8  Relationship of the HACCP system to Total Quality Management

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8.1  The importance of quality

8.1.1  What do we mean by quality?

Webster's Dictionary (1989) defines quality as ‘a degree of excellence or superiority in kind’. The American Society for Quality Control (ASQC, 1987) specifies that quality is ‘the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs’. Crosby (1979) states that quality is ‘conformance to requirements’. Juran (1993) suggests two simple definitions of quality: ‘fitness for use’ and ‘quality is customer satisfaction’.

The term quality has come to embody stringent standards in industrial operations, products, and services. To consumers, quality implies that products will perform as stated by the vendor and that services will be reliable. To the meat, poultry, and seafood industries, quality can be interpreted as satisfying consumer expectations in terms of specific product quality attributes such as food safety, aesthetics, convenience and nutrition.

It is very important that modern food companies define the quality standards for the specific customers they serve. Customers are more demanding than ever and, in general, will seek products and services offered by companies that have a reputation for adhering to stringent quality standards. Therefore, companies that provide goods and services which are consistent in quality stand the greatest chance for growth and, ultimately, survival.

To remain profitable, meat, poultry and seafood processors must incessantly strive for quality improvement and more uniform products. If these industries are to realize customer confidence and long-term benefits in the future, quality must always be a top priority.

8.1.2  The need for a ‘culture’ change

Juran (1993) felt that two primary forces had a major impact on quality following World War II. The first was the Japanese revolution in quality, and the second was the prominence of product quality in the public mind.
These two forces caused a change in business conditions that are typically influenced by quality (e.g. competition and higher levels of customer satisfaction). Therefore, modifications of such business conditions are necessary for today's companies to survive.

To consistently compete on a quality basis in modern day markets, it is essential for a company to instill a positive attitude towards quality in each of its employees. In other words, there must be a 'culture' throughout the entire organization that emphasizes the importance of quality.

The 'culture' change can be interpreted as the ability to develop and foster a climate encompassing belief, assumption, supposition, wisdom, understanding, etc., that make up the psychological environment within the organization. The company culture encompasses the factors that deal with the minds of people, and environment that conditions attitudes, moderates behaviour and guides action (Price, 1990). To modify a company's performance, cultural factors have to be addressed and attitudes must be changed.

A cultural change requires tremendous effort and dedication from all employee levels, including top management personnel. However, once the commitment to quality is made, rewards are manifested by greater employee motivation, improved uniformity in finished products or services, greater profits and, usually, increased customer satisfaction. By setting precise goals, implementing positive preventive steps and corrective actions to problems, and continuously improving quality, a company will be prepared for future changes as dictated by economics and customer needs.

8.2 Total Quality Management (TQM): the key to continuous quality improvement

8.2.1 TQM defined

Total Quality Management (TQM) can be defined as an effort for continuously improving the quality of all processes, products, and services through universal participation of all employees, that leads to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, and improved business results (Sarvandan, 1992). Sashkin and Kiser (1993) have stated:

'TQM means that the organization's culture is defined and supports the constant attainment of customer satisfaction through an integrated system of tools, techniques and training. This involves the continuous improvement of organizational processes, resulting in high quality products and services'.

The result of TQM is that companies supply products and services that are economical, useful, competitive, and of uniform quality (King, 1989).