

Selecting a Food Safety Consultant

As you start developing your Food Safety Systems, you may need the guidance and assistance of an experienced consultant. A Food Safety or HACCP consultant will bring the technical knowledge and expertise that facilitates the implementation of the Good Manufacturing Practices* (GMPs) and Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points (HACCP) systems in your facility.

Role of the consultant

A consultant provides assistance according to your requirements and your current situation.

Some of the services that a consultant should be able to provide are as follow:

- Initial assessment of your facility to determine your needs and the requirements for GMP/HACCP implementation (gap analysis)
- Assistance creating a work plan for developing and implementing your food safety system
- Development of written programs
- Implementation of GMP/HACCP systems
- Employee GMP/HACCP training to both management and staff members involved in your Food Safety System (e.g. personnel practices, sanitation, etc)
- Development of a record keeping system
- Assistance with the preparation for auditing and certification (e.g. internal audit)
- Maintenance of your GMP/HACCP system (follow-up after certification)
- Technical knowledge transfer to your staff (e.g. HACCP coordinator)

How do you find and select a consultant?

A list of Food Safety consultants is provided at www.gov.mb/agriculture/foodsafety/cfs10s14.html. Also, industry associations may be able to provide you with other contacts or advice.

Before you hire a consultant you should discuss your needs and evaluate his/her qualifications:

- **Technical knowledge** in food processing and/or food production (e.g. diploma or degree in Food Science, Microbiology, qualifications as auditor, etc)
- **Experience** implementing Food Safety Systems (e.g. experience with written programs, conducting HACCP training courses, etc)
- **Willingness to work on site** identifying the needs of your facility. The consultant should be committed to spend significant amount of time learning the daily operations to ensure a well-designed system
- **Interest of the consultant to maintain the system** once implemented (e.g. would the consultant provide follow-up support, training?)
- **Work history and references** of previous jobs and previous clients (e.g. have any of his/her previous clients received third party recognition/certification?)

*Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) are also known as Prerequisite Programs.

Preparing the agreement between you and your consultant

Once the consultant is selected, some key issues should be addressed before a contract is signed. Some of these issues include:

- Development of the plan and the activities involved in the project
- Duration of the project
- Identification of milestones
- Deliverables. This may include training sessions, meetings, preparation of forms, written programs.
- Cost of the project (e.g. cost per hour, total cost) and payment options
- Confidentiality agreement (e.g. process, recipes)

Working towards the implementation of your Food Safety System

- You need to understand and evaluate the programs developed by the consultant, by testing the procedures and documentation requirements.
- The programs should be feasible, effective and specific to your plant.
- Regulatory requirements should be met throughout the programs.
- Proper training of the staff involved with your operation is required for a successful implementation.
- Once the Food Safety System is implemented, the consultant should transfer the technical knowledge to your staff to maintain the program.

If you have questions regarding how to select a consultant please feel free to contact the Food Safety Initiative at 204-795-8507 and request to speak to a Food Safety Analyst