

Checklist for preventing and controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods



Food businesses are responsible for food safety, and for complying with federal food regulations. Failure to meet federal requirements may result in product seizure or recall, licence suspension or cancellation, administrative monetary penalties, and/or prosecution.

If you make ready-to-eat food to be traded in other provinces, territories, or countries, you must comply with Part 4 of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), including:

- Identifying and analyzing *Listeria monocytogenes* as a hazard that presents a risk of contamination of the ready-to- eat food. Refer to Health Canada's 2023 Policy on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods
- Using control measures that are shown by evidence to be effective to prevent, eliminate or reduce *Listeria monocytogenes* to an acceptable level. Refer to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Control measures for *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods; and
- Describing the hazard and control measures you implement in your preventive control plan (PCP). Refer to Who needs a preventive control plan to determine if you need a PCP.

KEY STEPS FOR CONTROLLING *LISTERIA* AT YOUR ESTABLISHMENT

UNDERSTAND THE RISK

- ☐ *Listeria* is widespread in nature, can survive at refrigeration temperatures in the environment of food processing plants for months to years.
- ☐ Ready-to-eat foods may support the growth of *Listeria*, especially those that have an extended shelf-life, including but not limited to deli-meats, cheeses, packaged salads, and refrigerated plant-based beverages.
- ☐ These foods have been linked to outbreaks of listeriosis, a bacterial infection that can cause serious illness or even death, especially in vulnerable populations like the elderly, pregnant women, and immunocompromised individuals.

CONDUCT SAMPLING AND TESTING

- ☐ Include non-food contact surfaces, food contact surfaces and finished product testing in your sampling and testing program.
- ☐ Analyze trends and increase sampling frequency if persistent contamination is found or after major facility changes (for example, construction, new equipment).
- ☐ Notify the CFIA of positive product test results if there is a risk of consumer exposure.

TAKE ACTION IF *LISTERIA* IS FOUND

- ☐ Identify and control any implicated product that is within your control.
- ☐ Investigate the root cause of the contamination and take measures to prevent its reoccurrence.
- ☐ Conduct additional testing and if contamination persists, increase sanitation efforts and adjust control measures.
- ☐ If contaminated food is in the marketplace, notify CFIA immediately and implement your recall procedure.

ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE PREVENTIVE CONTROLS

- ☐ Include *Listeria* in your hazard analysis and put control measures in place.
- ☐ Ensure plant layout allows for traffic control, and separation of equipment and utensils between raw and ready-to-eat processing areas.
- ☐ Establish effective sanitation procedures and train staff to ensure they follow them.
- ☐ Maintain, clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces, equipment, and tools regularly.
- ☐ Disassemble equipment to deep clean and sanitize hard-to-reach areas.

DOCUMENT WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO PREVENT, DETECT AND CONTROL CONTAMINATION

- ☐ Maintain records of testing, corrective actions, investigative sampling and risk management actions (for example, disposition of product).
- ☐ Maintain records that show your sanitation and other control measures have been implemented.

