



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 BRCGS.

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, BRCGS, 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 fork.

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

Requirement/Standard	GMP	ISO 22000
Online Accessibility		iso.org/iso-22000-food-safety-management.html
GFSI Benchmarked	No	No
Standard	Title 21 of the Code of Federal Regulation Part 117—Current Good Manufacturing Practices, Hazard	Second edition 2018-06
Standards and Guidance Literature	Hazard Analysis, and Risk-based Preventive Controls for Human Food21 CFR 117	Hazard Analysis, and Risk-based Preventive Controls for Human Food21 CFR 117
Auditor Accreditation	Food Safety Preventive Controls alliance (FSPCA) CFSA TAN	Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training
HACCP	Subpart C. Hazard analysis and Risk based preventive controls for covered firms	Subpart C. Hazard analysis and Risk based preventive controls for covered firms
HACCP Team/Verification and Validation	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.	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
Prerequisite Program	Part 117 Current good manufacturing practice, hazard analysis, and risk-based preventive controls for human food.	Part 117 Current good manufacturing practice, hazard analysis, and risk-based preventive controls for human food
Audit Process and Days	One-day audit to multi-days depending on the operation/ no. of employees/ simple or complex process.	One-day audit to multi-days depending on the operation/ no. of employees/ simple or complex process
Period to address non-conformities	Not required. The site must address it for preparation of next audit.	Not required. The site must address it for preparation of next audit.
Certification Requirements	Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards. Designated persons should attend opening and closing meetings.	Questions are scored based on minor, major and critical food safety hazards. Designated persons should attend opening and closing meetings.
Scoring/Grading	80+ for passing	No scoring – Pass or Fail

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



Key Food Safety Features of GFSI Audit Schemes

Requirement/Standard	GLOBALG.A.P.	PrimusGFS
Online Accessibility	globalgap.org	primusgfs.com
GFSI Benchmarked	Yes	Yes
Standard	Compliance and Control Criteria on GLOBALG.A.P. website	General Regulations and Standard on website
Standards and Guidance Literature	Free on GLOBALG.A.P. website	Free on PrimusGFS website
Auditor Accreditation	Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training	Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training
HACCP	Required risk assessments are based on HACCP	Applicable to all facility operations. Analysis required; critical control points (CCPs) depend on the process
HACCP Team/Verification and Validation	Not required	Applicable to all facility operations. HACCP team required; critical control points (CCPs) depend on the process.
Prerequisite Program	Documented GAP program	Preliminary steps outlined in standard
Audit Process and Days	Half-day to multi-day, depending on operation size and distance between sites.	Half-day to multi-day depending on size and distance between sites.
Period to address non-conformities	Submit corrective action plan within 90 calendar days (minor) 14 calendar days (major) Close corrective action before the site audit	30 calendar days
Certification Requirements	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.	Minimum score for each module and the overall total score. Overall preliminary score of 85% for GMP. Management or designee must attend opening and closing meetings and participate in the audit.
Scoring/Grading	95%+ minors, 100% majors must be met.	Preliminary and final percentage of compliance.

FSSC 22000	SQF	BRCGS
fssc22000.com	sqfi.com	BRCGSglobalstandards.com
Yes	Yes	Yes
Based on International Standards of ISO. Details found on Fssc22000 website	Multiple Codes: Food Safety Fundamentals, Primary Production, Manufacturing, Storage & Distribution, Retail, Quality and Food Packaging	One standard (includes food safety and quality management systems) Global Market Program for small sites (Basic and Intermediate levels)
Free on FSSC 22000 website	Free on SQFI website	Free on BRCGS website
Accredited Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training	Accredited (approved by SQFI) Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training	Accredited (Approved by BRCGS) Education, Work Experience, Qualifications, Audit Training
Subpart C. Hazard analysis and Risk based preventive controls for covered firms	Food Safety Plan based on CODEX Alimentarius HACCP Principles	Food Safety Plan based on CODEX Alimentarius HACCP Principles
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.	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.	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.
Part 117 Current good manufacturing practice, hazard analysis, and risk-based preventive controls for human food	Clearly described and defined	Clearly described and defined
Multi-day depending on operation size/ No. of employees / simple or complex process.	Initial Audit (Stage 1 and Stage 2) Stage 1: Document Audit Stage 2: Site Audit Audit duration is based on number of employees, size of facility, number of HACCP Plans, and any off-site storage areas. Mandatory unannounced Audit (UAA)-Every 3 years.	Auditor Preparation: pre-review of key documents Audit duration is based on # of employees, size of facility, # of HACCP Plans, and any off site storages Announced Audit (mandatory) Unannounced Audit (optional)
90 calendar days (minor) 28 calendar days (major)	30 calendar days (minor) 30 calendar days (major)	28 calendar days
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.	Mandatory requirements within the standard must be met. Pre-requisite, food safety and /or quality management requirements must be met Current standard to be made available. Senior management attends opening and closing meetings and participates in the audit. Auditor presents findings and reconfirms non-conformities.	Fundamental clauses (12) within the standards must be met. Pre-requisite, food safety and /or quality management requirements must be met. Current standard to be made available. Senior management attends opening and closing meetings and participates in the audit. Auditor presents findings and reconfirms non-conformities..
No Scoring – Pass or Fail	Score: Excellent, Good, Comply (Pass), Excellent and Good (require annual re-audit); Comply (requires semi-annual re-audit).	Grades AA, A, B, C, D (pass) AA, A, and B (require annual re-audit), C and D (require semi-annual re-audit). Note: A plus (+) sign added to a grade indicates that an unannounced audit was conducted.



GLOBALG.A.P.

GLOBALG.A.P.

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
- Stage 2 On-site Audit of Your Operation
- 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.





Safe Quality Food (SQF) Certification

The Safe Quality Food (SQF) Program, based on the HACCP codex is a rigorous and credible food safety and quality program that is recognized by retailers, brand owners, and food service providers world-wide. 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 if earned

Major: completed 30 days from facility audit date
 Minor: completed 30 days from facility audit date

Scoring and certification validity: Scores E and G result in a 12-month valid certification; Score 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.

GRADE	SCORE
96 - 100	E - EXCELLENT
85 - 95	G - GOOD
70 - 84	C - COMPLIES
< 70	F - FAILURE

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.



BRCGS Certification

The BRCGS 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. BRCGS Certification helps companies demonstrate compliance with the GFSI and gain access to top EU retailers. BRCGS 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

BRCGS 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:

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