



CIES INTERNATIONAL FOOD SAFETY CONFERENCE 2004

Barcelona, Spain, 29th & 30th January 2004

HIGHLIGHTS

DAY 1

GFSI gives update on implementation

Chris Anstey, Product Integrity Manager at Tesco, gave delegates an update on the progress of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), facilitated by CIES - The Food Business Forum. In the area of standards, he announced that the SQF 2000 food safety standard developed in the US was in compliance with the GFSI Guidance Document. SQF 2000 becomes the fifth standard to be benchmarked by GFSI. GFSI's vision remains the development of a single global food safety standard, he said, and it will continue to facilitate mutual recognition of food safety standards. In order to support this ongoing process of benchmarking, GFSI is to publish a fourth edition of its Guidance Document during the next three months, with the aim of offering clearer guidelines for food safety standards. In addition, GFSI will this year extend the same benchmarking principles to cover food safety standards for agriculture produce. The initiative is to work with standard owners to support harmonisation between the farm assurance schemes that have proliferated in recent years.

CIES presents traceability guide

The CIES Traceability Task Force presented a draft version of its guide to traceability, "Implementing Traceability in the Food Supply Chain". Hugo Byrnes, Director of Food Safety at CIES - The Food Business Forum, explained that EU legislation would require food companies to have a traceability system in place by January 2005, while a similar provision is to be introduced soon in the US. The CIES guide is designed as a concise overview of the issues for senior management. The document is based on the use of EAN.UCC systems that are already in place. A key objective for retailers in implementing traceability is to achieve rapid exchange of information, he stressed, since this is crucial for an effective withdrawal in the event of a product alert.

FMI pursues end-to-end food safety

Jill Hollingsworth, Vice President, Food Safety Programmes, of the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), summarised the US retailer association's efforts to support comprehensive food safety. She stressed that FMI members had identified food safety as their number one priority, just as CIES retailer members had in the organisation's Top of Mind survey. FMI has addressed four areas in its aim to develop end-to-end food safety: the food source (suppliers); in-store operations; employee training; consumer education. On the supply side, FMI has supported the creation of the SQF standard, which has now been benchmarked by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). FMI has also produced guides for in-store preparation and on employee training. With its 2003 survey showing that clean stores are the most important



factor for consumers in choosing a food outlet, FMI is at the same time maintaining a strong consumer perspective.

DAY 2

Head of European Food Safety Authority presents goals

Geoffrey Podger, Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), presented the organisation and objectives of the new body. EFSA is responsible for risk assessment, he explained, with risk management remaining the responsibility of the European Commission, national agencies and companies. He summarised the objectives of EFSA in terms of: “taking forward the science of risk assessment”; “greater transparency”; the development of “closer relations beyond Europe”; “increased stakeholder confidence”; and “better liaison and coordination between national authorities”. Geoffrey Podger stressed that EFSA would play an important role not only in risk assessment but also in risk communication. He cited the body’s response to the food scare last year concerning semicarbazide in baby food jars as an example of effective communication. He underlined the need to explain the context of a food alert and give concrete advice to consumers, industry and governments, taking into account important cultural differences between European countries.

Summary of Breakout Sessions

Specific areas of food safety were covered in detail in three special Breakout Sessions. The session chairmen summarised the key points of discussion as follows:

- **Food Safety in Retail Outlets**

Session Chairman Elizabeth Harrington, President & CEO of E. Harrington Global in the US, reiterated FMI’s finding that 85% of consumers in the US view store cleanliness as an important factor in choosing a food outlet. She explained that the debate had focus on the need for benchmarking best practices. She announced that the Global Food Safety Initiative’s (GFSI) project on Good Retail Practices would launch a benchmarking survey this year. Retailers can register to participate in the confidential study until February 13, with the results due out in October.

- **Auditing & Food Safety Standards**

Jan Kranghand, Quality Manager at Albert Heijn in the Netherlands, said that the session had shown how auditing works throughout the food chain. He recommended that GFSI resolve accreditation on a global scale as quickly as possible and keep track on the quality of audits.

- **Food Safety Risk Management**

Lawrence Hutter, Lead Partner Consumer Business EMEA at Deloitte, said that the discussion showed that risk management was not just about industry good practice and legislation but also about consumer perceptions and media coverage. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) was becoming a pervasive technology, he argued, and would support traceability. Summing up the challenge of food safety management, he said that companies would need to be seen “as part of the solution, and not part of the problem”.