Guidance for Developing Good Operating Practice Procedures: Process Control

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Amendment 1

Background

Process control is the system of controls that ensure that raw materials are processed correctly to produce food that:

- is safe and suitable for its intended use; and
- complies with regulatory requirements.

Note: The level of detail required in your procedure will vary depending on:

- how complicated the process is;
- how variable the inputs are; and
- how much information is already available that can be referred to (e.g. your documented programme or plan, instructions from equipment suppliers, or in customer's product specifications, etc.).

1 Purpose and Scope

Write up your purpose and scope for Process Control.

Example: To control the food production or manufacturing process so that you produce consistently safe and suitable food.

2 Authorities and Responsibilities

Write up who has specific authorities and responsibilities for Process Control. Think about managers, supervisors and other people as may be necessary.

Example: The business operator has overall responsibility for Process Control. Other staff responsibilities are assigned as follows:

- On-line staff are responsible for following process control procedures, including completion of on-line checks. [Please state who] is responsible for setting up machinery and equipment, and is authorised to change any critical settings as may be required.

3 Control Measures

Write up how you ensure effective process control.

Consider at least the following for each food, or group of foods made using the same process and equipment:

3.1 Control of Inputs

Write up:

- how you ensure the correct inputs are used, e.g. document:
  - all inputs required (including ingredients, additives, vitamins/minerals, processing aids, and packaging);
  - the quantities of each input required and any specific requirements; and
  - any lot or batch or individual product identification requirements that need to be met.

3.2 Control of Process

Write up:

- how you ensure the same process is applied each time, e.g. develop a flow diagram and task instructions to show:
  - the process steps in the order in which they are performed (i.e. from the first process step through to release of the product from your control, and including any rework as may be required);
  - the steps where inputs enter the process;
  - where outputs leave the process (including end-products, waste products or inputs into other processes);
  - instructions necessary to make the product correctly (what, when, where, how and who by);

- any parameters that must be met at each process step (e.g. pH, moisture content, time and temperature requirements); and
- where cleaning and sanitising activities integrate into the process flow (refer to separate guidance on Cleaning and Sanitation).

Note: the hazards identified for each input and process step will form the starting point for the application of HACCP (refer to the general requirements and programmes section of the MAF website for guidance on HACCP).

- how you ensure equipment is set up the right way, every time, e.g.:
  - initial set up of critical settings;
  - conduct pre-start up checks (including checks that any equipment required for critical measurements has been calibrated; checks that equipment is clean and, where necessary sanitised prior to use; checks that the equipment settings are correct); and
  - ensure that only authorised and competent persons may change critical settings (and only if required).

3.3 End-Product

Write up:

- how you ensure the final food is safe and suitable for intended use (e.g. visual inspection, quality and operator control checks, laboratory testing, etc.).

4 Monitoring

Describe how you check the process is under control (i.e. what, how, and how often the checks will be performed and by whom).

Consider the following checks:

4.1 Check of Inputs

Write up checks done which may include:

- visual checks for signs of deterioration, damage to packaging &/or seals, etc;
- checks of quantities used;

- checks that Use By or Best Before dates have been complied with; and
- records of batches used.

4.2 Process Checks

Write up checks done which may include:

- checks that process parameters have been met (e.g. pH, time and temperature).
- Visual inspection e.g.: of equipment assembly and settings, and product at particular points in the process.

4.3 Final Product Checks

Write up checks done which may include:

- visual inspection;
- product testing (rapid tests); and
- laboratory tests against specified parameters/limits as appropriate.

5 Corrective Action

Write up how you correct any problems that monitoring identifies, or that you otherwise become aware of.

Include how you cover the following:

1. Defining the extent of the problem (i.e. what has happened, when and why it happened, how it happened and whether any product has been affected);
2. Restoring control (i.e. the action needed immediately to stop more product becoming affected and to fix problem);
3. Handling affected product (e.g. preventing any unsafe product from being used - see the separate guidance for Complaints, Non-conforming Product, Corrective Action and Recall); and
4. Prevent re-occurrence (e.g. using information gained from the problem to identify better ways to do things; develop better procedures; improve checking systems;

provide better staff training; repair/replace faulty equipment; amend ingredient specifications, etc.).

6 Documentation and Record Keeping

Determine what records you need to keep for this procedure. These will help you to introduce and maintain consistent good practices, and to demonstrate to your verifier (auditor) that you are sufficiently controlling those factors that can impact on the safety and suitability of the food.

Assess any records you already have, and introduce any additional records you need for the monitoring and corrective action activities you specify in your procedure. When monitoring, you may have an option to either:

- record every check; or
- indicate that checks have regularly been carried out (e.g. throughout a week) and only record the results of a specific check where something went wrong. In these instances, always make a record of what you did to put things right (the corrective action).

Keep blank record forms handy for staff to use and let people know where they are. Keep completed record forms together where they can be found easily for your regular internal verification checks.

For your general programme requirements refer to the guidance document on the appropriate risk-based programme or plan which can be found on the Food Safety website.