

What the FDA's Food Protection Plan Means to Industry

By Mike Joyce

For the past 18 months, IES has been offering workshops to increase awareness of the need for Food Defense programs within the food industry. Working with a grant from the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), IES is providing overview training on the ALERT awareness program and the CARVER+Shock software analytical tool used to assess a facility's vulnerability to intentional contamination.

In November 2007, the FDA combined the Food Defense program with the Food Safety program under a single umbrella called the Food Protection Plan. This plan is intended to bring a greater focus on identifying potential hazards using science and modern technology. It will be integrated with the administration's Import Safety Plan to ensure a comprehensive program covering approximately 80 percent of the food supply chain. The other 20 percent, defined as meat, poultry, and processed egg products, is covered by the US Department of Agriculture.



The Food Protection Plan is intended to bring a greater focus on identifying potential hazards to the food processing industry by using science and modern technology.

Strategies

The Food Protection Plan uses three integrated strategies: 1) Prevention of food borne contamination; 2) Intervention at critical points in the food supply chain, and 3) Preparation to respond quickly to minimize harm.

These initiatives give the FDA the authority to define the level of controls necessary to prevent damage by terrorists, require registration every two years, qualify third party inspectors, require electronic import certificates for high-risk shipments, and allow mandatory recalls of food products when voluntary recalls are not effective.

This plan is designed to build in protection from production to consumption. Prevention promotes corporate responsibility so that food problems do not occur in the first place. Intervention focuses on inspections, sampling, and surveillance at high risk points in the supply chain. Response allows for increased speed and efficiency, including better communications with other federal, state and local agencies.

This approach is similar to that being used for emergency response planning and environmental management systems. First, by identifying what potential hazards exist,

companies develop reactive policies and practices should the need arise. Included in these practices are instructions for responding to an incident and the contacts that need to be made. Once established, the emergency response plan can be practiced using simulations.

ISO 22000

For the food industry, a comprehensive Environmental Management System (EMS) can be used to manage emergency response and Food Protection. The food safety management system of ISO 22000 for food manufacturers and suppliers in the food chain can be used as a method for developing Food Protection Plans. Being heavily focused on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), ISO 22000 allows for the Food Defense components to be included into a comprehensive food safety system that ensures food is safe at the time of human consumption.

Several units of NC State University are collaborating to help North Carolina's food businesses. IES is joining with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' Cooperative Extension Service and the Department of Food Science, Nutrition, and Bioprocessing's Extension Service to assist the state's food industry.

For more information on these efforts, contact IES food industry specialist Mike Joyce at 919.250.1113, or go to our [website](#).