



Pest Control And Food Safety: Are We Ready For 2010?

Numbers of people globally are affected by food-borne diseases as a direct result of negligence and lack of information regarding food safety regulations. As the food industry needs to gear itself for the huge demands 2010 will bring, the pest control industry needs to be factored into these demands.

In light of this, the eThekweni Municipality's Health Department in KZN hosted the first of a series of Food Advisory Day seminars, which started in October, for the formal food sector in the eThekweni area.

The seminar addressed measures that seek to improve the level of food safety in the City and to ensure that the formal food sector complies with the regulations and the requirement related to food safety. The seminars were also extended to Cape Town and Johannesburg as well.

Food safety is an imperative issue especially as we prepare for the FIFA 2010 World Cup in South Africa. "The City is concerned about the safety of its citizens and visitors.

Knowing that most people rely on formal food sectors and that the 2010 FIFA World Cup is close by, we need to be certain that all food retailers in the city follow all the food protocol precautions which must be properly monitored by the health officials," says Mr Siva Chetty, the Deputy Head of Pollution Control and Risk Management in Durban.

The importance on food safety places a great amount of pressure on the pest control industry to improve its services. Pest control companies need to take action in order to better prepare themselves with regards to health regulations and food safety.

Pest control companies should thoroughly train their staff about the correct procedure for all anticipated pests, use appropriate elimination methods and have proper training in place for staff on food hygiene and basic HACCP. Professional pest control companies should ensure that all pest control services are conducted by equip and registered pest control operators.

A copy of the current registration certificate should be kept on site. With summer in full swing, approved fly control units should be appropriately placed in high risk zones.

Fly units should have appropriate mechanisms that trap flies to ensure that contamination from insect debris on the surrounding food production areas are prevented. Most importantly, the supplier should belong to an industry controlling body such as SAPCA (South African Pest Control Association). These are just a few suggestions specified by Rentokil Pest Control.

"Consumers should not only rely on their pesticides and their pest control companies to eliminate their pest infestations but they should be focusing more on preventative measures and use Integrated Pest Management techniques which are in line with Pest Control in the 21st century.

Besides food and safety regulations, we need to develop a strong culture where food safety is considered a priority by all persons who are involved in the preparation and serving of food," says Deena Govender, Quality Assurance Manager for Rentokil Pest Control.

Integrated Pest Management Techniques (IPM) is a system that uses physical, biological, and only as a last resort, chemical means to maintain, control, or eliminate unwanted insects and vermin. The IPM approach involves both the food service manager and the licensed pest control operator working together. IPM decreases the chances of pest infestations by maintaining a clean, well constructed facility. This is a more cost effective route than using expensive and potentially dangerous chemicals.

When applying pesticides yourself, always read the label on the pesticide that you intend using and ensure that it is registered for the particular application and spectrum of control required. Follow the safety precautions as indicated on the product; this includes the use of personal safety equipment, such as gloves and a face mask.

Ensure to also follow precautions such as not eating, drinking or smoking whilst applying pesticide. Hands should always be washed with soap after application. Give special attention to withdrawal periods especially related to edible garden crops. The withdrawal period is the time that you need to wait before you eat the fruit, vegetables or herbs.

Govender feels that South Africa can confidently say that they are ready for 2010 in terms of food safety, as they have already successfully hosted several international events over the past few years with very few major negative incidents of food poisoning.

However, there is always room for improvement in terms of complying with food safety regulations. "One cannot be complacent in preparing food at any place (home or industry) as pests are abundant in our country due to the favorable climate and conditions.

Many role players are doing their best to improve the standards and awareness in our country. With proper planning and preparation we can only get better. Everybody needs to make their own tiny contribution to make this event a safe, pleasant and enjoyable experience for all our guests."