

BRIEF: As food industries continue to pinch every penny of profit out of their operations, the Food Safety Modernization Act allows the general public to trust the food products being delivered to market are safe for widespread retail distribution, and that proper precautions and supervision have taken place to ensure their food is safe for consumption. Although the overall benefits of this act serve the greater good of consumers in the United States, industries will be required to modify their current systems of measurement for quality assurance - which presents a handful of changes and challenges to all high-risk food producers. CHEP-TRAC™ allows food suppliers and manufacturers to more easily automate the capture, recording and sharing of key data required to comply with new industry regulations in a secure cloud environment.



FSMA Significantly Impacts Food Production Supply Chains

On January 4th, 2011, the United States Government passed the **Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)** to help better control and prevent the widespread distribution of unsafe food products. This bill represented the biggest change in food safety policies in nearly 70 years in the United States. FSMA allows the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to have greater visibility over all aspects of food production, including but not limited to:

- Increased monitoring of food products through mandatory HACCP plans
- Increased inspections and mandatory food production records access
- Mandatory recall of unsafe food
- Regulation of food imports to the United States

Detailed HACCP (**Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points**) plans are nothing new to the food industry. Over the past few decades, HACCP has been the prevalent preventative reporting system in regards to food safety. For those unfamiliar with the acronym, HACCP is a type of management system designed to address food safety through the analysis, prevention and control of chemical, biological and physical hazards during the different steps of the food production process. FSMA does not work in a way that drastically changes HACCP principles, but rather brings the specific HACCP plan to the forefront of every producer's supply chain.

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their product recalled at any point throughout the supply chain. Additionally, although the overall benefits of this act serve the greater good of consumers in the United States, industries will be required to change their current systems of measurement for quality assurance, representing a handful of changes and challenges to all high-risk food producers.

As a result of FSMA, **the accurate monitoring and record keeping of raw ingredients is of paramount importance** during all stages of the food production supply chain. Records proving a product was safe during the time of shipment or upon receipt at any given stage of the supply chain are absolutely essential for all industries. Not only do they protect consumers, but they also serve to protect companies from blame that may be passed after ingredients are combined into a finished product and distributed to the public – should that product at some point become contaminated.

The **standardization of record keeping** also becomes critical throughout this process, as proof of accurate data may be requested by the FDA at any time. **Mandatory inspections** will be implemented for all high-risk food manufacturers and will be followed at least every three years after the initial visit for perpetuity. Under FSMA, **the FDA will have the authority to force companies to issue recalls when a possible food contamination is suspected** - something the FDA could merely “suggest” before. The new law also **greatly increases the FDA’s ability to perform food safety inspections** on both foreign and domestic manufacturing and processing facilities.

In addition to the changes domestically, FSMA also adds **stringent regulations to imports reaching American shores**. Any high-risk food of foreign origin must meet the exact same standards to which food produced within the United States is held. This obviously presents some obstacles to foreign producers who already may be playing catch-up with their quality control standards, yet extends the level of food safety across all borders – ensuring a unified standard for the healthy well-being of American consumers.

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New Container Tracking Technology for the FSMA Age

With all of these changes on the horizon, a technological advancement in food production supply chains could greatly aid in mitigating necessary food industry changes due to FSMA. A Michigan-based company, **CHEP**, provides an individual and aggregate container tracking solution via its proprietary software, CHEP-TRAC™, allowing companies to easily capture and record data critical to complying with the new regulations.

By simply **capturing container bar codes via RFID or scanning and utilizing a touch screen scanner or tablet,** customers are able to record key information relevant to HACCP plans, which is in turn automatically loaded into the web-based cloud and shared with anyone granted access to the company's account. The data is generated into easy-to-read printable reports that are available within minutes of the scanner's upload. Utilizing a technology system such as CHEP-TRAC™ to electronically manage and share information to ensure compliance with an initiative such as FSMA significantly reduces hassle and the risk of human error associated with using pen, paper and binders. Perhaps one of the biggest benefits the CHEP-TRAC™ system provides the food industry is its ability to **electronically capture, store and report** on specific data control points **per container instead of per shipment** for traceability factors such as:



- Temperature and weight
- Purchase order numbers
- Product codes
- Safety seal numbers (critical to product recalls)
- Scanner operating user data
- Sanitation
- Loading/unloading data

This technology ultimately benefits all parties involved in the production & purchase of a given food product:

1. **Producer is ensured product arrives to their end user in the appropriate sanitary condition**
2. End user can add received ingredients to complete finished products **without concern of unsafe food** entering production
3. Retailer can trust they are buying **a safe product worth selling**
4. Consumer's concern of potential food-borne illness due to faulty production becomes **a thing of the past**

Furthermore, this technology helps support the FDA's rulings and improves preventative measures previously enacted to limit and eliminate food-borne illness in the United States moving forward.

With Challenge Comes Opportunity

As with any major change to the status quo, FSMA regulations will undoubtedly have a ripple effect, causing companies to experience challenges for which they'll need to develop solutions. However, with the proper research and sourcing, changes such as those required by FSMA can be much easier to overcome, providing an excellent opportunity to introduce new technology into the food production supply chain, **helping prevent food-borne illnesses** and leading to a healthier, safer American food system.

SOURCES

[Basic HACCP Information](#)

[Understanding FDA Authority Under HACCP](#)

[Top Five Food Safety Nightmares for Food Safety Types](#)

