



INCOMING MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications are information sheets that describe a product and outline important characteristics and attributes. These sheets ensure the production of a consistent, safe and high-quality product. Specifications are developed for incoming raw materials such as ingredients, additives and processing aids that may have an impact on the finished product. They are also developed for packaging that comes in direct contact with the product, chemicals and finished products.

When developing and approving specification sheets, it is important to ensure that all specifications meet the relevant regulatory and customer requirements. Below are examples of what should be included on specifications sheets for raw materials, packaging, chemicals and finished products.

Raw Materials

When sourcing raw materials, it is important to ensure they are from an approved supplier and that the supplier provides current and complete specifications with all relevant information. Raw material specifications may include, but are not limited to:

- Components or composition including the presence of allergens
- Organoleptic information
- Shelf-life
- Shipping and storage conditions
- Handling instructions
- Allergen information
- Properties that impact safety and quality such as pH or water activity
- Microbiological, chemical and physical limits



FACT SHEET

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Packaging & Chemicals

When sourcing packaging material that will be in direct contact with the product, it is important to ensure that any chemical components of the packaging will not migrate and pose a source of chemical contamination to the product. It is also important to consider the suitability of the packaging material for the product. Packaging specifications may include, but are not limited to:

- Details on chemical migration
- Material components or composition
- Physical dimensions
- Performance specifications
- Storage conditions
- Labelling

Packaging that comes in direct contact with the product must be accompanied by a certificate verifying that it meets regulatory requirements and/or approval criteria. This may be in the form of a letter of guarantee, certificate of analysis/conformance or a certificate or letter from the appropriate regulatory agency.

Chemicals such as those used for cleaning and sanitation or maintenance must also have specifications on file, such as technical data sheets and safety data sheets. These sheets must outline:

- Components including the presence of allergens
- Usage and handling instructions such as the concentration and temperature for use, duration of application, method (i.e., foaming, manual scrubbing, etc.) and if rinsing is required
- What material the chemical can be used on
- Health, safety and environmental considerations such as storage and disposal requirements and personal protective equipment (PPE) required

Finished Product

Finished product specifications must be developed and approved by the manufacturing company and meet all relevant regulatory and customer requirements. Finished product specifications may include, but are not limited to:

- Product name
- Size/content/weight

- Composition and ingredients, including the presence of allergens
- Manufacturing methods
- Shelf-life
- Quality attributes (acceptable vs. nonacceptable)
- Microbiological, chemical and physical limits
- Labelling and packaging, including traceability coding and country of origin
- Claims
- Storage and transportation requirements
- Handling instructions

Services Providers

Companies must also consider the contracted service providers that impact product safety, such as sanitation, maintenance, pest control, storage, or transportation. A written agreement detailing the service description and any relevant training, certificates, insurances, or permits should be on file for each service provider.

Reviewing Specifications

As specifications help make decisions regarding product safety and quality, it is important to ensure they are current. Specifications should be reviewed frequently enough to ensure they are current, and they must also be reviewed when there is a change in product, supplier, or regulatory or customer requirements. It is critical for suppliers to notify their customers when there is a change in product specifications.

Resources and Further Reading

Amsbary, Robin. (2013, June 12). Raw Materials: Selection, Specifications, and Certificate of Analysis. Retrieved August 13, 2021, from <https://www.qualityassurancemag.com/article/aib0613-raw-materials-requirements/>

For More Information Contact:

Perennia Food and Agriculture Inc.

Phone: 902-956-3376

Email: foodsafety@perennia.ca