



BSI Certification Guidebook Addendum SQF (Safe Quality Food) Edition 7.2

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Revision 4 (September 2015)

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Revision History

Rev No	Revision Date	Author	Approved by	Page No	Sec. No	Brief Description of Change
1						Old NCSI Recognition Booklet
2	November 2013	Stephanie Vincent	Stephanie Vincent			Transfer of NCSI procedure to BSI Procedure
3	September 2014	Mary Portelli	Stephanie Vincent			Changes are highlighted in yellow
4	September 2015	Alex Davies	Stephanie Vincent	1 13 14	Title page 9 11	Review of requirements

Related Documents

Document Number	Title

1 Introduction

This certification guidebook is designed to assist your organization on the requirements for certification to the Safe Quality Food (SQF) standard edition 7.2 throughout the BSI Group.

2 Accreditation Status

Certification to this standard is accredited.

BSI holds accreditation for this standard with ANSI (American National Standards Institute). The standard owner is Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI).

This scheme follows the requirements of ISO17065:2012

3 The Recognition Process

The following section outlines the steps that apply during the BSI recognition process for SQF.

BSI reserves the right to provide its clients and those that request quotations with marketing and technical information relating to standards, training and compliance services.

3.1 Initial Inquiry

BSI will respond to either verbal or written expressions of interest from organizations interested in one or more of our programs. If your organization is located near one of BSI's offices, an advisory visit may be arranged to discuss your recognition requirements and how BSI can help your organization achieve them.

BSI will also, on request and receipt of a Request for Quotation, prepare a proposal tailoring our services to your organization's needs.

3.2 Application for Certification and Assessment

Receipt of your organization's Application form (or authorized acceptance of a valid BSI proposal), along with the accompanying payment of the non-refundable application fee (or invoicing instructions) together with this document forms the contract between your organization and BSI.

Your requirements will be entered into our database and a Client Manager will be appointed to look after your certification or assessment requirements. The Client Manager will be your primary point of contact with BSI and is responsible for ensuring that our certification/assessment services are delivered to your organization in the most effective manner possible.

3.3 Client Contact

As soon as practicable after receipt of your signed application/proposal, a BSI Client Manager (or nominated representative) will contact your organization. The Client Manager will seek to establish a working relationship between your organization and BSI, and to confirm your recognition requirements in terms of the certification or assessment services, standards or codes of practice, locations, and activities and/or products to be included in the scope of certification.

The Client Manager (or nominated representative) will seek to gain an appreciation of the structure of your organization and the activities being conducted. In particular the Client Manager will:

- Seek an appreciation of the nature and scope of the organization's activities, structure and location(s), including any activities for which confirmation is being excluded; and
- Determine the status of system documentation and implementation including organizational policies, objectives and targets.

If you are working with a consultant it is often useful for that person to be party to the communication process.

3.4 Conduct a Pre-assessment Audit (not mandatory)

A pre-assessment audit can assist in identifying gaps in the supplier's SQF System so that corrective action can occur before engaging the selected certification body for a full certification audit. It can be conducted using internal resources, an SQF consultant, or an SQF auditor.

Suppliers that have registered on the SQF assessment database can download an assessment checklist free of charge to utilize in a pre-assessment audit.

3.5 Identifying the Scope of Certification

SQF certification is site and product specific. When 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.

The scope of certification forms part of the certificate of registration. It describes the food sector categories (refer to Appendix 1) and the products processed and handled on that site. The certificate of registration outlines the location of the site and nature and extent of the supplier SQF certification.

3.6 The Certification Audit

The SQF certification audit consists of two stages:

Stage 1: The desk audit is undertaken to verify that the supplier's SQF System documentation meets the requirements of the SQF Code.

Stage 2: The facility audit is conducted on site and determines the effective implementation of the supplier's documented SQF System.

Where a supplier operates under seasonal conditions (a period in which the major activity is conducted over five consecutive months or less) the certification audit shall be completed within thirty (30) days from the start of the season.

3.7 Identifying the Scope of the Audit

The supplier and the certification body shall agree on the audit scope before the certification audit begins. The scope of the audit shall cover the required level of certification (refer to module 2), the food sector categories, and the products listed under the scope of certification for a site. The audit scope shall cover all processes under the control of the supplier including from raw material receipt to shipment of finished product.

3.8 Audit Duration

The audit times will vary according to the size and complexity of the site operations. Guidance on how the audit durations are calculated is documented in the SQF scheme documentation.

3.9 Audit Report

At the conclusion of the audit, the audit team will prepare a written report on the audit findings and the audit team leader will present these findings to your organization's senior management at the exit meeting.

The certification body shall make the audit report available to the supplier within ten (10) calendar days from the last day of the audit.

Non-conformities will be discussed with your team during the auditor's visit and outlined at the exit meeting. Non-Conformities are categorized as Critical, Major and Minor. Observations are may be raised at SQF assessments.

The SQF electronic audit report is completed by the client manager, and is available to the supplier on the Reliance database. BSI undertakes an extensive review process of audit reports and there may be occasions when the audit result rating is revised based upon discussions with the Compliance and Risk team.

The audit findings include a summary of the overall compliance of your system with the requirements of the relevant standard(s) or codes of practice. The final report will be subsequently provided after completion of the Audit.

If you are unclear regarding the meaning of anything in your report, please contact your BSI Client Manager or the Compliance and Risk team.

3.10 Non-conformities

It is your organization's responsibility to respond to the non-conformities detailed in your audit report by the designated time frame. Failure to do so may result in suspension or cancellation of your certification.

Close out of non-conformities is via the SQF Reliance database. Refer to www.sqfi.com for details. The client manager will review the information provided and will either approve and close out the non-conformance or request further information from your organisation until such time as the sufficient information has been received.

Definitions and close-out requirements for non-conformities are defined in the SQF Code, Edition 7.2, sections 2.10 & 3.2

3.11 Audit Score, Rating and Audit Frequency

Based on the evidence collected by the SQF auditor, each applicable aspect of the SQF facility audit is automatically scored when the audit report is uploaded to the Reliance database. Desk audits are not scored.

A single rating is calculated for the facility audit. The rating provides an indication of the overall condition of the supplier's site against the SQF Code, and also provides a guideline on the required level of surveillance by the certification body. This would be either 6-monthly or 12-monthly unless the supplier has failed the audit, in which case they must re-apply for another facility audit.

3.12 Granting Certification

Certification of SQF System shall be awarded to suppliers that achieve a "C" audit rating or greater with no outstanding non-conformities. The certification decision shall be made within forty-five (45) calendar days of the last day of the facility audit. Once SQF certification is granted, the SQFI issues a unique certification number which is specific to that supplier's site.

Within ten (10) calendar days of granting certification, the certification body shall provide an electronic and/or hard copy of the supplier's certificate of registration to the supplier. The certificate of registration is valid for twelve (12) months from the date the certification decision was taken.

3.13 Maintaining Certification

To maintain SQF certification, a supplier is required to attain a "C" audit rating or greater at re-certification audits, ensure that surveillance and/or re-certification audits occur within the required timeframe, ensure that no critical non-conformities are raised at surveillance or re-certification audits, and that all major and minor non-conformities are corrected within the time frame specified.

3.14 Unannounced Re-Certification Audit

Within three (3) certification cycles the certification body shall conduct one (1) unannounced re-certification audit of the supplier. The unannounced audit shall occur in the supplier's facility within the sixty (60) day re-certification window (i.e., the anniversary date of the initial certification audit +/- thirty (30) days). Currently certified SQF suppliers shall be required to undertake one (1) unannounced audit within the three (3) year certification cycle.

- i. The supplier's certification cycle begins with the initial certification audit date. Unannounced re-certification audits shall occur once in every three (3) certification cycles.
- ii. Unannounced audits shall not be conducted on the initial certification audit or on a surveillance audit.
- iii. If a supplier changes certification bodies, the supplier's unannounced re-certification audit schedule shall not change.
- iv. The unannounced re-certification audit shall follow the protocol under the SQF Code, Part A, section 4.3 and 4.4.
- v. Multi-site suppliers are exempted from unannounced audits.
- vi. The date of the unannounced audit shall be determined by the certification body within the 60 day re-certification audit window. The unannounced audit year shall be determined between the supplier and certification body.
- vii. A defined blackout period shall be established by negotiation between the supplier and their certification body that prevents the unannounced re-certification audit from occurring out of season or when the facility is not operating for legitimate business reasons.
- viii. Immediate suspension of the supplier certificate will occur in facilities that refuse entry to the auditor for an unannounced audit.

3.15 Surveillance Audits

The surveillance audit is conducted when the supplier attains a "C" rating at a certification audit or re-certification audit.

A new score and rating is issued at the surveillance audit however the re-certification audit date is not affected.

Major or minor non-conformities raised at the surveillance audit shall be closed out as indicated in section 3.2. of the SQF Code.

The supplier's certificate of registration shall be suspended by the certification body if:

- The supplier fails to permit the surveillance audit within the required timeframe;
- A critical non-conformity is raised at the surveillance audit, or
- The supplier fails to close out major or minor non-conformities within the agreed timeframe.

3.16 Auditor Rotation

SQF have a restriction in place that one auditor may conduct no more than three (3) consecutive audits at the same company. After three (3) audits, another auditor must be assigned to visit your premises. Following this, the original auditor may return for up to another three (3) consecutive audits

4 Implementation of SQF

4.1 Learn about the SQF Code

There are several ways to learn how to implement the SQF Code within your food business. The following options are available:

- Attend an "Implementing SQF Systems" training course through a licensed SQF Training Centre (recommended);
- Take the online "Implementing SQF Systems" training course available from www.sqfi.com;
- Train yourself by downloading the SQF Code from www.sqfi.com free of charge, and read how to apply it to your industry sector;
- and/or take the SQF online exam.

4.2 Select the Relevant SQF Modules

The supplier selects the relevant modules that apply to their industry sector by visiting the SQF website www.sqfi.com, select *The SQF Code*, and select the relevant industry sector(s). Note that *Module 2: SQF System Elements* applies to all industry sectors.

4.3 Register on the SQF Database

To be considered for SQF certification, suppliers are required to register on the SQF assessment database. The database can be found at www.sqfi.com.

Registration is annual, and there is a fee per supplier site payable at registration and renewal. The fee scale is dependent on the size of the site as determined by gross annual sales revenue. The fee scale is available on www.sqfi.com.

Suppliers must register with SQFI prior to achieving certification, and must remain registered at all times to retain their certification.

If the supplier fails to maintain registration, the supplier certificate will be invalid until the facility is properly registered in the assessment database.

4.4 Designate an SQF Practitioner

Whether or not an SQF consultant is used, the SQF Code requires that every supplier have a suitably qualified SQF practitioner on site to validate and verify the food safety fundamental

requirements, food safety plans (at level 2) and food quality plans (at level 3). The requirements for an SQF practitioner are described in 2.1.2.4 and 2.1.2.5 of the SQF Code. Some sites may choose to have more than one SQF practitioner to meet shift and operational requirements.

4.5 SQF Implementation Training

A two-day Implementing SQF Systems Training course is available through the SQFI network of licensed training centres. Employees who are responsible for designing, implementing and maintaining the requirements of the SQF Code are encouraged to participate in a training course. This training is not mandatory for SQF practitioners

4.6 Select the Certification Level

Level 1 Food Safety Fundamentals: An entry level for new and developing businesses covering only GAP/GMP/GDP requirements and basic food safety elements (module 2);

Level 2 Certified HACCP Based Food Safety Plans: Incorporates all Level 1 system requirements and additionally requires that a food safety risk analysis of the product and its associated processes has been completed to identify the hazards and the action taken to eliminate, prevent or reduce their occurrence. System elements in module 2 at level 2 are required;

Level 3 Comprehensive Food Safety and Quality Management System: Incorporates all Level 1 and Level 2 system elements and indicates that a food quality risk analysis of the product and its associated process has been completed, that the actions taken to prevent the incidence of poor quality have been implemented. System elements in module 2 at level 3 are required.

4.7 Document and Implement the SQF Code

To achieve SQF certification, the supplier must document and implement the relevant modules of the SQF Code, at the level required (refer to 1.7). This requires a two stage process:

Document the SQF System – prepare policies, procedures, work instructions and specifications that meet the relevant modules of the SQF Code. In other words “say what you do.”

Implement the SQF System – implement the prepared policies, procedures, work instructions and specifications, and keep records to demonstrate compliance to the relevant modules of the SQF Code. In other words, “do what you say”. SQFI recommends that a minimum of two months of records be available before a site audit is conducted.

5 Suspending Certification

The certification body shall suspend the SQF certificate of registration where the supplier receives an “F” rating, or where the supplier fails to take corrective action within the timeframe specified.

The certification body will request that the supplier provides to the certification body, within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension, a detailed corrective action plan outlining the corrective action to be taken. Upon receipt of the detailed corrective action plan, an on-site audit will be conducted within 30 calendar days of receiving the corrective action plan. If successful, the supplier status will be reinstated.

Within six (6) months following suspension, the certification body shall conduct a surveillance audit to verify the effective implementation of the corrective action plan and that the supplier SQF System is achieving stated objectives

6 Cancellation of Certificate

When an organization's certification is cancelled, the organization shall immediately:

- Cease any advertising and promotional activities that promote the fact that the organization holds certification
- Withdraw and cease to use any advertising and promotional material that promotes the fact that the organization holds certification
- Cease to use relevant certification marks in any way to promote the fact that the organization holds certification and
- Return all certificates and pay outstanding fees

7 Variations to Certification

Your organization is required to advise BSI if there are any significant changes to your organization or the product.

Variations to certification may originate from:

Variations to the scope of certified product

- Major nonconformities
- Voluntary withdrawals
- Withdrawal of certification by BSI Group
- Change of certification scope
- Change of ownership
- Change of management
- Change of company name
- Change of ABN etc

BSI will determine if the degree of change is significant to require an additional assessment or if the changes can be assessed at the next schedule audit or if the product requires re-assessment.

8 Use of the BSI Certification Mark

You are entitled to use the appropriate BSI 'kitemark' whilst you maintain certification to this program with BSI. For a copy, visit our website at www.bsigroup.com

Use of the logo is subject to Condition and rules of its application.

Certificates will be issued annually or when the organisational details require updating.

9 Use of the SQF Logo

The SQF logo is proprietary and use of the logo is subject to SQFI terms and conditions. Refer to Appendix 3: SQF Quality Shield and Logo Rules of Use at www.sqfi.com.

The permission for a supplier to use the SQF quality shield shall be:

- a) suspended if the supplier's certification is suspended; all use of the SQF quality shield in the manufacturing process must cease upon certificate suspension.
- b) withdrawn if the supplier's certification is withdrawn, relinquished or not renewed.

10 Confidentiality

BSI will treat all information in accordance with the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012

11 Additional Obligations

Following certification, there are a number of managerial responsibilities which your organization will need to observe to maintain BSI's certification. These include:

- Continued compliance with the relevant systems standard(s) or code(s) of practice;
- Compliance with the BSI Standard Commercial Terms and Conditions and obligations as specified in this document as well as other guidance documentation that may be specifically provided from time-to-time;
- Conduct of regular internal reviews of your system, with appropriate documentation of such reviews and of any subsequent corrective actions;
- Notification to BSI of any significant changes in the structure (key responsibilities and management system), ownership and operations of your organization to enable the impact of such changes on the certified ownership system to be evaluated; and
- Notification to BSI of any litigation or serious events or matters that relate to the scope of your certification within twenty-four (24) hours of the event.

11.1 Complaints

Your organization is required to keep a record of all known complaints. These records must be made available to the audit team and BSI when requested.

Your organization is required to demonstrate that you have taken appropriate action to address these complaints through investigation and correct any deficiencies found. These actions must be documented.

11.2 Certification Agreement

Your Organization is required to meet the requirements of the Certification Agreement. This requires that your organization and products remain compliant with the scheme requirements at and the conditions of certification at all times.

Your organization is required to implement appropriate changes as communicated by BSI in a time appropriate manner.

11.3 Assessment Scheduling

Your organization is required to make all necessary arrangements to allow the evaluation and surveillance activities to take place. This includes but is not limited to; Equipment, Product, Locations, Personnel and Sub-contractors.

11.4 Misleading Statements

Your organization is not permitted to use its product certification in a manner that could bring the BSI into disrepute. This includes making misleading or unauthorized statements. If you are unsure if a statement could be misleading you are advised to contact BSI prior to making the statement. Statements include but are not limited to the use of the logo on non-certified product, advertising (including your website) and internal communication.

If your organization is required to provide copies of their certification documents these must be reproduced in its entirety. Failure to do so may be misleading to the recipient as to the scope of certification.

11.5 Changes to Circumstances

Your organization is required to advise BSI of any changes without delay to circumstances that may affect certification. Examples of such changes include but are not limited to;

- Authorized Representative
- Business name (Legal entity) and Trading Name (where applicable), ABN
- Ownership
- Contact details

- Location, site addresses
- Business activity/ies, scope of certification (Products and Processes
- System Management Number of employees, covering all shifts and sites
- Billing Details

11.6 Observers

- From time to time BSI requires an Observer to be in attendance at an audit. This may be related to training of new staff and witness assessment of existing staff. It is a requirement of certification that your organization allows these activities to occur.
- Failure to allow this activity to occur may result in cancellation of your certification.
- BSI will, at all times, ensure that the use of observers is kept to a minimum and your organization will be advised prior to the assessment activity.
- The Observer does not take an active part in an assessment.

12 Complaints and Appeals

Appeals against certification decisions and / or complaints against service delivery levels may be raised with your Client Manager. If you remain dissatisfied, contact the BSI General Manager Compliance and Risk in writing.

All complaints will be investigated and the originator of a complaint will be advised of the outcomes, as appropriate.

BSI will also investigate legitimate documented complaints, relevant to operation of the system, from customers of certified organizations and the accreditation body. Certified organizations shall, at all reasonable times, provide representatives of BSI with access to its premises and records for the purposes of investigating such complaints.

If your organization's application for certification has been refused; or your certified organization's certification has been suspended, withdrawn, or reduced in scope, you may appeal against the decision to a Review Committee constituted and operated as set out below:

- The appellant shall, within 28 days of the disputed advice from BSI, lodge a notice of appeal with an affidavit as to the grounds of appeal with the BSI Group ANZ Pty Ltd's Managing Director in writing;
- The CEO or equivalent shall advise the BSI Group Regional APAC Executive within 14 days of receiving the appellant's notice
- The Executive shall then establish a Review Committee upon payment of the fees set by the Executive for consideration of the appeal

- The Review Committee shall consist of three persons considered as experts in the area of technology or business relevant to the appeal. The Review Committee shall be constituted as follows:
 - One person expert in the relevant area of technology or business appointed by the Board; and
 - Two persons selected by the appellant from a list of four persons nominated as eligible by the Board

The appellant shall represent himself and no legal representation will be allowed unless approved by the Review Committee; and

The Review Committee will carry out investigations as are required, including assessment of information supplied by the appellant and, within a reasonable time, decide by majority vote whether or not to reverse the original decision. The Managing Director or equivalent shall give notification of the decision to the appellant within 14 days of the Review Committee decision

To raise a complaint or appeal against the service delivery by BSI or audit outcome please notify;

Stephanie Vincent

GM Compliance and Risk (ANZ)

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Phone: 02 8877 7100