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Food Safety Audits, Plant Characteristics, and Food Safety Technology Use in Meat and Poultry Plants

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Food safety technology can increase a company's capacity to prevent a foodborne contamination. A food safety audit—a quality control tool in which an auditor observes whether a plant's processing practices and technologies are compatible with good food safety practices—can indicate how effectively food safety technology is being used. Fast food restaurants, grocery stores, and other major customers of meat and poultry processing plants conduct their own audits or hire auditors to assess the soundness of a plant's processing operation. Meat and poultry plants can also audit themselves as a way to help maintain process control. In this report, we document the extent of food safety audits in meat and poultry processing plants. We also examine the associations between the use of audits and plant size, firm structure, and food safety technology use. Results show that larger plants, plants subject to food safety audits, and plants that are part of a multiplant firm use more food safety technology than other plants. Plants subject to both plant-hired and customer-hired audits had greater technology use than single (plant- or customer-hired) audit plants.



Keywords: Meat and poultry processing, safety standards, product recalls, food safety technology, food safety audits, ERS, USDA

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