Ensuring Food Safety in China

Food safety is taking center stage in China as consumers and businesses around the globe increase demands for quality. Quality is a top priority for consumers and confidence in food brands is greatly influencing purchasing decisions.

Additionally, since the 1st of June 2009, the new Food Safety Law, approved by the Standing Committee of the Eleventh National People's Congress [1], is in effect in China. Developed in response to the numerous food safety incidents that have recently occurred, the new legislation demonstrates that the Chinese government is taking these issues very seriously and could help to change the negative perceptions about food quality in China. While the new law has its critics, what's clear is that domestic manufacturers will have to demonstrate adherence to stricter standards or risk facing costly sanctions and eroding credibility.

To satisfy consumer and government demands for greater quality in food production, manufacturers can turn to the latest solutions in product inspection. Advances in metal detection and x-ray technology now allow companies to rapidly and reliably detect metals and other potentially harmful foreign bodies without impeding throughout, ensuring the health and safety of consumers and brand protection for the manufacturer.

Gaining Trust — The Big Picture

To regain consumer trust and prevent potentially costly food safety incidents from

occurring again, China's Food Safety Law makes several changes to streamline and strengthen food production quality. Firstly, more stringent and effective monitoring and supervision systems have been outlined. Additionally, food manufacturers must immediately stop the production of food that fails to meet quality standards and recall contaminated food that has been sent to market. Finally, stricter sanctions will be imposed on violators, with manufacturers required to pay the consumer ten times the value of any contaminated product purchased as compensation.

By ensuring improved safety procedures are in place and requiring full inspection processes to be implemented in food manufacturing companies, this new food safety legislation can be a big step forward in making consumers more confident in products made in China. If effectively enforced, this will send a strong message to the rest of the world that quality is a priority in China.

Another important benefit of the more stringent Chinese food safety regulation is that its contents are very similar to the standards in place in the European Union. The Chinese and European commissions are sharing information about food contamination issues and collaborating to eradicate this issue. By tightening and harmonizing food inspection regulations with Europe, the Chinese government is paving the way for increased trade with the region.

What's clear is that this new legislation will be taken very seriously, as the Chinese government will impose very strict sanctions on those who do not adhere. To avoid facing these costly sanctions and to build a reputation for quality, Chinese manufacturers will need to act quickly to ensure their production processes are up to standard. Reliable product inspection equipment is one tool to help companies do so.

The Latest in Product Inspection Technology

The latest solutions in metal detection and x-ray technology have brought product inspection equipment to the next level in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. These solutions can detect potential contaminants in products and prevent food safety incidents from occurring.

Metal detectors are now able to operate in very harsh environments and detect any kind of metal, including ferrous and non-ferrous metals and even difficult to detect non-magnetic stainless steels, without the need to stop the production line. Metal detectors can also be used at many different stages of the production process from the checking of bulk raw materials, through manufacturing processes and on to finished loose or packed products. When properly installed and operated, these systems can reduce metal contamination and improve food safety.

X-ray technology offers fully automatic contamination detection of dense contaminants like glass, metal, mineral stone and high-density plastics in bulk, pumped, raw or packaged products. In addition x-ray systems can simultaneously perform a wide range of in-line quality checks at high line speed such as measuring mass, counting components, identifying missing or broken products and packaging,

as well as inspecting seal integrity, and checking fill levels. X-ray inspection [1] systems ensure maximum production uptime as they are easy to set-up, clean and maintain. They also guarantee high throughput, minimise false rejects and reduce costs. By implementing an x-ray system into a production line, manufacturers can achieve compliance with the new Food Safety Law.

For compliance, it is essential that food manufacturers maintain full and accurate records of the inspection process and are able to access this information simply and quickly. New metal detection and x-ray systems are designed to serve as management tools as well as process controls, including automatic documentation features for easy record keeping.

There are no guarantees that food safety problems are completely in the past in China, but the new Food Safety Law is a big step forward. The government is taking real action to ensure that manufacturers produce high-quality food that consumers can trust. Advanced product inspection technology is a key tool to help manufacturers successfully meet the requirements of the new regulation and strengthen their brand reputations by instilling total consumer confidence.

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Sources:
[1] http://www.chinaview.cn/2009lh/index.htm [3]

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