

The demands on your plant are changing ...

Shouldn't your lubrication strategy do the same?



Proactive safeguarding becomes the norm

Regulations mandating proactive, documented food safety programmes to support hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) management continue to increase each year. For example, the Food Safety Modernisation Act (FSMA) gives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration legislative power to push companies to commit themselves to preventing – rather than responding to – food safety issues by imposing strict controls across the food supply chain.

At the same time that organisations are working to comply with regulations related to product and worker safety, they're also setting – and measuring themselves against – challenging

sustainability targets. It's an area of intense scrutiny and investment, something businesses focus on in order to reduce environmental impacts while enhancing the public's perception of their brands.

But it's tough to maintain regulatory compliance and meet sustainability goals when food and beverage production remains a complex process. The environments are challenging. Because of this, rotating parts require frequent relubrication, creating ongoing food, operator, and environmental safety risks.

The food and beverage industry is in the midst of a significant shift.



Some things change, some stay the same



Despite tight regulations and a sharpened focus on the environment, some aspects of food and beverage production remain unchanged. Take most common lubrication practices, for example.

The lubrication – and relubrication – of food and beverage processing machinery has been the reigning maintenance strategy for years. Because so many companies view it as the foundation of plant reliability, they see no reason to break from these entrenched routines. Especially if the relubrication process keeps their equipment up and running.

But given the need to **prevent contamination, increase environmental responsibility, and reduce total cost of ownership**, a traditional lubrication approach may no longer be the effective practice it once was.

Though it might seem like managing lubrication is a known concern, **these practices actually have a significant impact on the ways maintenance, sustainability, and business operations teams support the organisation's high-level goals.**

The impact on plant maintenance

Plant maintenance teams treat food and worker safety with the utmost seriousness.

They're accountable for preventing incidents and keeping planned and unplanned maintenance to a minimum, and rightfully spend most of their days working to mitigate these risks. And if lubrication practices are what get them there – just as it's been for years – then there's no reason to think about doing anything differently. The trouble is, this puts maintenance teams in a decidedly reactive posture. They find a component that needs fixing, address the problem, and move on to the next issue. Falling into this cycle means they typically wait until an accident or other compelling event to reevaluate their processes.

Even then, it's not always clear what improvement is required or how it should be implemented. In fact, they often await for direction from management or another department before acting, perpetuating the reactive cycle. This makes it difficult to determine how to preempt risks or understand what changes would allow the team to anticipate and avoid reliability issues, accidents, or contamination.



The impact on sustainability teams

Carbon emissions, water use, zero landfill, and waste reduction: these are the key measures driving food and beverage companies' sustainability efforts.

So it's not surprising that the teams responsible for driving these goals remain so singularly focused on upholding KPIs in these areas only. But when their agendas and actions are defined only by the metrics for which the department is responsible, it often obscures the impact operations and maintenance practices might have on these targets.

They may not understand how the push to conserve water, trim waste, or limit carbon emissions influences the ways other departments across the company work towards their own objectives. Likewise, **they might fail to understand how the maintenance team's lubrication practice could actively hinder, or even undermine, their ability to uphold the organisation's sustainability directives.**



The impact on business operations

For business operations teams, cost pressures and line availability concerns rule the day.

They're driven by demands to do more with less and must seek out and act on every opportunity possible to cut expenses, conserve resources, and help the organisation operate in a lean, efficient manner. As a result, they believe any positive progress towards these goals justifies the actions that brought them there.

However, this focus on cost and efficiency measures could actually be at odds with most established maintenance practices. Lubrication programmes are interruptive by

nature – production typically pauses while components are relubricated – increasing downtime and **making it difficult to turn untapped, “hidden plant” opportunities into tangible, positive production gains.**

Similarly, missed lubrication points or ineffective lubrication lead to the type of unplanned interruptions that can grind production to a halt, create costly rework, and delay time to revenue.



Well established practices, unseen consequences



Re-lubrication practices can not be simply regarded as a task for maintenance. It can bring unseen and under-appreciated consequences to further aspects of the production process.

For example, lubricants that are rinsed off of rotating parts during the washdown cycle often **leave grease in the plant's waste water**, impacting treatment efforts. Similarly, any towels used to clean up lubricated components or remove excess **grease must be disposed of responsibly, making it difficult for companies to meet zero-landfill objectives**.

Meanwhile, over-lubrication increases the chances that grease leaks enter the food stream while if inadequately applied, it can also result in equipment failures and unplanned downtime. Frequent relubrication also **counteracts cost-cutting efforts** by increasing grease-acquisition expenses and the labour required to apply it.

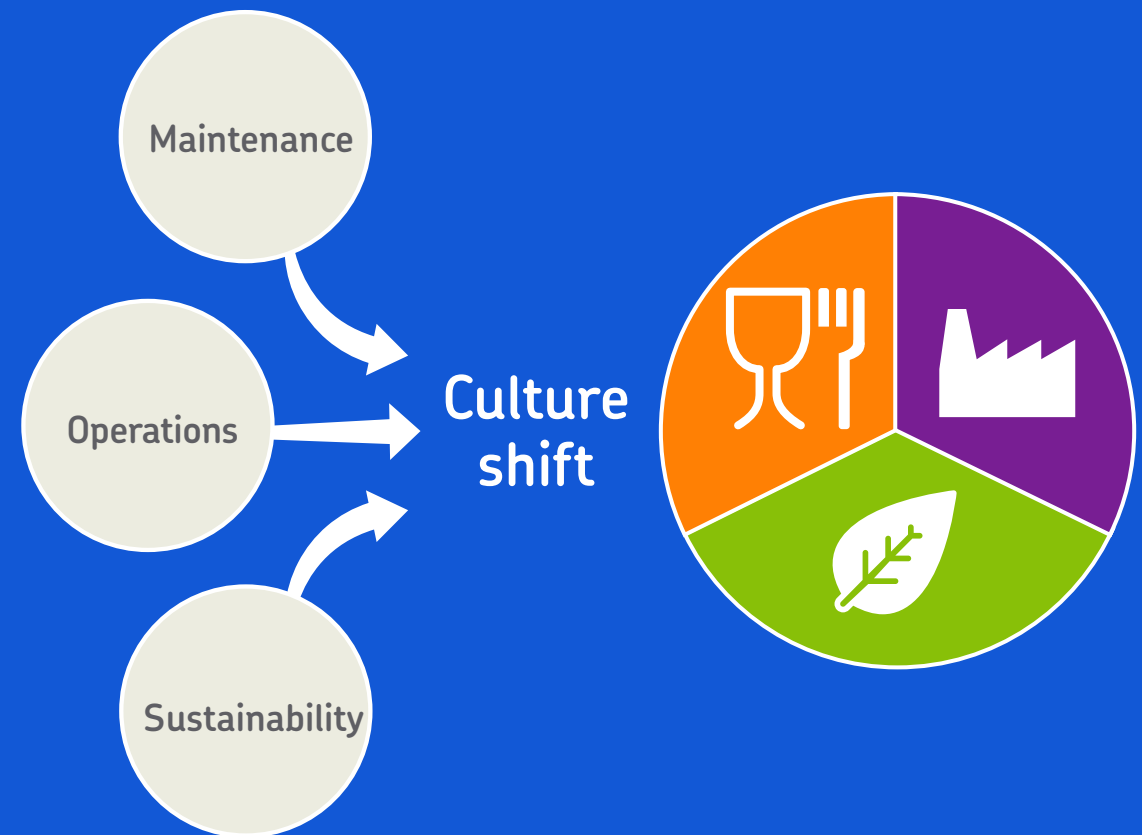
And, relubricating in hot or hard-to-reach spots increases the risk of accidents – as do the slippery floors in areas that must be frequently washed down – **impacting operator safety and potential absenteeism**.

The time for change is now

When maintenance, sustainability, and business operations are disconnected, individual units that focus on their own areas of responsibility, prevent the organisation from making changes that help it comply with strict regulations and meet demanding environmental targets.

For this reason, food and beverage companies can no longer stick with what they're doing, just because it's what they've always done. This continuous firefighting – addressing issues only after they happen – simply won't make it possible to achieve today's objectives.

But bringing this fact to light requires a culture shift: a new way of thinking that shows how all parties involved in food and beverage production can help the organisation achieve its large-scale goals by implementing a relatively small-scale change.



That's why it's time to **break the lubrication cycle**. Instead of simply regarding lubrication as a practice, companies need to start managing lubrication as a strategy.

To make this happen, **companies should reconsider and rethink their current lubrication methods**. That means seeking out new alternatives that keep the plant running efficiently, while making it possible to improve both food and operator safety, proactively anticipate and address issues, optimise costs, and meet corporate sustainability targets.

Change your culture, change your plant

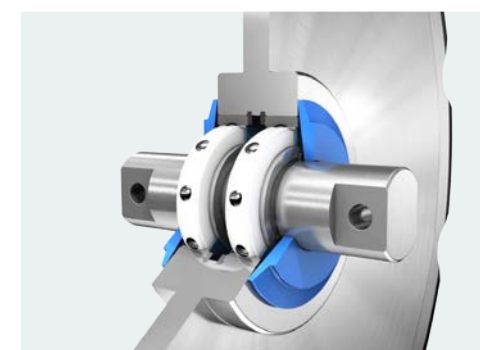
When you work with SKF, you'll have opportunities to bring this culture shift to life – while positively impacting key drivers across business, environment food and worker safety.

You'll be able to assess where – from a risk, cost or reliability perspective – it is more appropriate to implement relubrication-free bearing technologies, or where an effective lubrication practice is the right solution to pursue for the rotating parts of your machinery.

By implementing relubrication-free technologies for example, you will be able to **prove substantial maintenance cost savings**, in terms of lubricant and labour, but also reduce the risk of inadequate relubrication and its consequences on **asset reliability**.

Moreover, you'll be able to reduce wastes of lubricant, cleaning water, paper and towels – that are used by case to wipe of excess lubricants, enabling **the shift from a disposal to a preventive oriented environmental culture**.

With SKF lubrication management program you will be able to optimize your lubrication strategy and routines in order to apply the right amount of lubricant through automatic systems or manually, using the right tools and methods.



To learn more about how these and the other capabilities SKF delivers can help you rethink your lubrication strategy, please visit:

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