

# Explaining ISO22000

## **What is ISO22000?**

ISO22000: 2005 is the international standard on Food Safety Management Systems—Requirements for Any Organization in the Food Chain published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in September 2005. The aim of the standard is to harmonize on a global level the requirements for food safety management of businesses within the food chain. It is an auditable standard that can be used for internal audits, self-certification, or third-party certification. ISO22000 can be applied independently of other management system standards (e.g., ISO9001, ISO14001). Its implementation can be aligned or integrated with existing related management system requirements.

## **Why is ISO22000 needed?**

To minimize food safety risks, many organizations in the food chain require that their suppliers establish and maintain hazard and critical control point (HACCP) programs. In 1997, the Codex Alimentarius Commission published an international standard that defined the steps and principles of HACCP. HACCP continues to evolve. Advances in the quality management field allowed food-processing enterprises to develop complete food safety management systems (FSMS). Australia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the USA have developed national FSMS standards. In addition, several organizations developed third-party audit programs for sanitation and HACCP programs. Examples include: CIES by the Food Business Forum and the Global Food Safety Initiative; Food Marketing Institute and SQF program; and British Retail Consortium and the BRC Global Standard. All previous standards and audit programs were similar but differed slightly. After years of international efforts to harmonize the standards into a single, international one, ISO22000 was published.

## **ISO22000 implementation in APO member countries**

ISO22000 is applicable to all organizations, regardless of size, that are involved in any aspect of the food chain. This includes organizations directly or indirectly involved in one or more steps of the food chain. In the recent APO seminar on ISO22000 for Improving Food Safety (*see page 1*) participants from Japan, the Republic of Korea, Republic of China, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia concurred that approximately 100 organizations had already achieved ISO22000: 2005 certification in the APO membership. Japan leads the way with at least 20 ISO22000-certified organizations.

## **Significance of ISO22000 for the APO region**

Concern over food safety in the Asia-Pacific is obviously significant due to its huge population (and thus rate of consumption) and because most food processors are SMEs. It is expected that the number of organizations implementing ISO22000 and seeking certification will double every year. Organizations doing so will be confronting one or more of the following reasons:

- Realization: that ISO22000 can be used as a “tool” for improvement



*Yong (center, standing)*

- Legal and liability: to meet regulatory compliance/avoid litigation
- Customer driven: requirements by potential/existing customers
- Market focus: reputation/image of enterprise
- Pressure: directives from head office/main markets

## **How food industry SMEs can benefit from ISO22000**

ISO22000 provides a number of advantages to SMEs wanting to improve their FSMS. The standard ensures that the FSMS uses a “continual improvement” and “system approach.” Typical benefits for SMEs include: 1) Reduced cost of sales, since ISO22000 compliance immediately establishes an SME’s credibility and commitment to food safety. Demonstrating the effectiveness of an FSMS is straightforward and takes less time to earn customer trust. 2) Lower risk of liability, since by implementing ISO22000, SMEs take responsibility

for consumer safety and lower the risk of insurance payments and legal costs. 3) Improved overall performance, since a lean management system promotes continuous improvement in food products and processes, creating fewer errors, returns, and customer complaints. This generates improved relationships with customers and suppliers, providing a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

## **The way forward**

SMEs must be motivated to establish FSMS and acquire ISO22000 certification. Government authorities, SME associations, and NPOs should take the lead in:

- Developing introductory and educational materials on the standard targeting SMEs;
- Offering guidance in using self-assessment tools to help SMEs devise their own plans;
- Developing a database of consultants with expertise in establishing FSMS;
- Listing possible sources of funding for FSMS initiatives;
- Disseminating successful examples of SMEs implementing ISO22000;
- Encouraging SMEs to pursue best practices in ISO22000, including group visits to observe FSMS in action;
- Forming networks of interested SMEs to share information on effective approaches and the use of mentors to address common FSMS issues; and
- Establishing an award program to recognize organizations and individuals enabling good FSMS outcomes.

The challenge for SMEs in the food-processing sector is to regard ISO22000 as a tool for improvement that will enable them to provide consistently safe food for customers and consumers.

*Contributed by Managing Director Yong Kok Seng, QMC Resource Centre, Penang, Malaysia, and resource person for the APO seminar on ISO22000.*