Effective plant sanitation practices are an important part of the quality control program for plants producing canned, frozen or refrigerated seafood products. As a part of this program it is advisable to periodically review sanitation practices. The review should evaluate if current practices (especially those which present a potential health hazard) are adequately protecting food products from microorganisms and contaminants.

There has been an increased awareness expressed by regulators, consumer groups and industry regarding the microbiological safety of foods. In addition to other food poisoning microorganisms, recently there has been much concern over the microorganism, *Listeria monocytogenes*. This microorganism has been found in many food products, including seafoods and has been implicated in several cases of human illness. Control of this microorganism is especially important with products that may be eaten without further cooking.

*Listeria monocytogenes* can survive and grow under a wide variety of environmental conditions, many of which are common in a seafood processing plant. It is salt tolerant and can survive brine freezing as well as frozen storage. It can grow at temperatures as low as 37ºF and as high as 113ºF. It likes moist environments and can grow between pH levels of 5.0 to 9.6. This microorganism is commonly carried by mammals, birds, fish, crustaceans and insects. It is also found in soil and water, especially sewage and processing waste discharges. In other words, *Listeria monocytogenes* is ubiquitous.

Proper cleaning and sanitation is essential in controlling the total microbiological population including *Listeria, Salmonella* and other microorganisms of public health concern. After cleaning, common sanitizers such as chlorine, iodine and quaternary ammonium compounds are effective against these microorganisms. It is advisable to review sanitation procedures to assure that product is protected from contamination and that all product contact surfaces are cleaned and sanitized before use. Areas not traditionally thought of as harbors for microorganisms such as brine freezers and glaze tanks, should be included. Plant layout and operating procedures should be reviewed to assure that there is sufficient separation of raw and processed products to prevent cross-contamination. In general, all procedures should be reviewed to assure that they address the sanitation Good Manufacturing Practices in 21 CFR Part 110 (http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=110).

Plant management is responsible for compliance with federal and state sanitation requirements. In order to assure that compliance is being maintained, the plant quality control program should include a daily sanitation inspection with a written inspection report. This report could be in the form of a checklist requiring each critical area of the plant to be examined and notes made on sanitation conditions and corrective actions taken. The written sanitation inspection reports should be signed and dated by the person making the report and kept on file at the plant to provide evidence that proper conditions are being maintained.