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Mark Reo (left), Labeling and Program Delivery Division, and Jeff White, Center for Learning, record an upcoming podcast. (FSIS Photo)

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FSIS Launches Podcasting To Enhance Communication With Small Plants

By Ndidi Mojay and Keith Payne

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) recently launched a series of podcasts targeted to small plant owners and operators. Titled "Food Safety for Meat, Poultry and Processed Egg Product Inspection" podcasts, this series provides another way to obtain essential information from the Agency at your convenience.

For starters, a podcast is a series of digital media files that are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on computers or portable media players, such as an MP3 player. The term "podcast" comes from combining "iPod®," which is a small portable audio/visual player and the term "broadcast." Podcast can refer either to the series' content or to the method by which it's syndicated, which is also called "podcasting."

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Designing Your HACCP Plan Road to Completion With the Last Four Principles

By Ellyn Blumberg

In the June and July issues of *Small Plant News*, we featured the first two parts of a four-part series on *Designing Your Own HACCP Plan*. This month, we focus on the last four Principles of HACCP.

Designing and following a successful HACCP plan helps protect public health. It makes good business sense. Monitoring, corrective actions, recordkeeping and verification, the final four HACCP Principles, have a significant impact on your plans' effectiveness.

HACCP Principle 4

The fourth principle is to establish critical control point monitoring procedures to make sure you are meeting your critical limits. Monitoring involves a series of observations and measurements that are used to ensure that a critical control point is under control. You can think of monitoring activities as the checks-and-balances for each critical control point.

Monitoring can do three things for your plant. First, it shows you when a deviation from a critical limit has happened. Second, monitoring helps identify trends in your process that will allow you to predict a loss of control at a critical control point. Finally, monitoring produces written records for use in future HACCP plan verification steps.

To determine monitoring procedures, look at your critical control points. Think about the specific preventative measure you've chosen. Which method of monitoring will best keep track of the critical limits that need to be checked? For example, would time, temperature, or pH be appropriate to monitoring, or would another factor be effective?

The HACCP team should clearly identify the employees responsible for monitoring. The employees should be trained in the proper testing procedures, the established critical limits, the methods of recording



Regulations require every establishment to reassess the adequacy of the HACCP plan at least once a year and whenever any changes occur that could affect the hazard analysis. (USDA photo)

monitoring results, and the actions to take when critical limits are exceeded.

HACCP Principle 5

The fifth principle is to establish corrective actions. This is important. You want to have procedures in place in case something goes wrong. The regulation requires that corrective action must include: identifying and eliminating the cause of the deviation; demonstrating that the critical control

point is once again under control; taking steps to prevent a reoccurrence of the deviation; ensuring that no adulterated product enters commerce; and maintaining detailed records of the corrective actions.

You should always be prepared for unexpected outcomes. Segregate and hold any affected product until its acceptability can be determined to ensure that the adulterated product does not enter commerce.

Whatever type of corrective actions your HACCP team establishes, keep detailed records including: (1) the deviation that was identified; (2) the reason for holding the product; (3) the time and date of the hold; (4) the amount of the product involved; and (5) the disposition and/or release of product.

HACCP Principle 6

The sixth principle is to establish recordkeeping procedures. Records make it possible to trace ingredients, functions, or finished products should a problem occur along the process. Records also help you identify trends in your production line. And, records serve as written documentation of your plant's compliance with the HACCP regulations. Well-maintained records protect both your customers and you!

An easy way to approach recordkeeping is to review the records you already keep and see if they are suitable. The best recordkeeping system is usually the simplest one that meets regulatory requirements and can be easily integrated into the existing operation.

Think of the different kinds of records you'll need in two ways:

◆ First, there are records that are used to support the rationale in your hazard analysis and to establish the critical control points, the critical limits, the monitoring procedures and frequencies, the corrective action procedures, and the verification procedures and frequencies.

◆ Second, there are records that you'll work with on a day-to-day basis. These include monitoring and corrective action logs.

You may also conduct testing or have prerequisite plans to support your HACCP plan. Regardless of the type, all HACCP records must contain at least the title and date of the record, product identification, critical limits, signature of the employee making the entry, a place for the reviewer's signature, and an orderly manner for entering the required data.

You are required to retain your HACCP records at least 1 year for slaughter operations and refrigerated products, and at least 2 years for frozen, preserved, or shelf-stable products. After 6 months, you're allowed to keep all these records in storage as long as they can be retrieved and provided within 24 hours if an FSIS inspector requests to see them.

HACCP Principle 7

The seventh and final HACCP principle is to establish procedures for verifying that the HACCP system is working as intended. The three types of verification are

initial validation, ongoing verification, and reassessment of the HACCP plan.

Initial validation includes proving that what is written in the HACCP plan will be effective in preventing, eliminating, or reducing food safety hazards. This includes having information that shows your HACCP plan is scientifically and technically sound.

After validating your HACCP plan, you need to verify that your HACCP system is working the way you expected. You can do this several ways. A few examples are calibrating your equipment, sampling your product, reviewing your monitoring and corrective action logs, or personally inspecting your plant's operation.

Finally, regulations require every establishment to reassess the adequacy of the HACCP plan at least once a year and whenever any changes occur that could affect the hazard analysis. Reassessment should include a review of the existing HACCP plan, including the product evaluation, hazard analysis, critical control points, critical limits, monitoring procedures, corrective actions, and recordkeeping procedures.

It's important to follow the seven principles. Say what you do, do what you say, and prove it. That's HACCP. For additional information on the principles of an HACCP plan, visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov or call (202) 690-6520. In the September issue of Small Plant News, we'll explore common pitfalls in HACCP plans and how to overcome them.

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Podcasts fit into everyone's schedule because the recipient determines when to listen. The required equipment is a computer and an Internet connection. One does not need an iPod.

"Given their busy schedules, we know that plant managers don't have a lot of time during the day at the plant to read agency issuances, so podcasting offers the ability for the plant employee to listen or view the file when it's convenient for him or her," said Karlease Kelly, assistant administrator for the Office of Outreach, Education and Employee Training.

Podcasts that target industry cover subjects ranging from the Federal grant of inspection guide, to labeling, to preventing recalls from your

establishment. The most recent topics cover various food defense issues (*See related story on page 4 of this issue*).

FSIS launched another series to target consumers as well. The "Food Safety at Home" series offers consumers another method of obtaining food safety information for meat, poultry, and processed egg products. Topics covered in this series include what to do during a power outage; the four food safety messages of "Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill"; and food safety with outdoor grilling.

"To continue receiving these podcasts automatically as soon as they are published, the user can subscribe to either the small plant series, the consumer series, or both, which are called Real Simple Syndication, or commonly referred to as RSS feeds," said Maria Miranda, a Web manager

with the Congressional and Public Affairs' Web Services Branch in Washington, D.C.

To listen to the "Food Safety for Meat, Poultry and Processed Egg Product Inspection" or "Food Safety at Home" podcasts, visit FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov and select "News and Events" from the tabs, then click on the "Multimedia" link. This is where the user will find the links to either series.

Also, users can subscribe and obtain these podcasts through the iTunes© store by typing "Food Safety and Inspection Service podcast" in the search engine of iTunes' Web site, which is www.itunes.com.

For technical assistance or to submit ideas and feedback, send an email to podcast@fsis.usda.gov or call (202) 720-9113.

Podcasts Offer Vital Tips To Improve Food Defense at Your Plant

By Marianne Elbertson

F SIS has available a series of educational podcasts on food defense-related topics in both video and audio formats. This is part of the Agency's ongoing outreach efforts to provide essential information on food safety and food defense issues.

Often, busy schedules don't allow much time during the day to read agency information. Podcasts offer the ability to listen or view them when it's convenient. In June, FSIS started publishing a food defense podcast series. The first one was focused on the Agency's Office of Food Defense and Emergency Response, which describes this office's goals, objectives, and the services it provides.

Additional podcasts published included *Food Defense: What It Means to You* (June 18), *How To Develop a Food Defense Plan* (June 25), *Reducing the Insider Threat* (July 2), and *Emergency Support Function 11* (July 16), which provides information on how USDA serves as the lead Federal agency that coordinates emergency support with industry and local and State governments when meat, poultry, and processed egg products are involved in large-scale incidents—whether natural or manmade, such as riots, demonstrations, or acts of terrorism.

Please share this news with your employees and encourage them to view or listen to these informative, yet brief, food defense podcasts. They can access the podcasts on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov and click on the "Food Defense and Emergency Response" link on the left side of the page. The link for the podcasts is also on the home page.

You can also subscribe for free to receive notification automatically of new podcasts when they are published by clicking on the link at the top of the Web page where the podcasts are located. For questions concerning the podcasts or suggestions for future podcasts send an e-mail to podcast@fsis.usda.gov.

For additional food defense information, talk to your FSIS inspector or call the Office of Food Emergency and Emergency Response at (202) 720-5643.

Commonly Asked Questions & Answers

Q. *What are some of the steps involved in exporting, and what role does FSIS perform in the export of meat and poultry?*

A. There many steps to exporting. For example, finding customers, establishing credit, finding a supplier, purchasing product, certifying of product, and arranging shipment are among the many steps. However, FSIS is involved with only one aspect of exporting—certification. Often, exporters work directly with plant management at the producing or storage facility that requests export certification on behalf of the exporter. Exporters and the plant are responsible for making sure that product to be exported meets the country requirements that are posted on FSIS' Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/Index_of_Import_Requirements_by_Country/index.asp

The exporter usually will appear on the export certificate as the consignor. Potential exporters will find useful information on the FSIS Export Information page at www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations_&_policies/export_information/index.asp.

Q. *If an establishment purchases ice from a local store, can this ice be used to cool product?*

A. Yes, provided that the ice meets the same standards as potable water. Documentation must be made available to attest to, or certify, that the ice is made from potable water. If the plant uses ice purchased from a local store, a water report indicating potability must be on file from the manufacturer of the ice to show that the water used to make the ice was potable. If the ice was made from a private well, documentation indicating the potability of the water supply used to make it must also be on file and renewed at least semi-annually. If water potability documentation from the manufacturer of the ice is not on file, then there is noncompliance with 9 CFR 416.2(g)(6), which states: "Water that does not meet the use conditions of paragraph (g)(1) through (g)(5) of this section may not be used in areas where edible product is handled or prepared or in any manner that would allow it to adulterate edible product or create unsanitary conditions."