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 Critical Control Point (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 (ex: personnel practices, sanitation, etc.)
- Development of a record keeping system
- Assistance with the preparation for auditing and recognition (ex: internal audit)
- Maintenance of your GMP/HACCP system (follow-up after recognition)
- Technical knowledge transfer to your staff (ex: HACCP coordinator)

How do you find and select a consultant?

A list of food safety consultants is provided at manitoba.ca/agriculture/foodsafety/fsi/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 (ex: diploma or degree in Food Science, Microbiology, qualifications as auditor, etc.)
- **Experience** implementing food safety systems (ex: experience developing 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 (ex: would the consultant provide follow-up support, training?)
- **Work history and references** of previous jobs and previous clients (ex: 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 (ex: cost per hour, total cost) and payment options
- Confidentiality agreement (ex: 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 developed, the consultant should transfer the technical knowledge to your staff to maintain the program.

For information on the Food Safety Program contact the CVO/Food Safety Knowledge Centre. For technical information, call 204-795-7968 or 204-795-8418 in Winnipeg; or e-mail foodsafety@gov.mb.ca. For general information, contact your local GO Centre.