

An information series for Ontario food processors from the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors and The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

# *Purchasing Safe Ingredients*

• To learn more about food safety contact the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at 1-888-466-2372 ext 64752, follow the food safety links at [www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca) or email [haccp.advantage@omafra.gov.on.ca](mailto:haccp.advantage@omafra.gov.on.ca)

## **Know Your Supplier**

Your products are only as safe as the ingredients from which they are made. Ensuring the safety and quality of ingredients used in the making of your products is your responsibility. In order to do this you must know your supplier, their programs, procedures and facilities.

## **Programs and Procedures**

As a food processor you should require that your ingredient suppliers adhere to the same programs and protocols you do. These may include:

- Food Safety Program
- Good Manufacturing Practices Program
- Shipping, Receiving and Storage Program
- Sanitation Program
- Pest Control Program
- Recall Program
- Allergen Control Program
- Food Handler Training
- Personal Health/Hygiene Policy

## **Verification**

To verify that your suppliers are operating in an acceptable facility, with acceptable food safety programs and procedures, a visit to their plant is necessary. Tour their operation, review their records, and watch their processes. This verification visit should occur as frequently as possible with a minimum of one visit annually.

## **3rd party audits**

You may also wish to have an independent third party audit to provide a credible verification that there are no issues with your ingredient supplier. These auditors can act as a liaison between you and the supplier to ensure that there are no food safety problems and issues are resolved appropriately.

Do your homework upfront to make sure the auditor you want to hire is properly trained and credible to ensure that you get good value for your money and an audit that works for your business.

See Fact sheet #2 for more information on hiring outside help.

### **Monitoring Incoming Ingredients**

In addition to ensuring your suppliers have the same standards you do, monitoring of incoming ingredients is essential.

In an effort to control incoming ingredients, you will want to develop incoming specifications for ingredients and packaging materials. This should include a visual inspection upon receipt of all ingredients and packaging materials. This should verify that the received goods are:

- from the intended supplier;
- free from evidence of contamination, spoilage or damage;
- at the appropriate temperature;
- free from evidence of thawing if frozen; and
- matching the items listed on the purchase order.

If there are any issues with incoming ingredients, the products should be refused and the supplier notified of the issues.

### **Communication**

Developing a good relationship with your ingredient suppliers will assist in assuring a safe final product. Together you can work toward this goal.

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