The importance of hand hygiene in the food industry
A long shift draws to a close. Three employees have developed an irritant contact dermatitis and have to take sick leave. As a result, three other employees are withdrawn from their tasks to replace the colleagues who have taken ill; otherwise the workload could not have been accomplished. Productivity on the production line concerned is reduced and due to the delays work at the other production lines also slows down.

Suddenly the department is understaffed and there is a danger that orders will not be processed in time.
Consequences and causes

While it is important at this stage to clarify whether a possible lack of hand hygiene caused the skin disorder, increased time pressure means there is a risk that other workers will fail to take the necessary care to observe these key principles of hand hygiene.

The consequences: an increased risk of contamination, which in the worst case may result in the recall of a product. In 2006, this state of affairs had the following consequences for a leading confectionary company:

Due to a feared outbreak of salmonella contamination more than a million products were recalled. Estimated cost: 43 million euro.¹ This corresponds to the figures from a study conducted in the US in 2010, which showed that on average the turnover of a brand in the months following its recall drops by a quarter.²

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¹ Key Risks; Weblink: http://www.strategic-risk-global.com/key-risks/1361932.article
² FMI (Food Marketing Institute); GMA (Grocery Manufacturers Association); GS1 US; Deloitte: Recall Execution Effectiveness: Collaborative Approaches to Improving Consumer Safety and Confidence; S. 9; 2010 | Weblink: http://www.gmaonline.org/downloads/research-and-reports/WP_RecallExecution.pdf
Are you familiar with the processes for optimal hand hygiene?

Why did the staff develop dermatitis?

How much importance does your company attach to hand hygiene?

Are your safety systems regularly checked for relevant types of contamination?
Lack of hand hygiene and its consequences

The irritant contact dermatitis in our example may have several causes: it can be the result of inadequate PPE, a lack of system controls, personal negligence, caused by poor company management, or simply insufficient hand hygiene.

Hand hygiene in the treatment and processing of food is the most indispensable factor for the success of companies that depend equally on the health of humans and the functionality of machines. This is illustrated by the following figures:

24% of all product recalls are the result of pathogenic microorganisms such as salmonellae, campylobacter, Escherichia coli, listeria or noroviruses. Employees’ hands are the most important medium for spreading germs. Hand hygiene therefore is one of the most important measures for the prevention of contamination.

3 Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety/RASFF Report 2013
KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL* offers fundamental solutions for a safer, healthier and more productive workplace.

As part of our “Efficient Workplace” programme, we offer you a free Waste & Risk analysis.

During the course of an inspection of your plant, we work together with you to develop a clear picture of your production processes. In doing so, we take into account avoidable wastage and risks and suggest appropriate countermeasures.

A second pair of eyes
People working day after day in the same factory may easily overlook things. We have already conducted hundreds of waste and risk analyses in companies of the food processing industry and were able to demonstrate to the companies possibilities for increasing their productivity and for more reliable compliance with the regulations.

We work together with companies of the food processing industry from all over the world and have first-hand knowledge of the challenges facing the sector.

Our solutions are entirely geared to meet the specific requirements of the industry, to reduce the risk of contamination, to improve compliance with hand hygiene regulations, to reduce skin irritations and to ensure optimal hand hygiene.