

Key Takeaways

“Root Cause Analysis: The What and Why”

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Top 5

- 1) It is important that fresh produce operations understand what RCA is, why it is used, and how to conduct one successfully in their operations. Addressing small issues can help prevent a big issue from occurring. FDA conducts RCAs in outbreak situations when a company has not performed a thorough RCA.
- 2) The concept of RCA has evolved over the years, and RCA is not a single prescribed method or process. It should be highly customized for the situation where the approach is being used.
- 3) RCA is an important component of FSMA’s goal of preventing foodborne outbreaks. RCA can help an operation understand why a food safety issue may have occurred, which helps in anticipating and preventing future food safety issues that could lead to outbreaks.
- 4) Those who support the produce industry should develop RCA resources that keep it simple, confirm what is known, use real-world examples that transcend commodities, and create partnerships for information dissemination.
- 5) RCAs don’t have to be complex, don’t require extensive investment to conduct, should allow you to fix the problem once, document proof of acting on a problem, and focus the investigation on facts instead of assumptions.

Acronym Key:

FDA: Food and Drug Administration
FSMA: Food Safety Modernization Act
RCA: Root cause analysis

Additional Questions and Answers

For any questions that were not addressed during the Q&A at the live webinar, please review the “Remaining Questions from ‘Root Cause Analysis: The What and Why’” document on the CONTACT website.

Additional Reading

Association of Food and Drug Officials (2020). Webinar: A Guide for Conducting a Food Safety Root Cause Analysis. <https://www.afdo.org/trainings/a-guide-for-conducting-food-safety-root-cause-analysis/>

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The PEW Charitable Trusts (2020). A Guide for Conducting a Food Safety Root Cause Analysis.
<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2020/03/a-guide-for-conducting-a-food-safety-root-cause-analysis>

Western Growers (2021). Conducting a Root Cause Analysis: A “How-To” Guide for the Produce Industry.
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Western Growers (2021). When To Do Root Cause Analysis: A Decision-Making Guide for the Produce Industry. https://cpma.ca/docs/default-source/foodsafety/2021/rca_guidance_for_the_produce_industry_when_todo_rca.pdf

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