

The new Market Update section of Food Manufacturing is designed to offer our readers insight toward critical industry trends and issues. We received hundreds of helpful responses to this month's reader survey on HACCP. Please be on the lookout next month for our email survey on Outsourcing and let your opinions be heard in the pages of Food Manufacturing!

While the initial ground work for HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) was put in place back in the 1960's for the U.S. Space Program, it has been applied to all stages of food production and various other industries, including pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. HACCP is now government-mandated in the meat and poultry industries (USDA) as well as the seafood and juice industries (FDA).

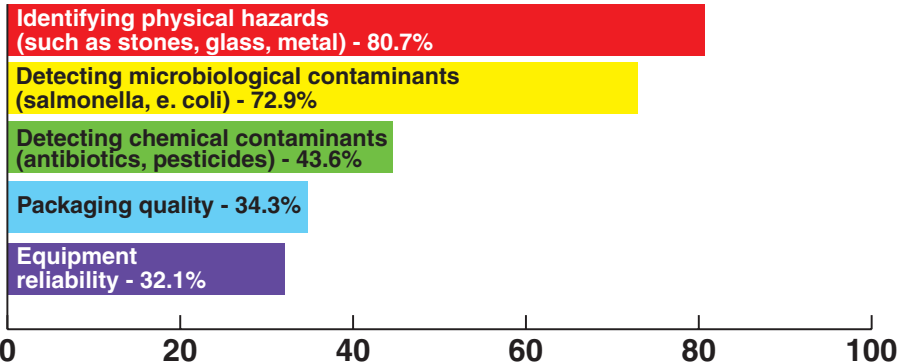
A survey of *Food Manufacturing* readers revealed that 12 percent of plants have had a HACCP plan in place for 20+ years. However, all of these plants with long-standing HACCP plans report having updated their plans within the last five years.

The majority of plants (35 percent) report having a HACCP plan in place for the last 6-10 years, while 18 percent put their HACCP plan in place recently (within the last five years). The food industry's push for more stringent food safety is perhaps reflected in the fact that 86 percent of all survey respondents reported having revised their plants' HACCP plans within the last year.

Food manufacturers report several motivating factors for HACCP implementation, with the largest being the need for a preventative system to insure the safety of products (61 percent). Other factors include:

- Adhering to government regs/preparing for inspection – 26 percent
- Prioritizing potential hazards – 3 percent
- Pressure from customers – 3 percent
- Enhancing potential for international trade – 1.5 percent

Which hazards does your HACCP program focus on?



Regardless of specific motivating factors behind HACCP implementation, 90 percent of respondents reported that there is a firm commitment to HACCP by top management, which has proven crucial to its successful implementation. In addition to buy-in from top management, 90 percent of plants have an individual or group specifically tasked with HACCP development, implementation and maintenance.

Some food plants seek outside help when it comes to reviewing the elements of their HACCP plans.

- 45 percent do not feel an outside consultant is necessary
- 29 percent report consistently using an outside consultant
- 19 percent report using an outside consultant once
- 7 percent don't use a consultant but plan to in the future

In addition, 12 percent of respondents report being part of a HACCP alliance, such as International HACCP Alliance or National Seafood HACCP Alliance.

As the food industry continues to tighten its food safety measures, there are numerous proposed solutions circulating. When asked whether they thought mandatory HACCP systems across the food and beverage industries would be enough to secure the safety of our food supply, 55 percent said no and 45 percent said yes. In addition, several respondents pointed out that:

- No system is 100 percent fool proof. Regardless of what measures the industry has in place, there is always some threat that could slip through the cracks.
- For HACCP principles to work, they would have to be adopted by the entire supply chain – starting as early as with the growers.
- Having systems in place does not always mean they will be followed. Plants must be 100 percent dedicated to HACCP for it to be successful.

Many respondents pointed out that HACCP, like other programs such as lean or Six Sigma, is only one part of a larger solution towards a safer food supply. ♦

What does your HACCP program involve?

