Taking the SQF 2000cm quality code to the world stage

Follow this and additional works at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture4

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture4/vol41/iss1/18

This article is brought to you for free and open access by Research Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 4 by an authorized administrator of Research Library. For more information, please contact jennifer.heathcote@agric.wa.gov.au, sandra.papenfus@agric.wa.gov.au, paul.orange@dpird.wa.gov.au.
TAKING THE SQF 2000™ QUALITY CODE TO THE WORLD STAGE

A StateWest Achievement Award in 1999 recognised the outstanding contribution of Agriculture Western Australia’s SQF 2000™ Project Team to the quality and safety of the State’s food products. SQF 2000™ is now being taken to the world, with the Project Team continuing to assist other States and countries to implement the quality assurance system. Paul Ryan reports on the increasing international recognition of SQF 2000™, its benefits to food and fibre industries, and the economic returns being achieved for Western Australia.

There was general consensus in 1999 that a special merit award in the StateWest Achievement Award Group Category for outstanding service to the community, and for achieving significant efficiency and productivity improvements, was well deserved by the SQF 2000™ Project Team.

The SQF 2000™ Management System is being recognised not only in Western Australia, but also worldwide as a highly efficient, easy-to-use and cost-effective system to implement throughout the food industry. SQF 2000™ provides a platform to combine food safety and quality controls at every step in the food production chain from grower to retailer. It is also the first system of its kind in the world to be applied across all sectors of the food chain and to all types of food products, including fruit and vegetables, grains, meat and fish.

SQF Management Systems are achieving international recognition and rapid adoption in other States and countries. SQF 2000™ can be tailored to meet specific customer requirements, and provide benefits such as improving the quality and safety of food products for consumers, raising production value, improving the efficiency and marketability of products, and providing economic returns to the State.

Background

Consumers are continually demanding high quality and safer food products for themselves and their families as they are more intent on living healthier and longer lives. In the early 1990s, Agriculture Western Australia realised that if the State were to remain competitive in the export of agriculture and food products, it would need to address the increasing emphasis on food quality and safety.

At the time, the only independently audited quality standard available to all sectors of the food industry was the ISO 9000 series. The European food industry, as well as New Zealand and Australia preferred this system. However, many considered the ISO series to be difficult, costly and complex to implement, particularly for smaller enterprises.
In addition, without the inclusion of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety method, ISO-based quality systems failed to adequately address food safety requirements. HACCP was already used by the food industry, with legislators in many countries implementing food laws that compelled its adoption.

In 1994 the agency employed Paul Ryan, from a food safety and quality management background, to identify a quality assurance system that could be applied to all sectors of the food industry in Western Australia.

When he analysed existing systems throughout the world, Paul found none to be suitable. He realised there needed to be a system that was flexible and that could take into account diverse factors in the livestock industry such as breeding, weight-to-fat ratios, feeding regimes, animal husbandry and prevention of disease.

In horticulture and crop industries, SQF needed to take into account production systems and management, purchase and storage of supplies, handling and delivering. Above all, it had to apply to both large and small enterprises, and needed to be simple, flexible and require minimum documentation once developed.

A new quality assurance system for Western Australia

While quality assurance is a familiar concept today, Agriculture Western Australia has gained international credibility and worldwide recognition for the innovative SQF 2000™ Quality Code.

Mr Ryan developed a system that could incorporate HACCP, as well as the best features of other quality systems such as ISO 9000, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP). The expertise of a number of food industry and quality professionals was used to fine-tune SQF.

SQF 2000™ has six core elements which contain specific requirements that must be addressed to achieve certification. These requirements are Commitment, Suppliers, Control of Production, Inspection and Testing, Document Control and Quality Records, and Product Identification and Traceability.

The number of businesses from the production, processing and distribution sectors in Australia which have gained SQF 2000™ certification now exceed 1,100, compared with 500 last year and 200 the previous year.

Trainers, facilitators and auditors must obtain a licence to use the system, which ensures its integrity is maintained both nationally and internationally.

Taking SQF 2000™ to the world

Although designed for local conditions, SQF 2000™ has been identified as easy to implement in other States and countries. Keen interest in and demand for the SQF 2000™
system has come from all corners of the globe. It is currently being implemented in Thailand, Singapore, New Zealand, Japan and the United States. There is also interest from all sectors of the food industry around the world, including Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Brazil, Argentina, United Kingdom, Malaysia, South Africa and Chile.

In particular, activity in Asia has increased over the past 12 months. Thailand’s leading rice producer Chia Meng’s recent certification means its ‘Golden Phoenix’ brands are now supported by the SQF quality assured mark, which will be welcomed by the sensitive markets of Singapore and Japan.

In Singapore, a training provider has been licensed and Singapore Food Processors Association members are currently completing SQF HACCP training. Agriculture Western Australia has also received requests for assistance to implement SQF in Indonesia.

In Japan, meat, fish, fruit and vegetable suppliers are preparing for certification, and Agriculture Western Australia has been requested to present SQF to Ajinimoto, Japan’s leading food manufacturer.

Further, a delegation of representatives from 10 provinces in China, representing the Quality Certification and Standards Association of China, recently conducted a study tour in Western Australia where they reviewed the application of SQF systems. They aim to use SQF in China to lift the food safety and quality performance of their food sector.

Economic benefit to Western Australia

Globally, SQF 2000™ will play a key role in customising quality assurance by encouraging all suppliers in the food chain to share responsibility for the integrity of food supply.

In Western Australia, royalties will be paid to Agriculture Western Australia for the use of the intellectual property inherent in the SQF 2000™ system.

Agriculture Western Australia has offered a commitment that any income generated from the sale of SQF 2000™ intellectual property will be returned to Western Australia’s agricultural industry, and will assist in facilitating the implementation of quality systems, including SQF 2000™.