

Actual situation in the area of implementing quality assurance systems GMP, GHP and HACCP in Polish food production and processing plants

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Abstract

The survey was carried out in 16 provinces of Poland. Its objective was to collect information on the actual situation in the area of implementing Good Manufacture Practice (GMP), Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) in food production and processing plants. The survey demonstrated that 91% of the surveyed plants are familiar with GHP rules and 95% with HACCP. 34% of the plants have already implemented the system, 35% are in the process of implementing it, 28% are thinking of its adoption and 3% do not intend to implement the system as long as possible. The advancement of the surveyed plants in GMP, GHP and HACCP implementation can be regarded as satisfactory.

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1. Introduction

Poland is a candidate country to the European Union. The scheduled date of Poland's accession to the EU is May 2004 and all the activities to harmonise regulations by law with EU requirements are highly advanced at present.

Ensuring full safety and high health quality of food in compliance with international standards is of crucial importance for the society due to the public health aspect, for consumers and the industry (Szponar et al., 2002). It is a significant element of measures taken in agriculture and food economy as well as of Poland's efforts to join the EU structures.

One of the tools to ensure safety of food is duty to implement Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system into Polish food–nutrition companies. In the EU the HACCP system is laid down in Directive 93/43/EEC on the hygiene of foodstuffs. In Poland the obligatory application of the system is introduced by

virtue of the Law of 11 May on health conditions of food and nutrition.

The Law provides for the obligatory use of the system in large and medium food production and processing plants as from 1 January 2004, and for the application of Good Manufacture Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP) in small enterprises. The draft amendment of the Law lays down the obligation of the HACCP system implementation in small plants as well.

The Polish Law defines HACCP system as “undertakings aimed at ensuring food safety through identification and assessment of the hazard scale from the point of view of health quality and the risk of hazard during all phases of manufacturing and trade of food; this system is also intended to specify the methods of reducing hazards and developing corrective actions”. According to the Codex Alimentarius documents the HACCP system in Polish Law covers the rules and procedure of actions as follows:

- (1) identification and assessment of the dangers for health quality of the food and the risk of their occurrence as well as establishing the means of control and methods of counteracting these dangers,
- (2) specifying of the critical control points in order to eliminate or minimize the occurrence of dangers,

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- (3) establishing requirements (parameters) for each critical control point which should be fulfilled and specifying the tolerance range (critical limits),
- (4) development and implementation of the system of monitoring of the critical control points,
- (5) specifying the corrective actions if the critical control point does not meet the requirements mentioned in point (3),
- (6) developing verification procedures in order to confirm that the HACCP system is efficient and complies with the plan,
- (7) developing HACCP system documentation, related to the phases of its implementation and specifying the system of data registration and storing and filing of the system documentation.

With the view to the approaching date of Poland's accession to the EU an initial survey was carried out to check how far the activities related to practical implementation of HACCP and application of GMP and GHP rules have been advanced in food establishments in Poland. This paper is devoted to the survey.

2. Methods

The survey was carried out in 2001 based on the questionnaire specially developed for the purpose. The questionnaire was sent by mail to 400 food production and processing plants selected at random from the food businesses directory. The questionnaire was anonymous, i.e. the name of the plant and its address were not required, and it was filled in on a voluntary basis.

The questionnaire was composed of 25 well-arranged questions. With the view to the coding of the results under elaboration and the tabular form of the data collected as well as easy and uniform understanding by all respondents, the closed questions dominated (22). The remaining three questions were open-type questions.

The results obtained from the survey were presented as graphs, tables and in a descriptive form. The description of the survey results was broken down into the six following areas:

- The period of plants' existence and operation and their size in terms of the number of employees.
- Production profile of the surveyed plants and their location and major outlets for their products.
- A knowledge of hazards to health safety caused by food produced in the surveyed plants.
- A knowledge of GHP/GMP rules and application of such rules in the surveyed plants.
- A knowledge of the HACCP system and practical aspects of its implementation.
- Benefits and difficulties resulting from the HACCP system implementation.

3. Results

Twenty percent of the questionnaires were filled in correctly. As regards the percentage of the questionnaires received, the highest was sent from wielkopolskie (20%), lubelskie (11%), małopolskie and pomorskie (10% each) provinces and the lowest—from świętokrzyskie, warmińsko-mazurskie and zachodnio-pomorskie provinces (3% each). No feedback responses were sent from lubuskie and podlaskie provinces (Fig. 1).

3.1. The period of plants' existence and operation and their size in terms of the number of employees

According to the information gathered, 68% of the plants that responded to the questionnaire carried out their operations for over 15 years, 21% for 8–15 years and the remaining 5–8 years (10%) and 1–3 years (1%).

Fifty percent of the evaluated plants employ over 150 people. 10% employ from 100 to 150 people and 6% from 81 to 100 people. Overall, they account for almost two thirds of the total number of the surveyed plants. The remaining one third are smaller plants employing from 1 to 10 people and from 31 to 50 (4% each), from 11 to 30 (15%) and from 51 to 80 workers (11%).

As for the size of surveyed plants in particular provinces, including employment levels, the situation is as follows: large plants which returned the questionnaires (over 101 employees) were mainly situated in opolskie, podkarpackie, świętokrzyskie and warmińsko-mazurskie (100% of questionnaires from each of these provinces). Smaller plants that responded to the questionnaire, employing from 1 to 50 people, were mainly located in dolnośląskie (80%) and łódzkie (60%) provinces. The biggest number of questionnaires from



Fig. 1. The administrative division of Poland.

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