

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 assists 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 recognition (e.g., internal audit)
- maintenance of your GMP/HACCP system (follow-up after recognition)
- technical knowledge transfer to your staff (e.g., HACCP coordinator)

How do you find and select consultant?

A list of food safety consultants is provided at manitoba.ca/agriculture/food-safety/at-the-food-processor/list-of-food-safety-consultants.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 their 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 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 (e.g., would the consultant provide follow-up support, training?)

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

- **Work history and references** of previous jobs and previous clients (e.g., have any of their previous clients received third party recognition/certification?)

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 option

- 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 developed, the consultant should transfer the technical knowledge to your staff to maintain the program.