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Food safety culture: The science and art of improving food safety

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Abstract

Food safety culture is a relatively new and misunderstood concept across the food value chain. It became popularized after the book “Food Safety Culture: Creating a Behavior Based Food Safety Management System” was published in 2009. Since then, investigations of major foodborne illness outbreaks in Canada and elsewhere have considered organizational culture as a contributing factor, and researchers have worked to develop valid, reliable tools to assess aspects of organizational culture related to food safety. Food safety culture has also been added as a requirement of various food safety standards and regulations, including the Codex Alimentarius Commission’s Principles of Food Hygiene, the European Union’s food safety regulation and Global Food Safety Initiative’s (GFSI) benchmarking system for standards.

Despite these initiatives and improved legislation in various countries, food safety failures continue to plague the agri-food value chain. Food safety management systems and new technologies are only as good as their implementation. A strong, positive food safety culture maintains a proactive workforce, ensuring compliance with legislation and food safety controls and reducing food safety risk. This presentation describes elements of food safety culture and what food business operators can do to improve the “people-side” of food safety.