



# Information and Certification Requirements SQF



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# Revision History

Rev No	Revision Date	Page No	Sec. No	Brief Description of Change
1	---	---	---	Old NCSI Recognition Booklet
2	November 2013	----	---	Transfer of NCSI procedure to BSI Procedure
3	September 2014	---	---	Changes are highlighted in yellow
4	September 2015	Various	Various	Review of requirements
5	November 2016	15 5	11.7 1.0	Requirement added for the client to be provide permission for their details to be used on the SQFI website. Clarification that this document links to the Ts and Cs
6	December 2017	---	5	Updated to Edition 8.
7	October 2018	---	---	Updated contact details Addition of recall notification
8	November 2019	Various	Various	New title and Edition 8.1 Now a Global Document Update to Obligations & Complaints / Certification Requirements / Nonconformities Revised Complaints and Appeals
9	June 2020	5 6 17 19	2.0 3.4 11.0 11.6	Change to accreditation body Pre-Assessment details Inclusion of the recall section as well as its related record (Food Safety Product Incident Form) Auditors may be accompanied
10	March 2021	Various	Various	Updated to meet the release of SQF Edition 9
11	October 2021	17	4.11	Addition of a failed audit
12	November 2024	Full restructure of the document		

## 1 Scope

This information requirements document sets out terms which satisfy the related Accreditation and Scheme requirements and forms part of the Service Agreement between client and BSI as indicated in the SRF (Service Request Form) which is completed by your organization when applying for the SQF Scheme Certification.

The requirements included in this document does not cover all Scheme rules and therefore the complete Scheme requirements shall be found in the related SQF Scheme documents and followed at all times.

For more information about the Scheme please visit the SQF Scheme Owner website available [here](#).

## 2 General Scheme description

SQF helps build confidence in the supply chain offering food safety and quality Codes for all aspects of the food supply chain. SQF certification is product specific and is designed to meet industry, customer, and regulatory requirements from all sectors of the food supply chain. These codes provide sites with a robust HACCP-based approach enabling them to ensure that their products meet food safety requirements.

### 2.1 Related normative requirements

- SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing
- SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing
- SQF Food Safety Code: Aquaculture
- SQF Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplement Manufacturing
- SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing
- SQF Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging

- SQF Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing
- SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production
- SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production
- SQF Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution
- SQF Food Safety Code for Food Retail
- SQF Food Safety Code for Foodservice
- Edition 9 SQF Food Safety Code: Quality Code
- Edition 1.1 SQF Fundamentals for Manufacturing – Basic & Intermediate
- Edition 1.1 SQF Fundamentals for Primary Production – Basic & Intermediate
- Scheme additional document as appropriated for the scope of certification;
- ISO 17065:2012;
- IAF Mandatory Documents – as applicable and appropriated in accordance with Scheme Rules.

## 3 BSI accreditation scope

BSI Assurance UK Limited holds a valid global ISO/IEC 17065-1:2012 accreditation. The accreditation body is ANAB and the Scheme Owner is the SQF Institute – FMI (The Food Industry Association). BSI Group is accredited and licensed to offer the SQF scopes that can be verified [here](#).

In addition to the accredited SQF scope, BSI also offers the following programs unaccredited:

- SQF Food Safety Code for Food Retail
- SQF Food Safety Code for Food service
- SQF Fundamentals for Manufacturing (Basic and Intermediate)
- SQF Fundamentals for Primary Production (Basic and Intermediate)
- SQF Suppliers Addendums

## 4 BSI scope coverage

BSI scope coverage is as follows:

Codes	Accredited	Licensed
Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing	X	X
Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing	X	X
Food Safety Code: Aquaculture	X	X
Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplement Manufacturing	X	X
Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing	X	X
Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging	X	X
Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing	X	X
Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production	X	X
Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production	X	X
Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution	X	X
Food Safety Code for Food Retail		X
Food Safety Code for Foodservice		X
Quality Code		X
Fundamentals for Manufacturing – Basic		X
Fundamentals for Manufacturing – Intermediate		X
Fundamentals for Primary Production – Basic		X
Fundamentals for Primary Production – Intermediate		X
FSMA Preventive Controls Rule for Human Food		X
Additional Costco Requirements		X

#### 4.1 Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing

The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the manufacture, storage, and transport of animal feed including compounded and medicated feed.

#### 4.2 Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing

The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the slaughtering, processing, packaging, storage, and transport of all types of animal-based products, including red meat, poultry, and fish products.

#### 4.3 Food Safety Code: Aquaculture

The SQF Food Safety Code: Aquaculture sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the intensive farming and harvesting of freshwater fish and shellfish species.

#### 4.4 Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplement Manufacturing

The SQF Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplements Manufacturing sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the manufacture, blending, transport, and storage of dietary supplements including vitamins, probiotics, and label supplements.

#### 4.5 Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing

The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the manufacture, processing, packaging, storage, and transport of all types of plant-based products, mixed animal and plant-based products, and ambient stable products.

#### 4.6 Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging

The SQF Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the manufacture and storage of food sector packaging including flexible films, paperboard containers, metal containers, flexible pouches, glass containers, plastic and foam containers (PET, polystyrene, etc.), and single-use foodservice products.

#### 4.7 Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing

The SQF Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in the manufacture of pet food intended for consumption by domestic animals and specialty pets.

#### 4.8 Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production

The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in production and management of animals (other than fish or seafood) used in meat, egg, milk, or honey production.

#### 4.9 Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production

The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in growing, harvesting, and packaging of plant products grown indoors and outdoors.

## 4.10 Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution

The SQF Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for storage facilities involved only in storage and transport of fresh, frozen, chilled, or ambient packaged food products. Note that warehouses associated with manufacturing facilities are included in the SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing or other applicable SQF Code..

## 4.11 Food Safety Code for Food Retail

The SQF Food Safety Code for Food Retail recognizes that food safety practices differ depending on the food safety risk to the product and the process and has designed the SQF Food Safety Code for Retail to meet the individual requirements of the retail industry sector.

## 4.12 Food Safety Code for Foodservice

The SQF Food Safety Code for Food Service is suitable for all sectors of the food supply chain from primary production through to food retailing, catering, foodservice and the manufacture of food packaging. Note that warehouses associated with manufacturing facilities are included in the SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing or other applicable SQF Code.

## 4.13 Quality Code

The SQF Quality Code builds on the system elements defined in the various SQF Food Safety Codes. Sites seeking to attain certification to the SQF Quality Code must be certified to the applicable SQF Food Safety Code for their industry sector.

Edition 9 of the SQF Quality Code can also be applied as a food quality certification to any food or feed manufacturing or storage site certified to a GFSI-recognized certification program, any GFSI technically equivalent standard or other food safety management standard (FSMS) including HACCP certification or ISO 22000:2018. The SQF Quality Code sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites seeking to apply quality management principles to their operations.

## 4.14 Fundamentals for primary production and manufacturing – Basic and Intermediate

These codes meet the needs of retailers and buyers with small to medium enterprises, providing the essential requirements for building a robust food safety management system. The basic and intermediate levels suit a variety of needs, where they are an introduction to the SQF system and do not meet the requirements of a GFSI benchmarked program. The basic level includes regulatory compliance and good manufacturing practices. The intermediate level includes (in addition to what mentioned to the basic level) the basic food safety management system.

## 5 Application process

BSI will require completion of an official application form, signed by an authorized representative of the applicant site. It is the responsibility of the applicant site to ensure that adequate and accurate information is shared with BSI about the details of the applicant site.

## 6 Certification agreement

BSI will have a legally enforceable agreement with your organization for the provision of the SQF certification activities in accordance with the relevant requirements.

## 7 Audit planning

Your site is required to make all necessary arrangements to allow the certification activities to take place in accordance with the Scheme requirements.

### 7.1 Pre-questionnaire – annual completion

The BSI Pre-Audit Questionnaire needs to be completed for initial clients and confirmed/updated by existing clients annually before each audit takes place. The form should be sent to the local BSI contact at least 15 days prior to the audit date.

## 8 Certification cycle

The certification cycle starts with the initial certification audit date. Audit frequency is based on score and rating awarded in each audit. Refer to 'Audit Score' for the appropriate standard.

## 9 Certification and audit process

SQF certification is site specific. The entire site, including all premises, support buildings, silos, tanks, loading and unloading bays, and external grounds are identified and included in the scope of certification. If activities are carried out in different premises but are overseen by the same senior, operational, and technical management and are covered by the one SQF System, the site can be expanded to include those premises.

### 9.1 Initial and continuing certification activity

Initial audit is the first audit of the client with BSI and is a start of a new certification cycle to ensure the site's documentation complies with the SQF Code and that the food safety, hygiene, and management activities are carried out according with the documented policies, procedures, and specifications.

A surveillance audit is conducted if a site attains a "C – complies" rating at an initial certification audit or re-certification audit. It shall occur within thirty (30) calendar days on either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the last certification or re-certification audit. A new score and rating are issued at the surveillance audit, but the site's re-certification audit date is not affected. Major or minor non-conformities raised at the surveillance audit are required to be closed-out. The surveillance audit is a full SQF System audit.

Re-certification audit is conducted within thirty (30) calendar days either side of the anniversary of the last day of the initial certification audit. It is conducted to verify the continued effectiveness of your site's SQF System. The re-certification audit score is calculated in the same way as the initial certification audit, and the same rating system is applied.

If a site wants to change their recertification timeframe, the site must provide written justification. The request regarding temporary or permanent certification changes for legitimate business reasons, including changes due to extraordinary events such as acts of nature or extreme weather, is to be submitted to SQFI by BSI.



## 9.2 Unannounced program

BSI is responsible for managing the audit process and ensuring that within the 3-year period, all certificated sites receive at least one unannounced audit.

The audit must take place during normal site operation unless other arrangements have been agreed with the site. Important to consider the back out dates.

BSI shall notify the site of the year when the unannounced audit will take place, without communicating the actual date of the unannounced audit.

The site can choose whether to:

- Remain within the unannounced programme (fully on site)
- Forgo the three-year certification cycle and voluntarily select to have annual unannounced re-certification audits. Certificates issued are recognized on the SQF certificate as an "SQFI Select Site."

## 9.3 Non-conformance management

The process for 'closing out' non-conformities depends upon the level of non-conformity and the number of nonconformities identified.

**Critical:** A critical non-conformance is a breakdown of control(s) at a critical control point, a prerequisite program, or other process steps and judged likely to cause a significant public health risk and/or product contamination. A critical non-conformance is also raised if the certification body deems that there is systemic falsification of records relating to food safety controls and the SQF System.

If a critical NC is raised no CAP is needed and it is considered a failed audit. The site will be required to undertake another full audit before assessment for certification/re-certification.

**Major:** A major non-conformance is a failure of a system element, a systemic breakdown in the food safety management system, a serious deviation from the requirements, and/or absence of evidence demonstrating compliance to an applicable system element or Good Manufacturing Practices. It is evidence of a food safety risk to products included in the scope of certification.

The site needs to take appropriate corrective action for every non-conformance identified by the SQF auditor. Major non-conformances are required to be closed out. A documented root cause analysis is required as part of the corrective action evidence for every minor and major non-conformance.

**Minor:** A minor non-conformance is evidence of a random or infrequent failure to maintain compliance with a requirement but does not indicate a breakdown in the food safety management system or that food safety is compromised. It is evidence of an incomplete or inappropriate implementation of SQF requirements, which, if not corrected, could lead to system element breakdown.

The site needs to take appropriate corrective action for every non-conformance identified by the SQF auditor. Major non-conformances are required to be closed out. A documented root cause analysis is required as part of the corrective action evidence for every minor and major non-conformance.

In case an extension to the 30 days is needed, the related request must be made by the site representative in writing to the BSI country. Any extension can only be approved by the SQF T&C Manager.

If the corrective action involves structural change or cannot be corrected due to seasonal conditions or installation lead times, additional time can be granted provided the corrective action time frame is acceptable and temporary action is taken by the site to mitigate the risk to product safety. In such cases, the non-conformance is closed out and the SQF food safety auditor documents all details of justification of the extension, how the risk is being controlled, and the agreed completion date.

## 10 Audit reporting requirements

Following each audit, a full written report shall be prepared by the auditor. The SQF audit report template is designed to ensure the uniform application of SQF audit requirements. It is used by auditors to record their findings and determine the extent to which the site operations comply with SQF requirements. SQFI requires that:

- The auditor must report (compliant/non-compliant) on all mandatory elements for the SQF food safety audit report to be submitted.
- Non-conformances identified during the site audit need to be accurately described in the audit report and include the element of the SQF Code and the reason for the non-conformance.
- The audit report is generated for each audit.
- Audit reports shall remain the property of the company commissioning the audit and shall not be released, whole or in part, to a third party unless the company has given prior consent or the release is otherwise required by law.

## 11 Certification decision

BSI is responsible for, and retain authority for, its decisions relating to certification, including the granting, refusing, maintaining of certification, expanding or reducing the scope of certification, renewing, suspending or restoring following suspension, or withdrawing of certification.

## 12 Certificate and audit report ownership

A (certified) organization is the owner of an audit report (regarding the decision about who the report may be shared with), whilst BSI is responsible for the report data and therefore holds the ownership of the audit report content.

A (certified) organization is the certificate holder, not the owner. BSI is the data owner of the certificate data.

## 13 Auditing and certification status information

BSI may have to share the information of your organization relating to the certification and auditing process with the Scheme Owner, the related Accreditation Body, the IAF, GFSI and/or governmental authorities when required.

BSI and the Scheme Owner will share the information regarding your certification status with external parties through the related platforms/ database.

## 14 Other persons attending the audit

It is a condition of undertaking an audit that the auditor may be accompanied by other personnel for training, assessment or calibration purposes. This activity may include:

- training of new auditors by BSI;
- witness audits by Accreditation Bodies, Scheme Owner and/or BSI;
- use of technical expert and/or translator and/or observers.

By accepting the BSI contract your organization agrees to cooperate with such process.

## 15 Scheme Owner platform/ database management

The Scheme Owner maintains a register of certified sites and its status of certification. This register is publicly available on the Scheme Owner website.

The audit documents required by the Scheme Owner will be uploaded to their platform following the Scheme requirements timelines.

## 16 Scheme Owner audits and communication

The Scheme Owner reserves the right to conduct its own audit or visit to a site once certified in response to complaints and/or as part of the routine Scheme Owner compliance activity to ensure the integrity of the Scheme. Such visits may be announced or unannounced. The certification status may be affected in the event that access to any parts of the site or process or requests is unreasonably refused.

The Scheme Owner may contact the site directly in relation to its certification status or for feedback on BSI performance or investigation into reported issues.

## 17 Communication obligations

Your organization has the obligation to communicate with BSI within 24 hours the following:

- any significant changes that affect the compliance with the Scheme requirements and obtain advice of BSI in cases where there is doubt over the significance of a change;
- Serious events that impact the certified system, legality and/or the integrity of the certification, including situations that pose a threat to food safety or certification integrity as a result of Force majeure, natural or man-made disasters (e.g., war, strike, terrorism, crime, flood, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, etc.). BSI shall be contacted within 03 working days through [critical.food@bsigroup.com](mailto:critical.food@bsigroup.com).
- Changes to organization name, contact address and site details;
- Changes to organization (e.g., legal, commercial, organizational status or ownership) and management (e.g., key managerial, decision-making, or technical staff);
- Major changes to the certified system, scope of operations and product categories covered by the certified scope (e.g. new products, new processing lines, etc.);
- Any other change that renders the information on the certificate inaccurate.

- Any claim or threatened claim against BSI, any member or auditor has performed or is in the course of performing an Audit.
- Serious situations where the integrity of the certification is at risk and/or where the Scheme Owner and/or BSI can be brought into disrepute. These include, but are not limited to:
  - notice and actions imposed by regulatory authorities as a result of a food safety issue(s), where additional monitoring or forced shutdown of production is required;
  - legal proceedings, prosecutions, malpractice, and negligence; and
  - fraudulent activities and corruption.
  - food safety events/product safety incidents (e.g., recalls, withdrawals, calamities, food safety outbreaks etc.).

In case your organization is affected by a product safety incident, BSI shall be notified within 24 hours through [food.recall@bsigroup.com](mailto:food.recall@bsigroup.com) from the date of the incident.

The information related to the product incident will be evaluated and BSI will decide the course of action regarding action needed as well as the status of the certification.

Related definition as follows:

- **Product safety incident:** Food safety, authenticity or legality incidents, including product recalls, regulatory notice, food safety-related withdrawals or any other incidents affecting the safety of product.
- **Product Recall:** The removal by a supplier of product from the supply chain that has been deemed to be unsafe and has been sold to the end consumer or is with retailers or caterers and is available for sale (Ref: GFSI Benchmarking Requirements \_Version 2020.1).
- **Regulatory notice:** Any notice (related to the scope of the certification), filing or other documentation required to be submitted to an Applicable Authority with respect to any Regulatory Clearance.
- **Product Withdrawal:** The removal of product by a supplier from the supply chain that has been deemed to be unsafe, which has not been placed on the market for purchase by the end consumer (Ref: GFSI Benchmarking Requirements \_Version 2020.1)

- **Notifiable product safety incidents:** Any product safety incidents related to a product which is within the scope of the site's certification that shall be communicated to BSI and/or Scheme Owner as described in the following section. It includes cases where the product has already been consumed and therefore the client cannot recall/ withdraw the product.

## 18 Complaints and appeals

Please refer to BSI website for information related to complaints and appeals, including timeline and communication channel: [Complaints and appeals](#).

## 19 BSI Impartiality

Impartiality is the governing principle of how BSI provides its services. Impartiality means acting fairly and equitably in its dealings with people and in all business operations. It means decisions are made free from any engagements of influences which could affect the objectivity of decision making.

Find detailed information [here](#).

## 20 Misleading statement

Your organization is not permitted to use its certification in a manner that could bring BSI or scheme owner into disrepute. This includes making misleading or unauthorized statements.

## 21 BSI Mark of Trust and Accreditation Mark rules

The guideline related to access the marks and the related rules is available [here](#).

## 22 Scheme Owner Logo rules

The SQF logo is owned by SQFI. Sites obtain no property in the SQF logo.

SQFI delegates any or all of its functions described herein to BSI as stipulated in the Safe Quality Food Institute Certification Body License Agreement. The rules of use regulate the use of the SQF logo by certified sites only.

The rules of use do not regulate the use of the SQF logo by SQFI, certification bodies (CBs) or other entities licensed by SQFI to use them, unless otherwise provided for in this or another instrument.

Sites who achieve and maintain certification to the SQF Food Safety Fundamentals, the SQF Food Safety Code and/or the SQF Quality Code are granted permission by BSI to use the SQF logo.

A site shall, for the duration of its certification, have the right to use the SQF logo. There will be no fee payable by sites for the right to use the SQF logo, other than fees payable to obtain and maintain certification.

Subsidiary companies and site addresses not included on the certificate of registration are not certified to use the SQF logo.

Sites may only use the SQF logo in accordance with these rules of use, which are designed to protect the integrity and enhance the value of the SQF logo.

## 23 Scheme transition information

If a client is transitioning their GFSI certification to SQF, then the SQF audit must be considered an initial certification and planned as per the requirements established in this manual in previous sections.

Contact us  
[bsigroup.com](https://www.bsigroup.com)

