

Enhancing Quality Assurance in Food Processing through HACCP

Most food processing enterprises in Asia and the Pacific are small to medium sized. An assured domestic market, undemanding customers, and lack of awareness of modern quality concepts have hindered the development of the food processing industry. Consequently, food processing enterprises find it difficult to compete and survive in a highly quality-conscious global food market; their products are often relegated to the lower-end markets. In the developing countries only a very few food-exporting enterprises are implementing modern quality assurance and improvement techniques like good manufacturing practices (GMP), good hygiene practices (GHP), and hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) analysis, a preventive and proactive food quality assurance system different from the conventional ones. HACCP is fast becoming mandatory in many international food markets.



Participants on a field trip

To help propagate HACCP in the food processing industry of member countries, the APO organized a study meeting on “Quality Enhancement in Small and Medium Food Processing Enterprises through HACCP” in New Delhi, India, from 26 February to 4 March 2002. The program was jointly implemented by the Indian Ministry of Food Processing and the National Productivity Council. Seventeen participants from 12 member countries took part.

The six resource speakers in the meeting spoke on: 1) International Development of Food Safety Systems and Marketing of Processed Foods; 2) Quality Management Systems in Small and Medium Food Processing Enterprises - Experience of South Africa; 3) GMP/GHP and HACCP Systems - Experience of SMEs Producing Food Products in Poland; 4) Implementing HACCP in SMEs: Concepts versus Consumer Participation, Business Culture, and Policy Approach; 5) HACCP - Food Safety and Certification Issues; and 6) HACCP Implementation - Challenges Facing the Developing Countries.

The participants were generally agreed that the adoption of HACCP by food processing SMEs would 1) enable them to be competitive in the international food market; and 2) contribute to improving public health through enhancing their food safety and quality. However, these SMEs would have to address a number of key issues, like poor hygiene and management practices, unwillingness to change staff’s mindset, low awareness of the importance of food quality, inadequate development of food technology in universities and vocational institutes, lack of awareness of the benefits of HACCP and other modern food quality assurance systems, and lack of competent food inspectors for HACCP implementation, to mention a few. 