



What is the Alberta HACCP Advantage (AHA!)?

AHA! is the acronym for the Alberta HACCP Advantage, the Government of Alberta program designed to provide a framework for Alberta food processors to implement an Alberta-recognized HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) standard. Specifically, AHA! offers an HACCP standard, resource materials and recognition protocol.

It is important to know that the Government of Alberta is not implementing a new system. A HACCP system is implemented and maintained by the operator, who is responsible for the effectiveness of the system. Success is unlikely if the operator does not take full ownership for the system. In this way, HACCP emphasizes the power of the people who have the most control over food safety: the manufacturer.

What is HACCP?

The acronym stands for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point. HACCP is an internationally recognized, science-based food safety system based on preventing, eliminating and reducing hazards. It is fundamentally different from an inspection-based system because it identifies and addresses hazards before they emerge.

What is a HACCP system?

A HACCP system includes prerequisite programs (sanitation, recall, pest control, etc.) and HACCP plans that identify critical control points (such as cooking to appropriate internal temperature).



Can HACCP be applied to any size or type of facility?

Yes. And HACCP can also be applied throughout the food chain to any type of food. The principles of HACCP are the same; the size and nature of your operation will determine your particular challenges.

Is HACCP a Food Quality Control System?

No. HACCP systems are designed to enhance food safety, not food quality. That said, implementing a HACCP system might improve food quality.

How do we implement a HACCP system?

Using the Alberta HACCP Advantage, there are three steps to HACCP implementation:

- Management commitment
- Implementation of prerequisite programs
- Implementation of HACCP plans

Depending on the complexity of your operation, implementing a HACCP system can be quite simple, or quite daunting. In either case, the Food Safety Division can provide you with information, advice and support.

How do we maintain a HACCP system?

Obviously, the policies and procedures cannot just be left in a filing cabinet. Maintaining a HACCP system involves:

- Monitoring control measures
- Training new employees
- Including new products and processes into the HACCP system
- Maintaining records.



What are the benefits of implementing a HACCP system?

- Increased food safety
- Improved product quality and consistency
- Increased consumer confidence in food safety
- Increased consumer demand for adoption of HACCP
- Maintained or improved market access
- Best practices by staff constantly reinforced
- Ongoing efficient oversight
- After implementation, reduced staff training
- In some cases, HACCP is required by legislation
- Reduced operational costs
- Reduced waste
- Reduced recalls
- Improved product quality and consistency
- Reduced liability, possibly reduced liability premiums

Does the provincial government recognize the Alberta HACCP Advantage?

Yes! The recognition system for the AHA! program is in place. Recognition is a three-step process: (1) the processor implements the AHA! Standard, (2) a third-party certification body conducts and audit and grants certification, (3) ARD grants recognition.

What is HACCP recognition?

The Government of Alberta will supply formal acknowledgement that a food processing facility has met the requirements of AHA! through successful audits.

Do we have to use Alberta's HACCP Advantage?

There are other HACCP recognition programs available, including FSEP (for federally-recognized plants), the Ontario HACCP Advantage and other industry-accepted programs. Any of these programs will achieve outcomes similar to AHA!



Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development will offer recognition only for systems that meet the requirements of AHA!

Is there support for implementing a HACCP system in Alberta?

Yes. The Government of Alberta will support you to implement the Alberta HACCP Advantage (AHA!) by providing technical support and resource materials. Processors may also be eligible for funding through the Food Safety Initiative of the Agricultural Policy Framework. There is more information about that on these web pages. Also, feel free to call us.

We already have a HACCP system. Will the provincial government recognize it?

If your plant passes the AHA! certification audit, you will qualify for recognition.

Is HACCP related to the Meat Facility Regulation?

No. But any facility that passes an AHA! audit will be compliant with the Meat Facility Regulation.

How much will implementing a HACCP system cost?

Costs vary enormously among facilities. Start-up costs are usually those associated with the planning, development and implementation of the HACCP system and do not recur.

Generally, the more products and processes involved in your operations, the more complex your HACCP system will have to be. You might also wish to consider:

- Number of allergens in your product
- Current state of your equipment/cleanable surfaces
- Required facility upgrades
- Current inventory of monitoring equipment
- Current level of employee food safety training



- The number of risks introduced during your processing
- How much you can afford to spend on a consultant
- Whether your facility is eligible for federal funding

Recurring costs are those incurred from maintenance activities such as training, record keeping and monitoring, and updating. To keep recognized status, recurring costs cannot be avoided.

To help you make a sound business decision, you may wish to hire a consultant to conduct a cost/benefit analysis.

Where can I get more information?

Call us. We have assembled a team of specialists dedicated to assisting you.
Phone (780) 427-4054.