



Technews

**National Dairy Development Board
For Efficient Dairy Plant Operation**

March-April 2002

No.37

CODEX GUIDELINES ON FOOD HYGIENE - III

This bulletin includes technical and latest development on products, systems, techniques etc. reported in journals, companies' leaflets and books and based on studies and experience. The technical information on different issues is on different areas of plant operation. It is hoped that the information contained herein will be useful to readers.

The theme of information in this issue is **Codex Guidelines on Food Hygiene-III**. It may be understood that the information given here is by no means complete.

In this issue ...

INTRODUCTION

ESTABLISHMENT : PERSONAL HYGIENE

*Health Status
Illness and Injuries
Personal Cleanliness
Personal Behaviour
Visitors*

TRANSPORTATION

*General
Requirements
Use and Maintenance*

PRODUCT INFORMATION AND CONSUMER AWARENESS

*Lot Identification
Product Information
Labelling
Consumer Education*

TRAINING

*Awareness and Responsibilities
Training Programmes
Instruction and Supervision
Refresher Training*

INTRODUCTION

The previous two issues of the Technews presented some important provisions of the Codex 'Recommended International Code of Practice - General Principles of Food Hygiene'. This issue presents the remaining provisions of the Code.

The Code also describes the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system in and annex. An account on HACCP was presented in Technews Issue No.11, November-December 1997, and its application in pasteurised milk and table butter in Issues 12, January-February 1998 and 20, May-June 1999, respectively. Therefore, principles of HACCP are not repeated here.

ESTABLISHMENT : PERSONAL HYGIENE

People who do not maintain an appropriate degree of personal cleanliness, who have certain illnesses or conditions or who behave inappropriately, can contaminate food and transmit illness to consumers. Such people should not be allowed to come in contact with food, directly or indirectly.

1. HEALTH STATUS

- * People known, or suspected, to be suffering from, or to be a carrier of a disease or illness likely to be transmitted through food, should not be allowed to enter any food handling area if there is a likelihood of their contaminating food. Any person so affected should immediately report illness or symptoms of illness to the management.
- * Medical examination of a food handler should be carried out if clinically or epidemiologically indicated.

2. ILLNESS AND INJURIES

- * Conditions which should be reported to management so that any need for medical examination and/or possible exclusion from food handling can be considered, include:
 - jaundice
 - diarrhoea
 - vomiting
 - fever
 - sore throat with fever
 - visibly infected skin lesions (boils, cuts, etc.)
 - discharges from the ear, eye or nose

3. PERSONAL CLEANLINESS

- * Food handlers should maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and, where appropriate, wear suitable protective clothing, head covering, and footwear.
- * Cuts and wounds, where personnel are permitted to continue working, should be covered by suitable waterproof dressings.
- * Personnel should always wash their hands when personal cleanliness may affect food safety, for example:
 - at the start of food handling activities;
 - immediately after using the toilet; and
 - after handling raw food or any contaminated material, where this could result in contamination of other food items; they should avoid handling ready-to-eat food, where appropriate.

4. PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

- * People engaged in food handling activities should refrain from behaviour which could result in contamination of food, for example:
 - smoking;
 - spitting;
 - chewing or eating;
 - sneezing or coughing over unprotected food.
- * Personal effects such as jewellery, watches, pins or other items should not be worn or brought into food handling areas if they pose a threat to the safety and suitability of food.

5. VISITORS

- * Visitors to food manufacturing, processing or handling areas should, where appropriate, wear protective clothing and adhere to the other personal hygiene provisions in this section.

TRANSPORTATION

Food may become contaminated, or may not reach its destination in a suitable condition for consumption, unless effective control measures are taken during transport, even where adequate hygiene control measures have been taken earlier in the food chain.

1. GENERAL

- * Food must be adequately protected during transport. The type of conveyances or containers required depends on the nature of the food and the conditions under which it has to be transported.

2. REQUIREMENTS

- * Where necessary, conveyances and bulk containers should be designed and constructed so that they:
 - do not contaminate foods or packaging;
 - can be effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected;
 - permit effective separation of different foods or foods from non-food items where necessary during transport;
 - provide effective protection from contamination, including dust and fumes;
 - can effectively maintain the temperature, humidity, atmosphere and other conditions necessary to protect food from harmful or undesirable microbial growth and deterioration likely to render it unsuitable for consumption; and
 - allow any necessary temperature, humidity and other conditions to be checked.

3. USE AND MAINTENANCE

- * Conveyances and containers for transporting food should be kept in an appropriate state of cleanliness, repair and condition.
- * Where the same conveyance or container is used for transporting different foods, or non-foods, effective cleaning and, where necessary, disinfection should take place between loads.
- * Where appropriate, particularly in bulk transport, containers and conveyances should be designated and marked for food use only and be used only for that purpose.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION AND CONSUMER AWARENESS

Products should bear appropriate information. Information for industry or trade users should be clearly distinguishable from consumer information, particularly on food labels. Insufficient product information, and/or inadequate knowledge of general food hygiene, can lead to products being mishandled at later stages in the food chain. Such mishandling can result in illness, or products becoming unsuitable for consumption, even where adequate hygiene control measures have been taken earlier in the food chain.

1. LOT IDENTIFICATION

- * Lot identification is essential in product recall and also helps effective stock rotation. Each container of food should be permanently marked to identify the producer and the lot. Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) applies.

2. PRODUCT INFORMATION

- * All food products should be accompanied by or bear adequate information to enable the next person in the food chain to handle, display, store and prepare and use the product safely and correctly.

3. LABELLING

- * Prepackaged foods should be labelled with clear instructions to enable the next person in the food chain to handle, display, store and use the product safely. Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985) applies.

4. CONSUMER EDUCATION

- * Health education programmes should cover general food hygiene. Such programmes should enable consumers to understand the importance of any product information and to follow any instructions accompanying products, and make informed choices.
- * In particular consumers should be informed of the relationship between time/temperature control and food-borne illness.

TRAINING

Those engaged in food operations who come directly or indirectly into contact with food should be trained, and/or instructed in food hygiene to a level appropriate to the operations they are to perform. Inadequate hygiene training, and/or instruction and supervision of all people involved in food related activities pose a potential threat to the safety of food and its suitability for consumption.

1. AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- * Food hygiene training is fundamentally important.
- * All personnel should be aware of their role and responsibility in protecting food from contamination or deterioration.
- * Food handlers should have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to handle food hygienically.
- * Those who handle strong cleaning chemicals or other potentially hazardous chemicals should be instructed in safe handling techniques.

2. TRAINING PROGRAMMES

- * Factors to take into account in assessing the level of training required include:
 - the nature of the food, in particular its ability to sustain growth of pathogenic or spoilage micro-organisms;
 - the manner in which the food is handled and packed, including the probability of contamination;
 - the extent and nature of processing or further preparation before final consumption;
 - the conditions under which the food will be stored; and
 - the expected length of time before consumption.

3. INSTRUCTION AND SUPERVISION

- * Periodic assessments of the effectiveness of training and instruction programmes should be made, as well as routine supervision and checks to ensure that procedures are being carried out effectively.
- * Managers and supervisors of food processes should have the necessary knowledge of food hygiene principles and practices to be able to judge potential risks and take the necessary action to remedy deficiencies.

4. REFRESHER TRAINING

- * Training programmes should be routinely reviewed and updated where necessary.
- * Systems should be in place to ensure that food handlers remain aware of all procedures necessary to maintain the safety and suitability of food.

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