Think: Examples and Questions to Clarify Requirements

Questions

Clarify what's required

Confirm with customer/certification body/regulator the definition and interpretation of each term in the specification?
Ensure you understand exactly what is meant for each term

Assess what that means in your operations/process

How will meeting these requirements impact my operations?
What procedures do I need to have in place for these requirements at my site?
Do I need to start doing something, increase frequency?
Does staff know how they can affect the product and our ability to meet all requirements?

Assess ability to meet what's required

Is what I do now sufficient to consistently meet each requirement?
If not, then what are my options to achieve this?
Do I have staff that are trained and able to do what's required?
Do we have the protocols in place to ensure critical information is communicated and acted upon to meet all requirements? If not, what are my options?
What are the gaps?

Product Specifications

Requirement	Examples
Quality requirements **These describe the critical 'quality' features of the product, material or ingredient and may be related to suitability for further processing.** *** these attributes can also relate to safety as some foreign material can be hazardous and the moisture will affect what can grow in the product**	**Physical attributes** Purity level – 95% vs. 99.9% Defects – number, types, tolerance Foreign material* – tolerance <, range, types Size – dimensions, range **Organoleptic attributes** Taste – desired and undesired taste characteristics Odour – desired and undesired odour characteristics Colour – values, descriptors of desired and undesired colour characteristics Texture – values, descriptors of desired and undesired texture characteristics **Compositional attributes** Protein – range, minimum, type Fat – range, minimum or maximum, types Carbohydrates – range, minimum or maximum, types Moisture* - range %, greater than %, less than %
Product Safety requirements **These describe the 'safety' features of the product, material or ingredient that relate to ensuring it's consumption or application will not cause harm**	**Chemical parameters** Preservatives – types, levels Pesticides, fungicides, insecticides – types, levels Allergens – 'free from', identified on label **Microbiological parameters** Total plate count, Total coliforms, Yeast & Mould Pathogens: E. coli, Listeria, Salmonella

Testing and sampling requirements **These identify the quality/safety attributes/parameters for testing, test methods, testing frequency, reporting test results, what to do when test results don't meet specification and sampling requirements**	**Quality, Chemical, Microbiological** – method, frequency, when required, what to do if results don't meet specifications **Reporting** – list tests, when required, who gets the test results **Sampling** – number and size of samples, how to take samples for quality, chemical and microbiological, when to take sample, types of samples: Initial testing, rechecks, pre-shipment, shipment, retained
Operational	
Requirement	Examples
Purchasing, Receiving, Handling, Storage, Transportation & Delivery	
Requirements to ensure all incoming materials meet specifications and come from sources that don't present uncontrolled risks within your operation.	**Supplier Assessment** – how do you ensure suppliers are controlling risks at their operations and can produce materials to meet specified requirements? E.g. allergen control **Purchasing practices** – how do you ensure correct materials are procured? E.g. double check and approve **Incoming material inspection** – how do you ensure correct materials are received and meet specified requirements? E.g. procedures to check for damage, comparison of invoice vs purchase order, sampling and testing to prove incoming material meets specification.
Requirements to control risks associated with handling, storage, transportation and delivery	**Handling protocols** – how do you ensure proper handling and movement of materials, products, equipment to prevent damage, deterioration or introduction of hazards that impact quality or safety. E.g. staff training **Storage practices** – how do you maintain the identity, integrity, temperature of storage areas for materials, products, packaging, and chemicals and avoid introduction of hazards that impact quality of safety? E.g. designated storage areas, tamper proof bins, first in first out (FIFO) **Transportation & Delivery** – how do you ensure transportation vehicles are suitable for the transport of materials/products? What do you do to ensure the right materials/products get to the customer? E.g. transport vehicle inspections prior to loading; material/product coding and labelling; customer approval to ship

Programs and Certifications	
Requirements to develop and operate under specific program requirements and/or third party certification standards	**Programs** Operational areas with stipulated requirements for the control or reduction of risks associated with that area or function. Each facility will identify how they do this. People – E.g. training, hygiene, work instructions Facility and Equipment – E.g. design, installation, operation, maintenance Production and Processing – E.g. process parameters, control systems Sanitation and Pest Control – E.g. cleaning procedures for equipment and facility; location and inspection of traps within facility and external Traceability and Recall – E.g. identification and tracking; ability to identify and locate materials and products at the facility and in distribution Quality Assurance – E.g. calibration, inspection, testing, control of product **Certifications** Specific requirements associated with the need to meet a third party standard. This is often a condition that needs to be met in order to supply a customer. In order to become certified the company must meet all of the requirements of the relevant certification. E.g. Food safety – Canada GAP, Good Agricultural Collection Practices (GACP), HACCP Organic, Kosher/Halal, Allergen Free, Animal welfare
Documentation and records **Requirements to develop, implement, maintain and control procedures, forms, checklists,**	**Documentation and records** Within each program area, certification or regulation there are requirements to have written procedures, policies and forms that stipulate how you meet the requirements – what you do – and prove that you did what you said you would do. There can also be a requirement to describe how you control your documentation. E.g. ensure work areas have the current procedures.