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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Making sense of food defense: Figuring out what works and what doesn’t work *By John Hnatio, Chief Science Officer, FoodQuestTQ***  The scientists at FoodQuestTQ have been extremely busy lately.   They have been comparing and contrasting the different standards and checklists relating to food defense used around the world.  The results are fascinating.  For example, did you know that six different federal agencies, seven if you count the Department of Defense, cover aspects of Food Defense in their standards?   Another interesting fact is that each agency has its own unique focus.    Let’s take a look at the example of the two major agencies that deal with food in the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).  Our scientists postulated that the two agencies focus of interest are reflected by the number of specific criteria they address across each of thirty-eight areas of food defense and site security concern identified by the food industry and standards organizations.  If the agency addressed five or more criteria in any particular area then the scientists counted it as a main focus of interest.  Using this approach they found that the FDA has the following eight principal areas of food defense focus: 1.  Food Defense Awareness; 2.  Alarms, Computer, Communication and Process Control Systems; 3.  Physical Security; 4.  Protocol for Company and Vendor Transportation System Security; 5.  Visitor Access Control; 6.  Security of Food in Use and Storage; 7.  Security of Finished Product, and; 8.  Storage and Use of Poisonous and Toxic Materials.             Using the same scientific approach our scientists found that the USDA has its own five principal areas of focus: 1.  Food Defense Awareness; 2.  Physical Security; 3.  Employee Access Controls; 4.  Pre-employment and Criminal Background Checks, and; 5.  The existence of a documented Food Defense Plan.    Not only did our scientists compare U.S Government food defense standards and checklists but they also compared global and third party food defense standards.  The global and third party standards compared are Codex Alimentarius, the World Health Organization’s Food Safety Issues: Terrorist Threats to Food, AIB, BSI/PAS, BRC, SQF, IFS, ISO and GMA-SAFE.  Based on their scientific analysis of information publically available on the World Wide Web, our scientists for the first time can now tell the food industry which third party food defense criteria will contribute most to robust food defense programs and which won’t.  Our scientists will be publishing a more detailed scientific paper of their findings in the near future.  Now let me tell you about FoodQuestTQ’s Food Defense  ArchitiectTM.  Food Defense Architect is a patented cloud based software platform that addresses over sixteen hundred food defense criteria (1,654 to be exact) as drawn from every publically available federal and global standard on the World Wide Web.  The Food Defense Architect platform is not just another checklist; it is a comprehensive assessment that actually creates a food defense plan for a user.  On the very same platform, FoodQuestTQ provides food companies with an easy and inexpensive way to monitor how well you are implementing the plan you have created, helps you to test your plan, and mitigates events that happen along the way.  There is no other system available to the food industry that can create, maintain, and manage a company’s food defense program the way Food Defense Architect can.  The Food Defense Architect cloud based platform is a faster, easier to use and cheaper way for your company to put a robust food defense program in place.  Over the past several weeks, in reading through my emails and during telephone conversations with my colleagues in industry, they have shared with me some of their concerns about the strategic direction of the food industry when it comes to the topic of food defense.  It is safe to say that the delays in moving the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have created confusion and many in industry have simply decided to wait until new rules are actually published before they begin to tackle the task of creating robust food defense plans.  I will leave food safety for another time and another article because FoodQuestTQ has a platform for that as well.  Nonetheless, many of the people I have talked to share the belief that a safe food supply requires more attention on food defense.   And, just like death and taxes, there is one thing we can all rely on.  No matter who wins the Presidential election race, new FSMA rules will be pushed out of OMB sooner or later.  So all of us need to keep an eye on our calendars, because the Presidential election campaign is about over!   To all of those companies out there who have not yet turned their attention to the work of creating a robust food defense plan please call Bruce Becker at FoodQuestTQ.  Bruce is available at 540-645-1050 or you can write to him at[bbecker@foodquesttq.com](mailto:bbecker@foodquesttq.com).  Let Bruce demonstrate the Food Defense Architect platform for you.  You will be pleasantly surprised at how easy FoodQuestTQ has made it for your company to create, maintain, and manage your food defense program.  Our FoodQuestTQ software tools already address the elements of every other federal and global food defense standard.  Since FoodQuestTQ is cloud based, and when FDA issues new standards under FSMA, our science and technology staff will simply add the new information to our system and push it out to our clients as an update to our software. These upgrades are provided at no charge to the users of our tools.  So take the 800 pound gorilla off your back!  Begin now and make the task of creating a robust food defense program at your facility faster, easier and less expensive than you ever imagined. | | |
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