



HACCP International releases a new **‘WORLD’S BEST PRACTICE STANDARD’** for pest management services for the food industry

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One of the most significant issues effecting food safety is that of pest control. This subject is a major cause of food safety incidents, recalls, audit non-conformance and actions by state health departments.

HACCP International has just released a new standard that meets international best practice both in its development and in terms of the standard itself. It will make a huge contribution to reducing food safety incidents and can be used to ensure a consistently high standard of service, performance and outcomes in pest management and prevention within food handling facilities.

The new standard was developed by a committee of food manufacturers, retailers, auditors, pest management companies and HACCP International’s food safety experts.

Clive Withinshaw, a director of HACCP International says, “This is a world first. There are number of guidelines around but guidelines are only that – guidelines. A standard allows for absolute performance measurement and can be used as a minimum criterion for food companies and pest management service providers. Food companies that operate HACCP based food safety management systems, especially those certified to GFSI-endorsed standards, need to give their contractors a precise set of measurable expectations and pest management organisations that are certified to this standard will be able to demonstrate their ability to deliver exactly that which is required.

The new standard is already proving to be a very useful tool for food businesses in International and around the world. It has been years in development and the very hard work put in by so many people will at last offer a real benefit to our industry and a reduction in food safety risk and non-conformances.”

All pest management organisations certified by HACCP International will be audited against this standard after a transition period. New applicants will be audited to this standard henceforth.

BACKGROUND

HACCP International has been auditing pest management organisations and their on-site operations for the purposes of certification since 2002. The previous auditing standard included all the basics that a food business operating a food safety management system would expect of a pest contractor and was generally very well accepted by food safety auditors and food businesses. Some pest management professionals, however, found the lack of prescriptive requirements to be

unhelpful. There was a need for clear guidance around food safety requirements to pest professionals. Food businesses also needed guidance around best practices that they could communicate to their contractors and to their auditors.

It was time for a change!

In 2013, HACCP International began to develop a new pest management standard by completely overhauling the old standard. They began with the laborious process of collating feedback and researching best practice, followed by the production of multiple drafts, each submitted to stakeholders for review and feedback. Finally, after around 20 drafts, agreement was reached and the new standard was published.

The new standard aimed to directly address elements of good service practices which were implied but not explicitly described in the old standard. For example, the old standard required pest management organisations to have written procedures for pest management activities but did not provide any guidance as to what should be in those procedures and it did not explicitly require staff to be trained in or compliant with those procedures. Unfortunately, there were organisations that were taking advantage of that ‘loophole’. Experience and expertise within pest organisations was another area that was not explicitly addressed, as was the level of supervision and oversight of technicians’ activities on food sites.

The standard is available at no charge to food businesses, pest management organisations and other interested parties. To download a free copy, visit the tools/download page of www.haccp-international.com”

The new standard contains more information to help pest professionals understand food industry expectations. It has been modernised to reflect recent changes in the pest management industry and in food safety standards, such as the growing use of electronic reporting and more stringent requirements for monitoring and analysis. In addition, it was developed with the input of many stakeholders, which makes it robust and fair, as well as making it suitable for use within a JAS-ANZ accredited ISO 17065 certification scheme.

OVERVIEW of CHANGES

The new standard includes a number of new requirements. Most of these have been added to better define and describe current best practice for pest management services for food businesses and to provide guidance for service providers and food businesses. Pest management organisations that are currently certified by HACCP International are already compliant with the most of the new requirements, with the exception of a change to what is required for approved chemical lists and a completely new requirement to conduct internal audits. Internal auditing is not currently practised by some certified pest management organisations and those organisations will need to create and implement new systems to be compliant with the standard.

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The new standard explicitly defines which types of food sites should be audited and provides options for provisional certification pest management businesses that do not have sufficient food customers to obtain full certification. Guidelines for classifying non-conformances and timeframes for closing out non-conformances are included to aid transparency and communications between pest professionals and auditors. Alternative means of complying with the intention of the standard are explicitly allowed, if they are judged to be suitable and effective. There is a new audit checklist and reporting format.

TIME FRAMES FOR COMPLIANCE

The standard is being implemented over a two year transition period, which started 1st March 2017, for currently certified pest management organisations. During the transition period, compliance to the ‘new’ standard (Issue 2.0) will be assessed and reported to auditees but non-conformities will not be raised. Conformance with the ‘old’ standard (Issue 1.3) will continue to be required for re-certification until 28th February 2019.

From 1st March 2019, re-certification audits will be conducted against Issue 2.0 and compliance with Issue 2.0 will be required for all pest management organisations that wish to be re-certified. New applicants for certification are assessed against the requirements of Issue 2.0.

What hasn't changed

- The new standard is voluntary, like its predecessor
- It is used to evaluate the services of pest management organisations on a branch-by-branch basis for the purposes of certification
- The audit processes and certification processes are unchanged

New requirements explained

Technical expertise

Technical expertise is explicitly addressed for the first time

in this standard. The new requirements are not onerous; they reflect current industry practices and should not require any significant changes to current operations for certified pest management organisations.

Treatments on food sites

The requirements for treatments within the new standard are similar to the old standard; they require that pest management activities on food sites must be performed without contaminating food, food equipment and food packaging materials. The new standard, however, includes extensive guidelines accompanying which define best practice for performing treatments in food handling areas. The guidelines were developed with significant discussion and input from the pest management industry and have been agreed upon by a committee of stakeholders.

Register of approved chemicals

Under the new standard a pest management organisation's register of approved chemicals (or approved products list) should distinguish between chemicals approved for use in food handling areas of food sites, other areas of food sites and non-food sites. To meet this requirement, most currently certified organisations will need to make changes to their registers.

Equipment and devices for use in food handling areas of food sites

Requirements for the physical characteristics of equipment and devices, such as rodent bait stations, their procurement, as well as their siting and labels are explicitly addressed for the first time. The new requirements closely align with current industry best practices and should not require any significant changes to current operations.

Internal auditing by pest management organisations

Internal auditing was not required of certified pest management organisations previously. Significant risks to food safety, however, existed in some operations that were not subject to appropriate oversight. The new standard requires pest management organisations to conduct formal reviews of operations ('internal audits') at each HACCP-level food site at least once every 12 months.

Formal training plans

Formal training plans were assumed but not explicitly defined previously. The new standard reflects industry best practice and most currently certified organisations should not need to make any changes to their current activities to meet the new requirements. However, for those not operating to best practice, the new standard does raise the bar on what is expected in terms of induction training, on-going training and records. A list of scheduled tool box talks just won't cut it anymore!

The standard is available at no charge to food businesses, pest management organisations and other interested parties from : www.haccp-international.com.au/tools-downloads/

HACCP International's auditors and certification team look forward to helping all certified organisations get ready for the new standard. Every audit between now and March 2019 will include feedback on what needs to be done – if anything – to prepare.

Certified organisations can contact HACCP International any time for help with the new standard or info at haccp-international.com

For a list of certified organisations, or to become certified, contact us. ❁