

CARD Food Safety Team Attended the BRC Standards Training in Kiev, Ukraine

By Zaruhi Davtyan, CARD, 1 April 2007

On 26-27 April 2007, Swiss TS Company conducted training on BRC (British Retailer Consortium) Standards in Kiev, Ukraine. International Institute of Food Safety and Quality, USDA/CARD's partner in Ukraine, invited its Armenian colleagues to attend the training. In addition, 15 representatives from local food processing plants (fruit and vegetable processing, fish processing, meat processing, bakery), trading companies, regulatory agencies, consulting companies, and universities participated in the training.

BRC is a private food safety management standard, first issued in 1998 in UK and later became widely used in Europe and globally. Further to popular demand, the BRC as the author of the Standards and Good Practice Guidelines has used its expertise to develop a range of training courses based on their content.

Course Content included:

Summary of the Standard

BRC audit concepts- The auditor

The internal audit- Auditor skills

Audit report writing- Reporting audit results to management

Attendance of this course allowed delegates to gain an in-depth and practical understanding of the Standard's requirements with particular reference to implementation, audit management and reporting, formally audit and implement a documented system to comply with the Standard's requirements, gain confidence in report writing in support of certification body audits.

Lead Auditor of Swiss TS, Dr. Jorg Lopfe, who is a highly experienced practitioner with international reputation within the industry, delivered training. The training was interactive and practical, and delegates had an opportunity to ask about any aspect of the Standards and Guidelines. In addition, there was an opportunity to learn from the practical experiences of other colleagues from the appropriate industry through interactive discussion.

Training packs were issued to delegates, including a copy of the training presentation, and the relevant BRC Standard/Guideline. Upon the completion of the training, participants were awarded with BRC Certificates of internal auditor.

At first view, it might seem that the implementation of BRC Standards, that are legally required for any food processor exporting to UK, is not one of the priority challenges faced by Armenian food industry today. However, one of the important benefits of the Standard is that it is comprehensive and covers quality, hygiene, and product safety aspects. Its core requirements include adoption of HACCP, implementation of a documented Quality Management System, and control of environment, product, process, and personnel. Separately these requirements can be found in various other international standards, many of which are highly requested by Armenian food processors. Therefore, CARD's Food Safety team can use knowledge gained during the training to provide consultation and trainings for the quality managers and internal system auditors of local food processing companies, as well as representatives of regulatory agencies. In this respect, BRC training is an important contribution to CARD's self-sustainability.