork that needs proper record keeping.

Possible solutions

HACCP implementation is not easy, especially for companies with limited funding, expertise, and goodwill to get it right. However, it doesn't always have to be this way.

If you're struggling to properly implement a HACCP plan in your company, the following solutions and [best safety practices](#) might be a good place to start. After all, HACCP is a necessity and required by law in most parts of the world. The faster you overcome the above-mentioned challenges and implement them, the safer it will be for your establishment, both in terms of reputation and longevity.

Hire an independent HACCP consultant

For companies lacking HACCP experts in their ranks or funds to train in-house, hiring an independent consultant or partner is a good move. Work only with experts who have proven records of delivering efficient systems to your specific industry. They should also have hands-on experience in handling procedures that lead to full HACCP compliance.

Seek funding and automate repetitive tasks

For challenges stemming from limited funding, here are two quick solutions for you: First, look for support from your local government and other external sources of funding you may find. Alternatively, automate your processes using a food safety management system such as [FoodDocs](#). The idea is to cut time spent by your staff on repetitive HACCP processes and paperwork so that they can focus on more productive activities.

Educate your staff

Finally, invest in education for your staff, including top-level managers, about the need to remain HACCP-compliant and what it means for your food and beverage company. Sure, they don't all have to become experts in the area. But the support they'll give to those involved in the actual process will be worth it!

Does HACCP compliance now sound more achievable?

For businesses in highly competitive and challenging industries like food and beverage, complying with processes such as HACCP can feel like a big headache. To get over it, try to pinpoint the exact challenges your establishment is facing and implement the solutions offered to you in this article.

I won't lie: HACCP compliance is never going to be easy. But overcoming these day-to-day challenges and being able to sleep soundly at night, knowing your customers are safe, is enough reason to pursue it relentlessly. Good luck!

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