

LEVERAGING **SISTEM** TO MEET GFSI STANDARDS



SOLVING FOOD INDUSTRY SAFETY CHALLENGES

Pressure is mounting on food processors and manufacturers to quickly comply with stronger safety standards, such as those benchmarked by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). Included in the initiative are strict training requirements that focus on a higher degree of food safety education and thorough documentation. By following these guidelines and implementing a more effective training program, such as the SISTEM training platform, companies can maintain a safer working environment with better-educated employees and improved bottom lines.



The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

The GFSI, established in May 2000 with the help of the International Committee of Food Retail Chains (CIES), is a worldwide network of food safety experts and trade associations in retailing. The mission of the GFSI is to drive continuous improvement in food safety management systems in order to ensure confidence in the delivery of food to consumers ¹. As such, their objectives are to:

- ✔ Promote convergence between food safety standards through maintaining a benchmarking process for food safety management schemes.
- ✔ Improve cost efficiency throughout the food supply chain through the common acceptance of GFSI recognized standards by retailers around the world.
- ✔ Provide a unique international stakeholder platform for networking, knowledge exchange and sharing of best food safety practices and information.

The GFSI equally accepts, as compliant with their standards, any of the following certifications ²:

Manufacturing

- ✔ BRC Global Standard Version 5 www.brcglobalstandards.com
- ✔ Dutch HACCP Option B www.foodsafetymanagement.info
- ✔ FSSC 22000 www.fssc22000.com
- ✔ Global Red Meat Standard www.grms.org
- ✔ IFS version 5 www.food-care.info
- ✔ SQF 2000 level 2 www.sqfi.com
- ✔ Synergy 22000 <http://www.synergy-gss.com/>

Primary Production (Pre Farm Gate)

- ✔ SQF 1000 Level 2 <http://www.sqfi.com/>
- ✔ GlobalGAP (Aquaculture and Livestock IFA V3.0; Fruit and Vegetable Scope, Opt. 1 & 2 only) <http://www.globalgap.org/>

Primary Production & Manufacturing

- ✔ PrimusGFS <http://www.primusgfs.com>

These certifications are not accredited by the GFSI, but incorporate the three key elements required by the GFSI for compliance, including:

- ✔ A Food Safety Management System that is documented, implemented, maintained and continually improved.
- ✔ A Good Practice for ensuring food safety in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Good Distribution Practices (GDP).
- ✔ A HACCP system, or equivalent, to demonstrate food safety management.

At the beginning of 2008, the significance of the GFSI standards increased considerably when Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, became the first grocery retail chain to announce that all producers of Wal-Mart and Sam's Club private-label foods had to be audited for the ability to demonstrate GFSI standards by July 2009. With more companies like Kroger, US Foodservice, and McDonald's following suit, adoption of GFSI standards is key for the future of companies within the food industry ³.

Best Practices

- ✔ Secure corporate wide commitment
- ✔ Perform a GAP analysis at each plant to assess needs
- ✔ Establish specific, achievable and measurable goals
- ✔ Designate one person from each plant to be the lead practitioner
- ✔ Keep the process uniform throughout each plant

¹ Global Food Safety initiative. *Mission and Objectives*. <http://www.mygfsi.com/about-gfsi/mission-and-objectives.html> (accessed May 5, 2010).

² Global Food Safety Initiative. *Frequently Asked Questions*. March 2010. http://www.mygfsi.com/gfsifiles/GFSI_FAQs_March_2010.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010).

³ Whitaker, Dr. Bob, interview by Julia Stewart. *Chief Scientific Officer, Produce Marketing Association* (March 4, 2010).

The SISTEM Platform

Over seven years ago, Alchemy created the SISTEM training and compliance management platform specifically to help food producers and processors address food safety challenges and enforce regulatory compliance. Since then, SISTEM has become a foundation for companies looking to achieve and maintain their GFSI compliance in a highly efficient manner.



SISTEM is a one-of-a-kind training and compliance management platform that includes all of the hardware, software and courseware companies need to deliver and document effective personnel training. By using hand-held

remotes and interactive courseware in both English and Spanish, SISTEM increases employee comprehension and improves overall retention. SISTEM also includes an integrated web-based Learning Management System (LMS) that automates training documentation and reporting, providing companies with a valuable tool to assist with critical audits. Finally, SISTEM gives companies the ability to create, deploy and document their own custom courses, tests and evaluations.



Following a grant-funded, two-year trial of SISTEM in a number of processing plants in Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission performed a detailed outcomes assessment which reported impressive gains in both food and worker safety. The findings are summarized in the diagram to the right.

As one can see, SISTEM is a valuable tool for motivating employees to excel at their jobs, which ultimately improves the company's bottom line and the value customers see in the company and its products.



SISTEM Increased

- Worker Satisfaction by 28%
- Worker-Manager Relationships by 33%
- Operating Margins by 13%
- Worker Productivity 24%

SISTEM Decreased

- Worker Turnover by 14%
- Worker Injuries by 14%
- Food Safety Incidents by 21%
- Sexual Harassment Incidents by 47%
- Production Costs by 12%

SISTEM Helps Companies Meet GFSI Standards

The implementation of the GFSI’s key elements⁴ with the SISTEM training platform establishes a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to food and workplace safety for companies and their employees. SISTEM helps companies not only meet, but exceed the expectations for carrying out the key elements of compliance in a highly efficient manner.



GFSI Key Element: A Food Safety Management System that is documented, implemented & continually improved.

As a highly developed training platform, SISTEM allows employers to schedule trainings in advance or on-the-fly during downtime, while maintaining automatic and secure documentation of the results. SISTEM eliminates the need for time-consuming manual record keeping and simplifies audit preparation time by automatically tracking the course name, date taken, time duration, worksite, language, facilitator name, student name, and student answers. In addition, through the simple creation of custom company and/or job-specific courses, tests and evaluations in the SISTEM LMS, employers are able to consistently make updates and improvements to their training regimen. Alchemy also keeps all SISTEM courseware updated regularly with current regulations.

GFSI Key Element: A Good Practice for ensuring Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), & Good Distribution Practices (GDP).

By implementing SISTEM, employers have all GAP, GMP and GDP requirements covered including enabling training for personnel that is commensurate with their responsibilities, verifying the training, reviewing the training needs, keeping the training records, and providing adequate supervision of new personnel. In addition, SISTEM courseware is co-developed with industry experts to train employees on the fundamentals of good practices set forth by the GFSI including Physical and Chemical Product Contamination Risk; Segregation and Cross-Contamination; Housekeeping; Cleaning and Hygiene; Personal Hygiene; Protective Clothing; and Medical Screening.



GFSI Key Element: A HACCP system, or equivalent, to demonstrate food safety management

The SISTEM training platform includes HACCP-specific courses that teach employees how to help the companies implement and maintain their HACCP program. Also included is a course devoted to HACCP that covers the purpose of HACCP, the responsibilities of the individual for proper food handling, the three food hazard categories, the techniques for preventing hazards during food processing and examples of Critical Control Points in food production.

⁴ The Global Food Safety Initiative. “GFSI Guidance Document 5th Edition.” The Consumer Goods Forum. September 2007. http://www.ciesnet.com/pfiles/programmes/foodsafety/GFSI_Guidance_Document_5th%20Edition%20_September%202007.pdf (accessed May 5, 2010).

Benefits of GFSI & SISTEM

The combination of SISTEM with the GFSI brings a positive outlook to an industry battling food safety issues and hard economic times. Companies that take the initiative to enforce these practices and create a unified, streamlined and well-maintained food safety program will benefit from the following:

- ✔ A reduction in the number of required audits, saving companies' valuable time and money;
- ✔ Increased consistency in the production process, which improves the quality of the product and has a direct effect on the reputation of the company;
- ✔ Real-time results with high-quality reporting, thus reducing data entry and improving analysis;
- ✔ Explicit documentation to protect against legal issues;
- ✔ International business potential for continued growth opportunities.

Facilitating a benchmarked food and workplace safety plan is a win-win for companies in the food industry, as well as the consumers that buy their products. Companies must understand and take full advantage of the resources that are available now, to ensure a healthier future for the food industry.

About Alchemy Systems

Alchemy Systems, LP is an Austin, Texas-based company that creates and markets highly interactive training products that use technology and media to educate individuals and groups. Over the past six years, Alchemy has worked with manufacturing companies to implement training programs that lower employee turnover, reduce liability, and improve overall productivity. Training is specifically geared to manufacturing production workers, with all courses available in both Spanish and English. Workers use simple remote controls to demonstrate mastery of training material, with all results automatically stored to an easy-to-use online compliance reporting system. Alchemy product offerings include industrial safety, mandated training, basic supervision, and job success skills, as well as topics specific to individual industries.

While its solutions are used in many industries, Alchemy's initial impact was in the food processing space. In an industry where profit margins are very tight and educational technology has not been widely adopted, Alchemy has been able to create significant market acceptance with a majority of the top 25 food-processing companies in the U.S. as customers using our SISTEM product. For more information contact Alchemy at contactus@alchemysystems.com or visit www.alchemysystems.com.