

Diversey's "Are You Ready?" campaign has promoted personal hygiene and surface disinfection across the foodservice and retail sectors



# The hygiene factor

Businesses are benefiting from a more methodical, approach to their cleaning operations

Food and drink businesses are obviously aware of their obligations towards health and safety, which will almost certainly involve a full cleaning regime. Indeed, not only must all companies comply with hygiene regulations – such as the Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 in the UK – but many of their customers will have their own stringent

standards for food safety, such as Tesco's PIU audit and Marks & Spencer PPC audit.

These individual auditing processes, as well as other sector-specific standards such as those outlined by the Federation of Bakers, often go beyond the British Retail Consortium Global Standard for Food Safety. Indeed, the BRC's Standard itself has just been revamped for 2012

with expanded information on foreign body control, hygiene and housekeeping and allergens. Those who wish to meet the Standard will now have to undergo much more in-depth factory inspections, with more detailed examination of the production machinery, and the emphasis is now very much on the results of the cleaning techniques rather than simply the fact cleaning is being done.

Certainly those companies who can't illustrate that their cleaning processes meet the required, improving standards will be at a major disadvantage when it comes to landing major contracts.

The importance of hygiene has also been emphasised by a number of recent

campaigns. Diversey's "Are You Ready?" campaign, for example, recently aimed to promote personal hygiene and surface disinfection across the foodservice and retail sectors and provide customers with the tools to prepare for and protect against the onset of common illnesses such as influenza and norovirus.

Many businesses may find these hygiene requirements challenging, as customers often also demand that their suppliers take their environmental responsibilities seriously, and it could be felt that the two are sometimes contrary, given the extensive use of chemicals in the cleaning process. However there are certainly options to ensure energy is saved while still ensuring cleaning is carried out effectively. The new breed of chemical products are much improved, using less water and generating less energy than chemicals with sodium hydroxide properties. Companies now also make use of low pressure washdown systems that use less water and energy, as well as reducing the risk of particles being released into the air – an obvious disadvantage of high pressure washing.

As well as using new cleaning products, the equipment used in the process can also make a major difference. For example, companies are increasingly looking at spray nozzles to play a small but significant part in the reduction of both energy and water usage. These spray nozzles, such as those manufactured by ICS, are the correct metering devices to influence the correct flow rates and spray patterns – therefore saving water, pump energy and wear of the system. Not identifying the correct spray nozzle can also lead to maintenance issues causing down time and lost production, eating



*Companies such as Winterhalter are using innovative machine technology, cleaning products and water treatment to impact on warewashing results*

into profits.

As ICS point out, in many cases, spray nozzles were designed for original applications that have now been upgraded or changed and the original nozzle could be changed for a more economical design. There are numerous application on most sites where another look at the spray nozzles could lead to beneficial changes, saving energy and spray fluids and leading to an eventual reduction in carbon emissions. ICS's new range of adaptors, for example, are ensuring a wider variety of nozzles can be made available for customers. The adaptors include sizes from 1/8" x 1/4" upwards and are in stainless steel.

Such has been the increased importance in reaching the highest standards, many businesses are considering outsourcing their cleaning operations to specialised companies, considering the task now too complicated and important to continue to run in-house. As Antony Thompson, director of ISS Facility Services' food manufacturing

division, points out, "Outsourcing food production site cleaning to hygiene specialists ensures your site is audit ready at all times, while allowing the manufacturer to focus on the core task of food production. Food companies can gain a competitive advantage with strategic outsourcing by allowing each plant to minimise downtime whilst meeting its mission and objectives.

"A relationship of this magnitude must be a partnership with an organisation you can trust; one that has a reputation to deliver a quality service backed with technical expertise that meets requirements and exceeds expectations. Outsourcing to a

company which has proven specialist cleaning services in all manner of food production sites, including those which are particularly high risk environments, can save management valuable time and resources.

"If you're using workers to provide a service, such as cleaning the food production line or cleaning food waste that is to be further used, as in pet foods, the contractor must be licensed by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority. The GLA regulate the supply of workers to industries involved in the processing and packaging of foods. This licence is a legal requirement and demonstrates that businesses can prove ethically sound treatment of workers as well as impeccable health and safety standards."

The outsourcing of cleaning to other companies makes sense at a time when the work is taking on increasing priority for food businesses, and when the need to conserve energy and resources is very great. No longer can cleaning be seen as peripheral to a company's operations.



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