



www.tuvalamerica.com



America

**Choose certainty.
Add value.**

Eggs America and TÜV SÜD America: A Partnership for Food Safety

According to data from the American Egg Board, American egg farms ship more than 200 million cases of shell eggs annually. When an organization represents producers of more than 60 million cases of eggs, taking the leadership position with regard to food safety is essential. It also helps to have a strong partnership with an organization that can effectively respond to the unique challenges and complexities of developing and implementing large-scale food safety programs.

The Background:

Formed in 1985, Eggs America is an agricultural marketing cooperative of major regional egg producers located throughout the United States, and serves as the marketing arm to the foodservice industry on behalf of its member companies. Eggs America member/approved suppliers currently represent approximately 85 million chickens, more than 70 individual processing plants, and are responsible for almost one-third of the shell eggs produced and sold in the United States. As such, Eggs America, and its suppliers, places a premium on programs that will ensure the safety of its products for consumers.

According to president Linda FitzHugh, Eggs America and its member companies have been actively involved in driving quality control and safety efforts since 1999. At that time, FitzHugh and Dr. Ryn McDonald, Director of Food Safety at Cal-Maine Foods, and Chairman of the Eggs America Quality Assurance Committee, worked with the United States Department of Agriculture and a number of industry customers to develop a comprehensive quality and food safety program for its supplier's egg processing operations. This program became the

foundation for the quality assurance and food safety PSA audits conducted by USDA annually since 2000.

The Challenge:

In April of 2008, a major industry customer of Eggs America announced that all egg suppliers would be required to demonstrate food safety compliance under the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). At that time, the only viable provider for validation of the standard available in the United States was the Food Marketing Institute's (FMI's) Safe Quality Food (SQF) Code for producers, processors and manufacturers. Proof of SQF compliance would require auditing and certification of each of the cooperative's 70 plus egg processing plants by an independent SQFI certification body. Critically, certification of the cooperative's processing plants needed to be completed by the end June of 2009 to comply with the customer mandate.

In June 2008, the Quality Assurance Directors from 12 Eggs America companies received SQF 2000 Practitioner certification and immediately determined that no existing Guidance Document met the needs of shell

TÜV SÜD America Inc.

TÜV®

CASE STUDY: Eggs America, Inc.



America

egg processing. FitzHugh quickly formed an SQF 2000 Guidance Document Task Force, which was faced with the daunting task of formalizing 16 pre-requisite programs, and developing food safety and quality manuals, protocols, procedures, training, documentation, verification and validation under the SQF system. In less than 5 months, the Task Force developed a section-by-section review of SQF 2000, and specific information on the steps to comply with each requirement. The results of that effort were ultimately adopted by the SQF Institute and released as the formal SQF 2000/Category 12/Level 3 Shell Egg Guidance Document in February 2009.

At the same time, Eggs America management worked to identify an SQF certification body that could develop an audit and certification program to address the unique challenges facing Eggs America member producers. Eggs America needed to find a certification body with extensive knowledge of food safety issues and requirements, as well as the creativity and flexibility to effectively address the certification task in a timely manner. After reviewing the capabilities of a number of potential certification bodies, Eggs America chose TÜV SÜD America to conduct the initial round of SQF 2000 facility audits and certifications in 2009.

The Outcome:

Now in its third year, the relationship between Eggs America and TÜV SÜD America represents a true partnership in building the highest level in food safety and quality competence. Beyond providing SQF 2000 auditing services, TÜV SÜD America personnel continue to contribute their extensive experience in helping Eggs America improve the effectiveness of its food safety and quality program. TÜV SÜD America has also provided direct assistance to Eggs America corporate and individual food safety directors in maintaining up-to-date compliance via Code interpretation, clarification of standards and a strict control of audit standardization.

Today, Eggs America and TÜV SÜD actively coordinate the scheduling of over 70 production plant audits between January and September each year. TÜV SÜD America personnel also meet annually with FitzHugh

and member food safety directors to address major issues, changes in Code standards, training in the SQFI Quickfire system and recommendations on further improvements. These efforts have played an important supporting role in helping Eggs America achieve its goal of delivering safe eggs to American consumers.

Dr. McDonald credits TÜV SÜD America personnel for their knowledge and professionalism in guiding Eggs America through the first year. "The dedication and patience of the entire TÜV SÜD America team was key to our completing the initial audit process on time," said McDonald. "They were, and continue to be, an essential part of our food safety auditing program."

"No cookie-cutter auditing approach could work for our structure," says FitzHugh. "But TÜV SÜD America has found a way to make it all work. Because of our ongoing relationship with TÜV SÜD America, we've been able to meet our commitments to our members by developing and maintaining a food safety program that ensures the safety of eggs for their consumers."

For Craig Casillas, Director of Management Services for TÜV SÜD America, the partnership with Eggs America exemplifies TÜV SÜD America's strengths as an SQF certifying body. "Our experience in working with Eggs America is just one example of TÜV SÜD America's commitment to provide our clients with food safety compliance solutions tailored to meet their specific requirements," said Casillas. "Our capabilities are perfectly matched to address the scope and complexity of the most demanding food safety compliance programs."

About TÜV SÜD America Inc.

TÜV SÜD America Inc., a subsidiary of TÜV SÜD AG, Munich, Germany, is a leading globally recognized testing and certification organization. TÜV SÜD's Auditing Division provides management system certification services to Safe Quality Food (SQF), ISO 9001, ISO 14001, AS9100, ISO 13485, and more. Globally, TÜV SÜD has over \$1.5 billion sales and 16,000 employees at more than 600 locations worldwide.

TÜV SÜD America Inc.

10 Centennial Drive • Peabody, MA 01960 • 1.800.TUV.0123