



# Prevention Partnership Planning

SUPPLY CHAIN INITIATIVES  
TO IMPROVE FOOD SAFETY



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The Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) represents the world's leading food, beverage and consumer products companies. The association promotes sound public policy, champions initiatives that increase productivity and growth and helps to protect the safety and security of the food supply through scientific excellence. The GMA board of directors is comprised of chief executive officers from the association's member companies. The \$2.1 trillion food, beverage and consumer packaged goods industry employs 14 million workers, and contributes over \$1 trillion in added value to the nation's economy. For more information, please visit the GMA Web site at [www.gmaonline.org](http://www.gmaonline.org).

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# Grocery Manufacturers Association

## Product Recall Portal

### Fact Sheet

#### BACKGROUND

Recent high-profile nationwide recalls have exposed weaknesses in the nation's food safety net and had an adverse affect on consumer confidence in the safety and security of the products they buy and the food they eat.

Product recalls are complex and multi-faceted events requiring thoughtful but expeditious action by a variety of stakeholders to identify and remove affected products from the marketplace as quickly as possible. In addition, retailers and wholesalers, whose active participation in successful product recalls is critically important, need timely and accurate information and clear instructions for product removal and disposition.

Modernization of the recall process through greater collaboration among manufacturers, retailers and government agencies will reduce the amount of time it takes to identify and remove recalled products from the marketplace and provide appropriate instructions to all points of the supply chain, especially consumers.

#### SOLUTION

In response, the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) in collaboration with the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) engaged the New England Consulting Group in 2007 to conduct a survey of industry leaders to identify areas of retailer and manufacturer collaboration in improving recall management. Timely and accurate recall notification between manufacturers and retailers was identified as the priority for improving recall management.

To streamline the communication of consistent and accurate product recall information, FMI and GS1 US\* with the support of GMA have developed and launched a centralized, electronic, Web-based platform for manufacturers to upload comprehensive information about recalled products that is accessible to all participating retailers.



# Grocery Manufacturers Association

## Accredited Third Party Food Safety Certification

### The Product Recall Portal was created to address:

- Product Removal Timelines and Accuracy
- Reliable, Standardized Communications
- Consumer Protection and Confidence
- Brand Protection and Assurance

### The Portal's features include:

- User authentication
- A standardized form and process for communicating recalls
- Online Web access from anywhere, anytime
- The ability to embed product images and additional product information to easily identify recalled products
- Targeted recall communication

The FMI Recall Portal is functional. The companies registered to use the portal include 49 retailers (operating 10,040 stores and accounting for 43 percent of supermarket sales) and 32 manufacturers. Recruitment efforts are ongoing along with work to build an active and engaged retailer and manufacturer community. GMA, FMI and GS1 US are currently identifying and implementing additional improvements to the site and actively recruiting the participation of additional manufacturers.

GMA is also working with FMI to address additional improvement opportunities around product recall. The organizations have formed a Recall Working Group which is strengthened by cross functional industry experts, who are identifying model practices in crisis planning, product removal, product destruction and product replacement. A model practices document is expected to be released this fall.

\*GS1 US is a leading global organization dedicated to the design and implementation of global standards and solutions to improve the efficiency and visibility of supply and demand chains globally and across sectors. The GS1 system of standards is the most widely used supply chain standards system in the world.

## Fact Sheet

### BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, nationwide food safety alerts or recalls involving spinach, beef, peanut butter, chili sauce, tomatoes, peppers, peanut products and pistachios have exposed weaknesses in our food safety net and diminished consumer confidence in the safety and security of the food supply. These events highlight the need to modernize and strengthen our nation's food safety system to meet the challenges of a global food supply.

Food manufacturers are ultimately responsible for providing consumers with safe products and for ensuring that those products meet all applicable standards. However, accredited third party certification bodies can play a critical role in efforts to continually improve the safety of our food supplies. Food companies routinely retain third party auditors to assess conformity of food manufacturing facilities to ensure they meet or exceed standards and to identify steps to continually improve food safety. In addition to industry efforts, Congress and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are considering ways by which accredited third party certification bodies can supplement FDA efforts to improve food safety.



# Grocery Manufacturers Association

## Modernization of Good Manufacturing Practices for Food

### SOLUTION

Third party certifications/auditors already play a critical role in food safety and will play a larger role in the future. Accordingly, policymakers and industry leaders should take steps to ensure that third party audits are conducted by auditors who are qualified, employed by a certification body that is duly accredited, and should encourage the development of transparent, universal food safety auditing criteria.

To ensure such rigor and integrity in third party auditors, policymakers and industry leaders should encourage the engagement of auditors employed by certification bodies accredited to international standards by recognized organizations such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). ANSI is widely respected as the coordinator of the standards and conformity assessment systems in the United States, and recognized by the federal government as well as internationally for that role. Among those recognitions, ANSI is the accreditor specified by the (FDA and Center for Disease Control supported) *Conference for Food Protection* – assessing the competence of those bodies certifying food safety professionals.

GMA is working with other public and private partners, including the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), to progress the development of food safety auditing criteria based on sound science and that incorporate internationally-recognized voluntary food safety standards such as those developed by Codex Alimentarius, an international body that establishes voluntary food safety standards. ANSI accreditation is currently specified by FMI's affiliated SQF Institute as a requirement for certification bodies performing audits in accordance with the SQF food safety standard, which is a recognized dimension of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

By increasing the number of well-trained auditors and developing universal food safety auditing criteria, industry leaders and policymakers will ensure that auditors are qualified to review a particular facility, discourage duplicative audits, reduce auditing costs, and encourage wider use of third party certification/audits throughout the food industry. Ultimately, wider use of third party certification/audits will reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses.

Third party certification could help supplement FDA activities in several ways. For example, voluntary third party certification could be one criteria used by FDA to determine the potential risk of a product being imported into the U.S. Identifying low-risk imports would allow FDA to focus greater scrutiny on imports that pose greater risk of food-borne illness. However, third party certification/audits should supplement – not replace – the critical roles played by FDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture and other federal and state agencies.

### Fact Sheet

#### BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, nationwide recalls and warnings of spinach, ground beef, peanut butter, chili sauce, tomatoes, peppers, peanut products and pistachios have exposed weaknesses in our food safety net and diminished consumer confidence in the safety and security of the food supply. These events highlight the need to modernize and strengthen our nation's food safety system to meet the challenges of a global food supply.

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) regulations (sometimes referred to as umbrella GMPs or current GMPs (CGMPs)) are designed to help ensure the safe and sanitary manufacturing, processing, and holding of food for human consumption. The GMPs cover, among other things, conditions of buildings and facilities; sanitary operations, facilities and controls; equipment and utensils; production and process controls; and warehousing and distribution.

**GMPs were last updated in June 1986.** This was before allergens and *Listeria monocytogenes* were concerns in the food industry, before we recognized the importance of environmental monitoring for pathogens in particular operations, and before the implementation of HACCP regulations that require a strong foundation in GMPs to be effective. Many of the recent food-borne disease outbreaks have been associated with GMP failures (e.g., in the most recent peanut butter outbreak, inadequate pest control, prevention of contamination and environmental monitoring coupled with insanitary conditions led to contamination with Salmonella).

In 2002 FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition formed a working group and in 2004 FDA held public meetings and requested input on food GMP modernization. In late 2005 FDA issued its white paper on the need for GMP modernization and its current thinking on what was needed to improve the regulation. The food industry has actively engaged on this issue and provided input to FDA at every opportunity.

## SOLUTION

A CGMP Coalition, comprised of more than 60 companies and trade associations, believes updating FDA's GMPs for food production is essential and has offered to assist FDA in their effort to update the GMPs. In advance of new GMP regulations, GMA is working with allied stakeholders to develop education and training programs designed to foster widespread implementation of existing GMP regulations and will aggressively pursue the timely adoption of and training on these new foundational regulations as soon as they are issued.





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