

The Importance of Custom, Cost-Effective Food Safety Programs

Ron Shepard, CEO, Shepard Bros.



As our food supply has become increasingly global in nature, the challenges to food safety also have become more complex. Different countries have different regulations about what defines a “safe” raw material or finished product, making it critical for companies to have a strong, well-defined food safety program — including cost-effective cleaning and sanitation programs. Failure to do so can lead to public health and safety issues and ultimately a loss of credibility with consumers.

Investing in Brand Protection

Cleaning and sanitation in the production plant is sometimes a rushed event in order to get production back on-line. These procedures are often poorly defined and can lead to overlooked issues that in turn lead to larger problems with time. The establishment and implementation of comprehensive cleaning and sanitizing standard operating procedures (SSOPs) lead to greater efficiencies, consistent and safe products and brand protection within the industry.

The key to this vital component of any food manufacturing company’s success is to identify potential operational hazards and develop solutions before they become realized sanitation concerns. The importance of eradicating potential pitfalls within a site’s cleaning and sanitation programs cannot be understated, as maintaining a positive brand image with consumers should drive all food manufacturing organizations to implement programs that ensure each product is produced as safely, efficiently and profitably as possible.

Development of Successful — and Profitable — Sanitation Programs

Sanitation and cleaning programs are successful and subsequently become profitable when they are thoughtfully designed and customized to the particular manufacturing site. The following steps, when properly developed and implemented, allow for program design and service teams to identify and mitigate the sanitation concerns of the production plant and minimize the potential for a product recall:

- **On-Site Audit:** A thorough, on-site plant audit should be conducted to determine the baseline of the site's cleaning and sanitation elements, while also identifying areas of concern that could negatively impact product quality.
- **Identify Customer Requirements:** Many customers now require that their vendors and suppliers are certified to a specified [Global Food Safety Initiative](#) [1] (GFSI) standard. Certification to a GFSI standard not only satisfies a customer's requirement, but also significantly reduces the cost of redundant audits while improving productivity and profitability. It is best to determine up front what standard the company's major customers require, coupled with what standard is best aligned with the products manufactured by the company.
- **Written Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOPs):** Design a written sanitation program (SSOP) that takes into account the issues identified in the audit, facility cost considerations and previously identified site-specific goals related to the product quality and sanitation programs. As the [Food Safety Modernization Act](#) [2] (FSMA) legislation is implemented, the identification of hazards and the development of written SSOPs that address those hazards will be critical for facility compliance with the new rules.
- **Continuous Evaluation and Feedback:** A properly designed food safety program solicits regular feedback from the principal stakeholders and provides for continuous evaluation of the program via service reporting and systems review. Through operational documentation, problem analysis and recommended action plans, the development of a system review procedure enables the company to continually optimize their programs while remaining within the confines of their cost-structure. It also creates an environment where greater accountability encourages the business to thrive in all respects.

Remaining on the Forefront of Innovation

Establishing a commitment to the design of individualized cleaning and sanitation programs begins with ensuring a safe production environment for employees. Forward-thinking companies often equip program managers with access to advanced industry training as a way to increase their technical expertise and furnish their production teams with knowledge of the industry's latest productivity and efficiency innovations.

Evaluation and implementation of these latest industry innovations at production plants — including testing the performance of new mechanical equipment,

The Importance of Custom, Cost-Effective Food Safety Programs

Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

developing innovative chemical programs and investing in engineering enhancements — lead to the application of reputable and sustainable business practices. Such benefits are evident in areas such as the reduction of workers' exposure to hazardous chemicals, the decrease in operational costs and the continued generation of an environmentally-friendly footprint.

As all industries strive to be more productive, efficient and profitable producers, the food manufacturing segment is no different. Implementation of customized food safety programs that include specific cleaning and sanitation procedures will allow organizations of all sizes to maintain the highest quality of product for consumers while encouraging their existing framework to evolve and grow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ron Shepard is the CEO of Shepard Bros., a premier supplier of custom specialty chemicals and application support services. With more than 36 years of diverse business experience, Ron drives the strategic direction of the business and leads its day-to-day operations. He started with Shepard Bros. in 1979 as a field sales representative and has spearheaded the company's shift beyond its traditional dairy customer base into eight market-focused segments. Ron has overseen four company acquisitions in the last seven years and has led Shepard Bros. to industry recognitions including Family Owned Business of the Year by the Los Angeles Business Journal and the 72nd Assembly District Business of the Year for the State of California, among others. He is an active member of the following professional organizations and boards: California Creamery Operators Association, California Dairy Industries Association, California League of Food Processors, International Association of Food Industry Suppliers, La Habra Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Chemical Distributors, Northwest Food Processing Association, and Vistage International Association of CEOs.

ABOUT SHEPARD BROS., INC.: Shepard Bros., Inc. is a leading provider of chemical products, services, and solutions to a wide variety of markets. Founded in 1976, the company has evolved from its dairy industry roots into a major chemical manufacturing corporation with eight diversified product divisions including food and beverage, specialty chemicals, commercial laundry, hand care, water treatment, animal health care, compounding and packaging, and food ingredients. With headquarters in La Habra, Calif., and additional production, warehousing and distribution points located in Portland, Oregon and Idaho Falls, Idaho, Shepard Bros. is committed to improving productivity and profitability for its customers. The sustained expansion of Shepard Bros., Inc. is the result of broad technical expertise, a superior level of service and an unwavering responsiveness to customer needs. For more information, visit www.shepardbros.com [3].

For more food industry news and information, [subscribe here](#) [4] and follow us on [Twitter](#) [5], [Facebook](#) [6] or [LinkedIn](#) [7].

Source URL (retrieved on 04/28/2015 - 1:56am):

<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/articles/2014/04/importance-custom-cost-effective-food-safety-programs>

The Importance of Custom, Cost-Effective Food Safety Programs

Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

Links:

- [1] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/articles/2014/04/gfsi-recognized-food-safety-schemes-ensure-global-acceptance>
- [2] <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/default.htm>
- [3] <http://www.shepardbros.com>
- [4] http://subscribe.advantagemedia.com/fm_ods/landing.aspx?cmpid=footerlink
- [5] <https://twitter.com/foodmfg>
- [6] <https://www.facebook.com/FoodManufacturing>
- [7] http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Food-Manufacturing-wwwfoodmanufacturingcom-4656128?trk=my_groups-b-grp-v