Best Practice – Traceability

Key Takeaways on an Effective Traceability System

A robust traceability system can identify sources of food contamination and prevent them from reaching consumers thereby assuring consumers of product safety. Traceability systems Provide transparent information from farm to fork helps win the consumer's trust and assures them of a quality product.

End to end traceability and reduces time and costs in identifying issues in the supply chain and increases operational efficiency.

Traceability systems optimize supply chain operations and streamline the various processes involved, thereby reducing waste and improving supply chain management.

Best Practices for Mock Recall:
- Perform mock recalls yearly and include different product types.
- Track customer complaints.
- Be able to quickly and easily locate and implement recall standard operating procedures.
- Have access to customer's contact information for management or quality assurance person responsible for recall (and secondary contacts) to oversee recall process.
- Be able to identify target products and where distributed (and the ingredients).
- Verify response time and set goals to increasingly reduce the identification of affected product and the response time.
- Have steps identified for efficient communication with customers for product removal and disposal.
- Focus on continually improving traceability systems and processes. This should not be viewed as 'one and done'.

Best Practices for Identification and Labelling:
- Have an efficient and accurate process for identification of batches and lot numbers of all products.
- Be able to identify ingredients including supplier lot, date received, and used.
- Have in place accurate labelling protocols that take into consideration the readability and durability of label (resistant to environment storage conditions). Electronic labellers are more production efficient and minimize human transcription errors and mislabelling of product. Implementation of GS1 Canada barcodes, including electronic product code enable RFID technology which are compatible, with scanning technologies facilitate product tracking through distribution and retail.
- Have a tested system to follow product from receipt of livestock or raw materials at the plant, through each step of manufacturing, packaging and further distribution (end location and shipment date). Some form of electronic data collection facilitates the linkage of this data through all steps of the process. More robust systems facilitate recalls, can limit the recalled product scope by being able to identify only affected products, and allow fast and accurate communication of those affected products to regulatory bodies and customers.

Best Practices to Mitigate Product Recalls:
- Product quality reports, including the presence of foreign object identified in a product, must trigger a review of that production process and standard operating procedures to avoid this occurrence from happening in the future. This should include employee training, appropriate gowning and hair nets, and monitoring the of use and access to foreign objects near manufacturing lines (pens, paper, gloves).
- Have scheduled food safety and risk-based assessments of the manufacturing processes.
- Use Mock Recalls to identify gaps in traceability systems and implement improvements in tracking methods.
- For coolers and freezer, use electronic monitoring and alarm systems in conjunction with equipment check lists to ensure that products have been held at defined optimal storage conditions compatible with food safety and shelf-life parameters.

Best Practices for Customer and Supplier Lists:
- Ensure customer and supplier lists are kept up to date and are easily accessible.
- Track specific customer complaints.

Best Practices for Equipment at Red Meat Slaughter:
- Use an RFID animal tag reader when RFID tags are present to capture the tag number accurately.
- Use an electronic scale with a printer and all required software that is integrated with the tag reader to create the carcass label.
- Use the information from the tag reader and scale, that includes the ability to export to a spreadsheet (e.g. Excel), to retire tags through an upload to CCIA.
- For future flexibility, choose a carcass label system that includes a bar code that can be read in the cutting room.

Best Practices for Cutting, Further Processing, Packaging and Labelling:
The following recommendations need to be balanced for each processor with the volume processed and the destination of the meat. The tighter the information, the less chance that a wide spread recall would be needed.
- Have product codes which provide detailed information of the product including ingredients
- Use batch records for meat products which include tracking information on the meat as well as the batch numbers for any ingredients, casings and packaging material.
- Be able to trace product back more accurately than using carcass weight alone.
- Be able to track back to an individual animal to tighten traceability. This must be balanced with the volume processed and breadth of product distribution.
- Use the cutting list to record as much information on the source of the meat (producer name, animal tag number, etc.), date, weight and destination. Include batch information for further processed products.
- Gather the trim from individual animals and separate from other animals processed that day.
- Have product labels that include all the information to trace back at least one step.
- Keep accurate shipping and distribution records to be able to quickly find product destinations; one step forward.
- For future flexibility, have a carcass label system that includes a bar code that can be read in the cutting room and linked to the cutting list and further linked to invoices and product ingredient batch numbers.