TIP SHEET 8

SPECIFICATIONS

How will you know what to produce unless it is defined? There are two types of specifications the site will need to have: raw material and finished product. Raw and packaging materials specifications work in conjunction with the approved supplier plan to define the product raw and packaging materials suppliers will provide to the site as an approved supplier. And to ensure the final product meets both company and customer requirements, finished product specifications are to be documented, approved by the customer and kept current.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- PREPARE RAW AND PACKAGING MATERIALS SPECIFICATIONS
- DEVELOP FINISHED PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

APPLICABLE CODE ELEMENTS

- 2.3.2
- 2.3.5
- 2.4.4

KEY TERMS

- SPECIFICATION

A detailed description of work to be done or materials to be used in a project; an instruction that [defines] exactly how to do or make something (dictionary.com).

PROCESS STEPS

1. Raw and Packaging Material Specifications
   a. The quality and safety of the finished product depends on the quality and safety of the incoming raw materials. Specifications for raw and packaging materials must fully describe the materials provided, comply with relevant legislation and kept current.
   b. Safety-related information in raw material and ingredient specifications may include threshold levels for microbiological pathogens, factors affecting microbiological growth such as pH and water activity, threshold levels for potential chemical or physical contaminants and the presence or absence of known allergens. The extent to which these factors need to be included in the specifications will depend on the use of the material and the food safety risk to the finished product.
   c. All raw and packaging materials must be validated to ensure hazards and risks to finished product safety are identified and controlled. Validation methods will vary depending on the risk to finished product safety. Evidence of validation for materials may include certificates of analysis or certificates of conformance. For food-contact packaging material, validation may include testing or assurances for potential chemical migration to the food product.

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2. Finished Product Specifications
    a. The site must develop a written finished product specification for each product (or group of similar products) covered under the scope of certification. The specification must, as a minimum, comply with the appropriate food safety legislation (including labeling requirements) and must be updated as required.
    b. A finished product specification can include microbiological (e.g., aerobic plate count, yeast and mold, lactic, coliforms), chemical (e.g., salt, moisture, titratable acidity, pH, fat content, brix, viscosity, etc.) and the labeling and packaging specifications for the product.
    c. The site's customers may provide finished product specifications and if this is the case, it is advisable that both the site and their customers agree the specification is achievable and agree on the safety attributes of the product to be supplied.
    d. The specification must be made available to relevant processing staff in production, process control and/or QA personnel.

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- SQFI YouTube Channel
  https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC39i4KZQ7BhAg0SzuEuAVTQ/featured
- SQFI Documents
  http://www.sqfi.com/documents/