

Using Technology to Stay Proactive Will Help Manufacturers Navigate the FSMA in 2016

Mon, 02/15/2016 - 2:15pm [1 Comment](#) by Jack Payne, Vice President of Product Management and Solution Consulting, Aptean



Jack Payne

Vice President of Product Management and Solution Consulting, Aptean

Editor's note: This article originally appeared in the [January/February 2016 issue of Food Manufacturing](#).

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration keeps a public list of recalls, market withdrawals and safety alerts on its website. And 2015 was a year of high profile recalls in the food and beverage industry.

While some brands were not listed as the result of food contamination, the reasons for those that were ranged from undeclared nuts or glass breakage, to salmonella, E. coli and more. Each contamination situation may be different, but the one thing they all have in common is the ability to improve processes and deliver the utmost health and safety to consumers moving forward.

With stronger industry standards in place — like the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act — food and beverage manufacturers will see a huge emphasis in 2016 on preventative measures. The FSMA's mission is to put prevention at the forefront — meaning the overall goal is trying to proactively prevent a problem or recall before having to implement the processes and procedures to fix it, also known as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point.

Although some food and beverage manufacturers aren't yet equipped to handle growing consumer concerns and compliance demands, they are already starting to feel the heat. A recent survey conducted by Aptean found that the majority (81 percent) are experiencing some level of impact from current and impending regulations. Processes relating to traceability, supplier and facility audits, HACCP, and product recalls are causing the most concern.

The FSMA leaves no more room for human error. Although technology with track and trace capabilities to help eliminate human error has been available long before the FSMA came into play, there are a significant number of food manufacturers that continue to manually record their process for tracking and controlling food safety hazards. More than 30 percent of surveyed food manufacturers admitted to documenting their HACCP plan manually.

Even with the FSMA in place, the FDA does not have legal authority to require companies to use computerized traceability solutions. However, in 2016, implementing advanced track and trace technology to transform business strategies from a reactive to proactive approach will be a significant step toward maintaining compliance and meeting FSMA standards. Track and trace technology creates a more systematic account throughout the food production lifecycle and significantly decreases the chance for human error. In fact, Aptean's survey listed traceability as the number one area of companies' current enterprise resource planning and manufacturing execution solution systems already in place that will help them comply with FSMA.

Even with the FDA doing everything in its power to improve the way food and beverage manufacturers get their product out to consumers, technology isn't the be-all and end-all solution. While technology is instrumental for improvement, food manufacturers need to step back and take a critical look at their processes and make adjustments where necessary to effect positive change. Automating poor processes will only accelerate poor results. Approaching FSMA compliance and implementing track and trace technology requires time and strategy.

Ultimately, ensuring the safety of your consumers puts your company's reputation on the line all the time. Taking a proactive stance and dedicating the necessary time and resources toward compliance planning and technology implementation is well worth the investment.