Choosing the Right Food Safety Program

A Primer on Food Safety Audit and Certification Options

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) mandates that the majority of food operations producing or selling food in the United States have a comprehensive food safety plan in place. SCS prepared this guide to help you navigate your food safety management, auditing and certification options:

- Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) are considered by retailers and foodservice buyers to be a base requirement for conducting business with their suppliers.
- The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) schemes and a brief description and comparison each of the four major auditable standards: GLOBALG.A.P., Safe Quality Food (SQF), PrimusGFS, FSSC 22000, and BRC.

SCS Global Services: Your Go-To Food Safety Experts

Whether you need information about the latest FSMA updates, to satisfy your customers’ requirements through third-party audits and verification, or to upgrade your internal management systems to minimize food safety risks, we can help. Our professional auditors, scientists, trainers and food safety management experts have been providing comprehensive, high-quality, customer-focused food safety services more than three decades.

Combine your food safety audit with any of our other food and agriculture certification offerings – Organic, Gluten-Free, Sustainably Grown, and Non-GMO Verified – and earn recognition for multiple achievements cost effectively. SCS auditing, verification, and vendor management services are recognized globally by food producers, major brands, distributors, retailers, and food service providers.

Contact us for more information:
foodsales@scsglobalservices.com
scsglobalservices.com/services/food-safety-and-quality
Food Safety Training

SCS operates a full-service Food Safety Training department to answer all of your food safety questions and support your efforts to develop and implement a thorough, effective food safety program. Our convenient training options include live instructor-led or on-site trainings throughout North America and Latin America.

Webinars, and Interactive Online Trainings
- IHA Approved HACCP trainings (live and on-line)
- GFSI Standards – SQF, BRC, GLOBALG.A.P.
- FSMA Food Safety Preventive Controls for Human Food delivered by FSPCA Lead Trainers

Food Safety Consulting Services

Whether you are a small start-up or an established organization, food safety audits can be time consuming and difficult – this is where SCS Consulting Services Inc. comes in. Our Food Safety Consulting Services provide you with cost-effective premium solutions to meet your Food Safety audit needs and challenges. Our highly technical and expert consultants will guide you through the entire process by educating you on what you need for your evaluation and empowering you to solve any potential issues or violations.

Applicable Services*
- FMSA, HACCP, GMP and GFSI program development
- Audit readiness assessments
- Documentation development and compliance review
- Facility review and assessment
- Gap Analysis for food safety and quality programs
- Manufacturing process review
- Risk Management
- Supply Chain Management
- Regulatory and Industry Compliance Evaluation
- Training for managers and staff at all levels

*Disclaimer: “Using SCS’ Food Safety Consulting Services does not guarantee you a certification or give you an advantage. Our experts are here to guide you through the process but there is no guarantee.”
GMP, GDP, Harmonized GAP and ISO 22000

Retailers and foodservice buyers consider independent verification of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Good Distribution Practices (GDP) to be an essential baseline of food safety performance when conducting business with suppliers. GAP, GMP and ISO 22000 compliance are also considered a tangible first step toward more comprehensive certification under a GFSI-benchmarked standard.

SCS provides verification that your food safety practices comply with GMP, GDP, and Harmonized GAP requirements. A comprehensive checklist based on regulatory requirements is used by SCS expert auditors to review your documents, records and implemented food safety processes and procedures, including your HACCP plan as applicable. We can also audit vendors in your supply chain directly, and verify audits conducted by other third parties.

Benefits
Independent verification demonstrates your commitment to food safety, confirms your operation’s food safety practices, prepares you to implement a HACCP or a risk-based preventive controls food safety plan, and puts you on the path to GFSI-level compliance.

If you are at an early stage in your food safety program, a pre-verification audit helps you refine your internal procedures and puts you on the path to compliance with regulatory requirements and GFSI.

Which Standard is Right for You?

**GMP**
For any food processing or packing operation in which food is handled, processed, packed, stored or distributed. Includes verification of your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as well as GMPs, and other relevant food safety prerequisites such as traceability, recall and food defense.

**Harmonized GAP**
For growers or producers of vegetables, fruits, or agricultural feedstocks, both open field and greenhouse, including specialized audits such as the Tomato Food Safety Protocol. Audited under the United Fresh Harmonized Audit Standard. Includes verification of your SOPs as well as GAPs, including traceability, water sourcing and usage, and harvesting practices.

**GDP**
Product storage and distribution practices for food distributors. Includes verification of your SOPs as well as Good Product Storage and Distribution Practices, and other relevant food safety prerequisites such as traceability, recall and food defense.

**ISO 22000**
For growers, food manufacturers and other entities across the human food supply chain. Applicable to all organizations in the food chain, from farm to table.

Audit Process
1. Application
2. Schedule the audit
3. On-Site Audit
4. Audit Report Review
5. Issue Certificate if earned

---

### Key Features of GMP and ISO 22000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement/ Standard</th>
<th>GMP</th>
<th>ISO 22000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Accessibility</td>
<td>GFSI food safety management.html</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFSI Benchmarked</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards and Guidance Literature</td>
<td>Hazard Analysis, and Risk-based Preventive Controls for Human Food 21 CFR 117</td>
<td>Hazard Analysis, and Risk-based Preventive Controls for Human Food 21 CFR 117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Accreditation</td>
<td>Food Safety Preventive Controls alliance (FSPCA)</td>
<td>Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACCP</td>
<td>Subpart C. Hazard analysis and Risk based preventive controls for covered firms</td>
<td>Subpart C. Hazard analysis and Risk based preventive controls for covered firms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACCP Team/Verification and Validation</td>
<td>FSMA Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) required for covered firms. Verification required for Preventive Controls. Validation required for Process PCs only. HACCP program is based on Codex Alimentarius.</td>
<td>FSMA Preventive Controls Qualified Individual (PCQI) required for covered firms. Verification required for Preventive Controls. Validation required for Process PCs only. HACCP program is based on Codex Alimentarius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Process and Days</td>
<td>One-day audit to multi-days depending on the operation/ no. of employees/ simple or complex process.</td>
<td>One-day audit to multi-days depending on the operation/ no. of employees/ simple or complex process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period to address non-conformities</td>
<td>Not required. The site must address it for preparation of next audit.</td>
<td>Not required. The site must address it for preparation of next audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Requirements</td>
<td>Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards. Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards.</td>
<td>Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards. Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring/Grading</td>
<td>80% for passing</td>
<td>No scoring – Pass or Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is a global collaborative effort intended to promote the highest standards of food safety. Rather than create a single worldwide standard, the GFSI collaborative established a benchmarking process to encourage innovation and competitive development of standards that would all meet a core set of requirements pertaining to management commitment, risk-based preventive practices, and continuous improvement. GFSI itself does not administer accreditations or conduct certification activities. Such activities are left to administrators of specific food safety standards that are benchmarked to GFSI requirements, and to independent accredited certification bodies who certify against those standards.

Benefit of Certification to Food Producers, Manufacturers and Other Operations

A growing number of retail and foodservice buyers around the world now mandate that their suppliers adopt food safety and auditing systems aligned with GFSI criteria, and favor suppliers who have had their food safety and quality management systems independently certified under a GFSI-benchmarked program. In addition, food companies are increasingly opting to build out their internal food safety programs to GFSI-level requirements to minimize food safety risks.

Core GFSI Elements

The following elements are built into each GFSI-benchmarked standard:

- Senior Management Commitment and Continual Improvement
- Food Safety Plan based on Risk-Assessment
- Annual Scheme Internal Audits
- Supplier Approval and Management
- Corrective and Preventive Actions, Root Cause Analysis
- Layout, Product Flow and Segregation
- Housekeeping and Hygiene
- Management of Allergens
- Process, Product, and Operations Control
- Traceability and Recall Programs
- Labelling and Pack Control
- Personnel Hygiene and Training
- Documentation and Record keeping
- Verification and Validation
- Continuous Improvement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement/ Standard</th>
<th>GLOBALG.A.P.</th>
<th>PrimusGFS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>globalgap.org</td>
<td>primusgfs.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GFSI Benchmarked</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standards and Guidance Literature</strong></td>
<td>Free on GLOBALG.A.P. website</td>
<td>Free on PrimusGFS website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Auditor Accreditation</strong></td>
<td>Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training</td>
<td>Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HACCP</strong></td>
<td>Required risk assessments are based on HACCP</td>
<td>Applicable to all facility operations. Analysis required; critical control points (CCPs) depend on the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HACCP Team/Verification and Validation</strong></td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Applicable to all facility operations; HACCP team required; critical control points (CCPs) depend on the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prerequisite Program</strong></td>
<td>Documented GAP program</td>
<td>Preliminary steps outlined in standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audit Process and Days</strong></td>
<td>Half-day to multi-day, depending on operation size and distance between sites.</td>
<td>Half-day to multi-day depending on size and distance between sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period to address non-conformities</strong></td>
<td>Submit corrective action plan within 90 calendar days (minor) and 14 calendar days (major). Close corrective action before the site audit.</td>
<td>30 calendar days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Certification Requirements</strong></td>
<td>Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards. Designated persons should attend opening and closing meetings. Closing corrective actions on time.</td>
<td>Minimum score for each module and the overall total score must meet the minimum required on-site score. Overall preliminary score of 85% for GMP, Management or designee must attend opening and closing meetings and participate in the audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scoring/Grading</strong></td>
<td>95%+ minors, 100% majors must be met.</td>
<td>Preliminary and final percentage of compliance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FSSC 22000**
- Based on International Standards of ISO. Details found on FSSC22000 website
- Multi-disciplinary HACCP team employed with a team leader. A competent and experienced SQF Practitioner employed full-time to oversee SQF program requirements. External expertise may be used, but day-to-day management of food safety is the responsibility of the company.
- Verification and validation activities conducted by competent personnel and service providers.
- No pre-requisite, food safety and/or quality management systems. Pre-requisite SQF for Process PCs and Preventive Controls for covered firms.

**SQF**
- FDA approved
- One standard (includes food safety and quality management systems)
- Global Market Program for small sites (Basic and Intermediate levels)

**BRC**
- Based on International Standards of ISO. Details found on BRC Global Standards website
- Multi-disciplinary HACCP team employed, including a team leader with in-depth knowledge of HACCP and demonstrated competence and experience. External expertise may be used, but day-to-day management of food safety is the responsibility of the company.
- Verification and validation activities conducted by competent personnel and service providers.

**Certification Requirements**
- Free on FSSC website
- Free on SQF website
- Free on BRC website

**Part 117**
- Current good manufacturing practices, hazard analysis, and risk-based preventive controls for human food
- Multi-disciplinary HACCP team employed with a team leader. External expertise may be used, but day-to-day management of food safety is the responsibility of the company.
- Verification and validation activities conducted by competent personnel and service providers.

**Training**
- Accredited (approved by SQFI) Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training.
- Free on BRC website
- Free on GLOBALG.A.P. website
- Free on PrimusGFS website

**Subpart C**
- Hazard analysis and Risk-based preventive controls for covered firms.
- Multi-disciplinary HACCP team employed, including a team leader with in-depth knowledge of HACCP and demonstrated competence and experience. External expertise may be used, but day-to-day management of food safety is the responsibility of the company.
- Verification and validation activities conducted by competent personnel and service providers.
GLOBALG.A.P. certification opens valuable new markets to large and small producers alike, and helps satisfy the basic food safety and sustainability specifications of retailers and major buyers worldwide. Assure your customers that your good agricultural practices for food safety and your environmental management practices meet GLOBALG.A.P. Requirements. GLOBALG.A.P. Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standard is recognized in more than 100 countries.

GLOBALG.A.P. certification is suitable for: Agricultural producers, packers, processors

Audit Process

1. Choose Certification Body and Apply for Auditing
2. Complete Registration Form
3. Schedule the Audit
4. On-site Audit
5. Complete Corrective Actions and Technical Review
6. CB makes Certification Decision
7. Receive Certificate

Once certification is achieved, SCS issues the certificate and final report to the facility/operation and posts reports to the SCS Certified Supplier Directory and to retailer databases when requested. Annual audits are required to maintain certification.

Certification Options

SCS offers certification to both the Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) Standard and Harmonized Produce Safety Standard (HPSS) Standard. The following certification options apply to both standards:

Option 1: Certification for Single Site and Multisite for individual producers of single site or multisite operations with or without an implemented Quality Management System (QMS).

Option 2: Group Certification for small producers seeking recognition under one group certificate, and for multisite operations operating under a unified QMS and internal auditing procedure.

For IFA-only clients, we also offer TESCO, Combinable Crops & Hops.

Combined Certifications for Greater Efficiency

Bundle your GLOBALG.A.P. audit with other certifications, such as: PrimusGFS for your handling facility, and other agricultural audits such as Sustainably Grown and Organic.
PrimusGFS certification is a leading food safety standard benchmarked to GFSI and accepted by buyers around the world. Its integrated approach allows you to certify both your farm and packhouse operations during the same audit, saving time and money. Primus GFS is well recognized in U.S., Canada, Mexico, Latin and South America. SCS is approved by Azzule systems, the PrimusGFS standard owner, to perform certified PrimusGFS audits.

PrimusGFS certification is suitable for: Farms, ranches, greenhouses, pack houses, processors, storage and distribution centers, cold storage facilities, pre-processors of plant products, grains, and pulses, processors of perishable plant products and ambient stable products (drying, roasting, salting, milling).

Audit Process
- Application
- Registration
- Self-assessment (OPTIONAL)

Schedule the Audit
- Onsite Audit
- Corrective Actions (CA)
- Certification Decision
- Certificate Issuance
- Recertification

FSSC 22000 Certification

The Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000 is a complete certification Scheme for the auditing and certification of Food Safety Management Systems for food manufacturers. The scheme is GFSI-benchmarked and is based on ISO 22000, ISO 22000:2005 and ISO/TS 22003:2013 standards. The robust framework addresses food safety risk management across the entire supply chain. Getting certified to this scheme assures supply of safe food to retailers and consumers by meeting their requirements.

FSSC 22000 certification is suitable for: Any food processing or packing operation in which open food is handled, processed, packed, stored and distributed; manufacturing of packaging materials for food. Food, ingredients and food packaging material manufacturers, brokers, and agents can apply.

Audit Process
- Learn the Standard
- Complete CB application
- Self-Assessment or Pre-Assessment Audit (Optional)
- Schedule the Audit
- Stage 1 On-site Audit including Document Review
- Complete Corrective Actions (28 from audit date)
- Make Certification Decision (120 days from audit date)
- Receive Certificate

Certification validity: Grades A and B result in a 12-month valid certification; Grade C and D result in a 6-month valid certification with surveillance audit. Unannounced option "+" is added to score (e.g., AA+)

Audit Duration
Each audited company is required to have a full-time trained, in-house food safety manager. The food safety manager is responsible for ensuring that the company and its sites understand the audit process. In the case of vertically integrated, multisite operations where primary production sites are under direct control, certification is more complex and may require extra time.

Initial audits require a documentation or desktop review, typically 1 to 1.5 days in length, followed by a facility audit of 1.5 to 4 days.

Audit Process
- Stage 2 On-site Audit of Your Operation
- Certification Decision (120 days from audit date)
- Receive Certificate
The Safe Quality Food (SQF) Program, based on the HACCP codex, is a rigorous and credible food safety and quality program recognized by retailers, brand owners, and food service providers worldwide. Recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), the SQF family includes several levels of certification. Food Safety Fundamental Program, Food Safety Program, and Food Quality Program. These programs are designed to meet industry, customer, and regulatory requirements for all sectors of the food supply chain.

The standard consists of distinctive food sector category modules. All operations must comply with Module 2 (System Elements) as well as an additional module that defines the fundamental practices for their specific industry sector. For example, organizations producing fresh produce adhere to Modules 2 and Module 7, which focuses on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), whereas a company processing fruits and vegetables must adhere to Modules 2 and 11, which focuses on Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs).

SQF certification is suitable for: SQF certification can benefit any food processing or packing operation in which food is produced, handled, processed, packed, stored, and distributed.

Audit Process
- Learn the Standard
- Identify SQF Practitioner
- Complete CB application
- Self-Assessment or Pre-Assessment Audit (Optional)
- Schedule an Audit
- Desk Audit of Documentation
  (Unscored. For initial certification audit only)
- Facility Audit
- Complete Corrective Actions
- CB makes Certification Decision (45 days from audit date)
- Receive Certificate

Scoring and certification validity: Grades E and G result in a 12-month valid certification; Grade C results in a 6-month valid certification, with surveillance audit prior to the 6-month term of the certification audit end date. A score of F results in no certification.

Audit Duration
Each audited company is required to have a full-time trained, in-house SQF facilitator, called an SQF Practitioner. The SQF Practitioner is responsible for ensuring that the company and its sites understand the audit process. In the case of vertically integrated, multisite operations where primary production sites are under direct control, certification is more complex and may require extra time.

Initial SQF audits require a documentation or desktop review, typically 1 to 1.5 days in length, followed by a facility audit of 1.5 to 4 days.

The BRC Global Standards are used by suppliers in over 100 countries to protect food safety during the manufacture, storage, and distribution of food and food packaging materials. BRC Certification helps companies demonstrate compliance with the GFSI and gain access to top EU retailers. BRC Global Standards include: Global Standard for Food, Global Standard for the Storage and Distribution, Global Standard for Packaging and Packaging Materials, Global Standard for Agents and Brokers.

BRC certification is suitable for: Any food processing or packing operation in which open food is handled, processed, packed, stored, and distributed; manufacturing of packaging materials for food. Food and food packaging material manufacturers, brokers, and agents can apply.

Audit Process
- Learn the Standard
- Complete CB application
- Self-Assessment or Pre-Assessment Audit (Optional)
- Schedule the Audit
- Onsite Audit (approximately 1.5-3 days)
- Complete Corrective Actions (28 from audit date)
- Make Certification Decision (42 days from audit date)
- Receive Certificate

Scoring and certification validity: Grades A and B result in a 12-month valid certification; Grade C and D result in a 6-month valid certification with surveillance audit. Unannounced option “+” is added to score (e.g., AA+).
For all your food safety needs

For more information:
foodsales@scsglobalservices.com
scsglobalservices.com/services/food-safety-and-quality