

HACCP Principle 3: Establishing Critical Limits

Dennis Burson
University of Nebraska

HACCP
and Food Safety
Heip for Small Meat and Food
Processing Operations

Definition:

 The maximum or minimum value to which a physical, biological, or chemical food hazard must be controlled at a critical control point to prevent, eliminate, or reduce to an acceptable level the occurrence of the identified food safety hazard.

Critical Limits and CCPS

 For each CCP, a Critical Limit is established to signify whether a CCP is "in" or "out" of control.

Exceeding Critical Limit Indicates

- Existence of direct health hazard.
- Direct health hazard could develop.
- Product not produced under conditions assuring safety.

Setting Critical Limits

- May require consultation with experts.
- Should be based on research.
 - published and reviewed research papers
 - in plant studies

Parameters for Critical Limits

- Time
- Temperature
- Water activity (Aw)
- pH
- Salt concentration
- Weight
- Visual evaluation

Critical Limits

- Are already established for many Critical Control Points in the USDA regulations.
 - Time and temperature for ground beef.
 - Zero tolerance for fecal contamination.

Critical Limits

 If the agency has a regulation on a critical control point, must use the regulation, even if strict compliance with regulation is not necessary for safety.

Steps is Establishing Critical Limits

- For each Critical Control Point
 - Determine if there is a regulatory critical limit (or find one based on scientific evidence.)
 - If there's no regulatory critical limits, you may have to obtain assistance from outside HACCP experts.
 - File letters or other documentation for critical limits you had to determine (for validation).

417.1 Definitions

 Critical Limit: The maximum or minimum value to which a physical, biological, or chemical hazard must be controlled at a critical control point to prevent, eliminate, or reduce to an acceptable level the occurrence of the identified food safety hazard.

HACCP Compliance Checklist Form 5000.1

 The HACCP plan does not list the critical limit to be met at each CCP (417.2 (c) (3)).

417.2 Hazard Analysis and HACCP Plan

- (c) The contents of the HACCP plan.
 - (3) List the critical limits that must be met at each of the critical control points. Critical limits shall, at a minimum, be designed to ensure that applicable targets or performance standards established by FSIS, and any other requirement set forth in this chapter pertaining to the specific process or product, are met.