

An Ounce of Prevention

HACCP software reaps a pound of cure for poultry producer

BY LISA LUCAS

WHY DO ORGANIZATIONS implement quality systems? Some customers request improvements; regulations demand them. Recent USDA actions require interventions to reduce *E. coli* O157H7, improve traceback systems and reduce *Listeria* in ready-to-eat meat. Processors must implement preventive, not reactive, maintenance to stem problems and boost consumer confidence in the nation's food supply. Managing an effective HACCP program is the way to do this.

Though intended to increase the safety of meat and poultry products by decreasing harmful bacteria levels, HACCP also has the potential as a quality management tool to reduce production cost and improve efficiency.

When one Perdue Farms Inc. plant was selected for the HACCP-based Inspection Model Program (HIMP), Perdue's Corporate QA Manager Rod Flagg began his search, for a software vendor who could help the plant meet HACCP requirements. USDA's HIMP empowers employees to take a more active role in inspection, with the goal of zero tolerance for food safety defects. Perdue selected CAT², a global software solutions provider in Conway, AR, to supply software for the HIMP program.

After success with HIMP, Perdue's QA manager at the Lewiston, NC plant, Bill Pulaski, realized his plant's need for a comprehensive software package that included plant monitoring, quality control and HIMP all in one package. With data collection by wireless applications, CAT²'s Hazard Analysis Tool series (HAT) was

his answer.

Volume, complexity and expertise made the plant a good candidate for installation of the HAT software: Its HACCP plan is intricate and Pulaski's technically savvy team were up to the task.

"We wanted a real-time data collection solution that would support our Statistical Process Control (SPC) applications," Pulaski said. HAT offers plant monitoring, quality control and HIMP in one package; data is collected by wireless applications. Lewiston's production output two million birds per week, some further processed-and three systems, each with its own chiller, trayback, CVP and export features can all be managed with HAT. "We felt this was the best choice considering how the direction of HACCP regulations were going."

"The HAT module addresses HACCP's seven principles and gives us better quality control over our processes," says Flagg.

Installation began in August 2002. Perdue saw substantial reduction in time dedicated to HACCP activities. Personnel now concentrate on other issues-like production quotas-knowing safety issues are being met.

Pulaski appreciates that the software can be customized. CAT² created a Radio Frequency (RF) module that contains all the data collected from the RF probes, such as vacuum, pH, pressure and temperature monitoring. "The alarm paging feature at the heart of the program allows us to identify and fix problems quickly with minimum product exposure, plus pinpoint problems that are trending to



One reporting feature of the Hazard Analysis Tool Series: Graph shows Statistical Process Control of cooler temperatures.

exceed limits. Our pH and tri-sodium phosphate are monitored to ensure proper levels are maintained. Alarm levels are set to allow operators to react to low and high deviations for pre-set targets." This eliminates the need for manual checks.

"It is essential our plants have shop-floor data-collection systems as an integral part of the HIMP process," adds Flagg.

In 2001, Perdue implemented its farm-to-fork food-safety program, which includes documented and audited practices covering every aspect of live production and processing. This program complements FDA and USDA compliance, including HACCP programs for all processing plants. Food safety teams at processing plants and a new food safety education program for employees round out Perdue's quality programs.

What does Flagg think is HAT's most valuable feature? "We have the security knowing the system offers traceability with complete lot tracking." As a HIMP plant, Perdue now has more responsibility and accountability for product safety while meeting government standards with less supervisory monitoring.

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