

## **EPIA PIQS Comparable Certifications** *by Stan Williams, Managing Director for EPIA*

We have reached a milestone that we can all be proud of attaining. Every EPIA producer member has provided documentation of HACCP Certification that is at least as rigorous as the EPIA PIQS requirements.

The EPIA operates across all European countries and some countries outside of Europe. Each country imposes HACCP requirements for food production to some degree, but HACCP requirements are not consistent overall, nor is the enforcement consistent throughout EPIA producers' home countries. EPIA producers can be assured that the level of food safety has now reached a standard we can all be proud of and will promote our tag line of ***"Ice You Can Trust."***

To get to the point where we truly can support the EPIA logo as the standard or safe ice in Europe has taken some time and a great deal of energy and negotiations while working with our producer members. This has been a confusing journey with so many levels of certifications, so many certifying organizations, and so many types of certifications.

This year, EPIA's BoD engaged a professional auditor who conducts food industry certifications of many types to provide some understanding of this complex issue of food quality certification. The company, Food Safety Assist, was started by Brian Humphreys, who has worked with major supermarket suppliers and producers for many years. This gives him a strong oversight of all sectors of the industry and common problems that can occur. Being a SALSA (Safe and Local Food Approval) auditor and mentor helps him to keep abreast of all food issues and new legislation and standards. SALSA certification is only granted to suppliers who are able to demonstrate to the SALSA qualifying board of auditors that they are able to certify the processes needed for safe and legal food and are committed to continually meeting the requirements of the SALSA standard.

Brian's background uniquely qualified him to evaluate the PIQUES requirements and compare them to the major certifications used in the food industry (these being BRC Version 7, IFS, and ISO 22000:2005). This past spring, Brian spent a great deal of time developing a matrix that identifies the PIQUES requirements and maps these major certifications against the PIQUES requirements. This document provides a very clear and understandable way to compare the EPIA HACCP level of certification to these other food HACCP certifications that many of our producers maintain. This document is now complete and will be posted on the EPIA website for all members to use as needed.

The second phase of this study was to provide a list of recommended auditors fully capable and qualified to conduct an acceptable EPIA level of HACCP audit. This list is not all inclusive, but is a reference point for finding local qualified auditors near producers' facilities. It provides the names of qualified certification companies and includes links to their websites. These companies have locations throughout Europe and, in some cases, around the world. This amount of coverage should make it easy to find a qualified auditor to work with in a cost effective manner with limited travel expenses.

We have come a long way from that first official meeting in Seville that took place ten years ago this fall. Congratulations to all our EPIA members for working together to build and continually improve the reliability and safety of the packaged ice we produce. We are the packaged ice industry in Europe and we provide ***"Ice You Can Trust."***