



## Global standard a new ingredient for growth

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**Kathy Ellem**

Quality Assurance and Food Safety Manager  
Farm Fresh Fine Foods

**Client solutions:**

- Investing in quality systems, training and data including a one-touch recall system database.
- Global Standard FSSC 22000 Certification
- Meet Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) requirements

**Client benefits:**

- New opportunities in the global supply chain
- One on one training or buddy system is used to update skill levels.
- A new onsite training room will also support the development of the growing
- Cost savings on staff and production time.

**Background:**

Farm Fresh Fine Foods holds a unique position in the Australian food chain – but to continue growing its export business it needed an international food safety standard. The family-owned business became BSI’s first customer in Australia to achieve FSSC 22000 in September 2013.

The Bundaberg, Queensland, based business has supplied vegetable ingredients to large food manufacturers since 1993, and has between 25 and 30 staff, including three onsite managers.

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"We develop innovative ingredients for a broad spectrum of clients in the marketplace," explains Kathy Ellem, Quality Assurance and Food Safety Manager. "Utilising a range of specifically developed processes, we are able to value add raw vegetables with a wide variety of other ingredients to create something new."

The company spends a lot of time in product development, and has close client relationships so it can meet their changing needs. "We make it easier for them to develop new products to meet market trends."

Kathy says there are no other food producers suppliers of ingredient components like this. As well as supplying some of Australia's leading food manufacturers, they also export to New Zealand, South-east Asia and Hong Kong.

"We're agile and quite diverse, and very flexible in what we can do here – most of our plant is mobile, so what we produce today can look very different to what we do tomorrow."

### Why Certification?

"We're continually targeting new customers, and although we've had ISO9001 and HACCP certification since the business first opened, there was a roadblock in getting some new clients – we needed one of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) standards," says Kathy.

She says they did a lot of research to determine which standard to pursue.

"FSSC 22000, which was developed by the Foundation for Food Safety Certification, was the most similar to our existing system. We've used BSI for about 10 years, and they were very helpful in advising us on the process and how long it would take to reach that target."

Kathy says Farm Fresh Fine Foods puts quality first, and having invested in quality management and strategic planning they wanted to be world-class and also measure that properly.

### Implementation

It took about four months to achieve the FSSC 22000 certification.

"Due to the robust systems we've created to suit our clients needs, the standard was highly adaptable to our processes," says Kathy. "The standard is more prescriptive, and we were about three-quarters of the way there already, so we just had to review everything to ensure we meet the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) requirements." She says the preliminary audit process was very useful as her BSI auditor could explain the elements that were missing, and she could make the required changes before the onsite audit.

Involving staff early on in the process was vital. "I think knowledge is key – when people know what is happening and what's expected of them, they're more willing to go along with you," says Kathy.

Farm Fresh Fine Foods has a matrix that is reviewed every six months to see where skill gaps may exist. A one on one training or buddy system is used to update skill levels. A new onsite training room will also support the development of the growing team.

It has also invested in a database to create a one-touch recall system for all information. "You can get all the information you need on the screen in front of you, in one touch."

### Benefits of working with BSI

Because FSSC 22000 is a global standard, it gives Farm Fresh Fine Foods a new competitive advantage, as both a marketing tool and a reassurance of food quality and safety. "We've made contact with suppliers who couldn't take our product before because of their export customer requirements, and there is definitely interest now," says Kathy.

She also expects cost savings, as fewer onsite client audits will be needed. "We should only need six to eight a year instead of twelve – that's a big saving on staff and production time."

The planning and preparation required to achieve this standard – and keep it going with built-in systems – has certainly been worth it. "We really thought a lot about whether this was the standard we wanted. We went with FSSC 22200 – and we're glad we did," Kathy concludes.



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