

BSI Certification Guidebook

BSI Standard Terms and Conditions Addendum
SQF (Safe Quality Food) Edition **8**

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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
5	November 2016	Mary Portelli	Stephanie Vincent	Page 15 Page 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
5	December 2017	Mary Portelli	Stephanie Vincent		5	Updated to Edition 8. Changes are highlighted in yellow

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 8 throughout the BSI Group. This document is considered an addendum to the BSI Standard Terms and Conditions and therefore are part of the contract with BSI.

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 an auditor will be appointed to look after your certification or assessment requirements. The auditor 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 auditor (or nominated representative) will contact your organization. Your auditor 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 auditor (or nominated representative) will seek to gain an appreciation of the structure of your organization and the activities being conducted. In particular the auditor 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 your organization's SQF System so that corrective action can occur before engaging BSI for a full certification audit. It can be conducted using internal resources, an SQF consultant, or an SQF auditor.

Once your organization has registered on the SQF assessment database you 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 for initial certification to verify that your organization's SQF System documentation meets the requirements of the SQF Code.

The desk audit is conducted by a registered SQF auditor.

The audit includes a review of the:

- The food safety plan and the associated Critical Control Point (CCP) determinations, validations and verifications are appropriately documented and endorsed by the SQF practitioner;
- The documented system is relevant to the scope of certification and the products processed there under.

Critical non-conformances can not be raised at a desk audit.

The desk audit is not scored.

When the supplier's re-application occurs within six (6) months of the last audit date a facility audit shall be scheduled but a desk audit is not required. If the re-application occurs after six (6) months from the last audit date, or with a new certification body, then a desk audit and facility audit are required.

An independent desk audit is not required as part of a re-certification audit. However an integrated desk and facility audit shall be conducted at each re-certification. The supplier's documentation shall be reviewed as necessary as part of the facility audit.

Stage 2:

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

If your operation is seasonal (a period in which the major activity is conducted over five consecutive months or less) the certification audit is required to be completed within thirty (30) days from the start of the season.

3.7 Identifying the Scope of the Audit

The audit scope will be agreed between your organization and BSI 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 your organization 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.

BSI can provide the audit report available to your organization within ten (10) calendar days from the last day of the audit. It is also available on the SQF Database after the certificate decision.

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 can not be raised at SQF assessments.

The SQF electronic audit report is completed by the auditor, and is available to your organization 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 auditor 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 Database. Refer to www.sqfi.com for details. The auditor will review the information provided and will either approve and close out the non-conformance or request further information from your organization 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 8, sections 2.11 & 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 your organizations' site against the SQF Code, and also provides a guideline on the required level of surveillance by BSI. This would be either 6 monthly or 12 monthly unless your organization has failed the audit, in which case your organization 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.

BSI will provide an electronic certificate to your organization within ten (10) calendar days of granting certification. 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, your organization 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

SQF requires unannounced audits to be included in the certification cycle. The way that these audits are conducted is outlined below;

- Within three (3) certification cycles BSI is required to conduct one (1) unannounced re-certification audit of your organization.
- The unannounced audit takes place in your facility within the sixty (60) day re-certification window (i.e., the anniversary date of the initial certification audit +/- thirty (30) days).
- Your organization is required to undertake one (1) unannounced audit within the three (3) year certification cycle.
- The certification cycle begins with the initial certification audit date. Unannounced re-certification audits shall occur once in every three (3) certification cycles.

- Unannounced audits cannot be conducted on the initial certification audit or when a surveillance audit is scheduled.
- If your organization changes certification bodies during the cycle, your organization's unannounced re-certification audit schedule does not change.
- The unannounced re-certification audit is outlined in more detail in SQF Code, Part A, section 4.7.

Multi-site suppliers are exempted from unannounced audits.

The date of the unannounced audit shall be determined by BSI within a 60 day re-certification audit window. The unannounced audit year is agreed with your organization and BSI.

Your organization can nominate a defined blackout period which is established by negotiation with BSI that prevents the unannounced re-certification audit from occurring out of season or when your facility is not operating for legitimate business reasons.

Immediate suspension of the organization's certificate will occur in facilities that refuse entry to the auditor for an unannounced audit (refer to section 11.7 of this guidebook for further details).

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.

Your organization's certificate of registration will be suspended by BSI if the organisation:

- Fails to permit the re-certification or surveillance audit
- Receives a 'F – fail to comply' rating
- fails to take corrective action within the timeframe specified for major non-conformities
- fails to permit an unannounced audit
- fails to take corrective action within the timeframe specified
- fails to maintain the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code for Manufacturing

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

Your organization 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 the **Quality Module** - *SQF System Elements* applies to **most Retail** industry sectors.

4.3 Register on the SQF Database

To be considered for SQF certification, your organization is 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.

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

If your organization fails to maintain registration, your 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 organization has 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

Entry level for new business and HACCP not required. This level is not GFSI benchmarked;

Level 2: Food Safety Codes

Incorporates HACCP-based Food Safety codes for Primary Production, Manufacturing, Storage and Distribution, Food Packaging and Retail

Level 3: Quality Code

Includes system elements specific to quality, which can be conducted with or without the food safety audit. The results will not affect the score of the food safety audit (It is not available with the Retail Code)

4.7 Document and Implement the SQF Code

To achieve SQF certification, your organization 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

BSI will suspend your organization’s SQF certificate of registration (refer to 3.15)

BSI will request that the your organization provides a detailed corrective action plan outlining the corrective action to be taken within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension,. Once the detailed corrective action plan has been recieved an on-site audit will be conducted within 30 calendar days.

If this audit is has a successful outcome your organization's certificate will be reinstated. If the audit outcome is not successful your organization's certification will be withdrawn (refer to 6).

Within six (6) months following suspension, BSI will conduct a surveillance audit to verify the effective implementation of the corrective action plan and that your organization's SQF System is achieving stated objectives.

Should an organization refuse entry to a BSI auditor for an unannounced audit BSI will immediately suspend the SQF certificate. Re-instatement of the SQF certificate is required to be an announced re-certification audit. The following year will be the un-announced audit year.

6 Withdrawing Certification

BSI will suspend shall withdraw the certificate when the site:

- Has been placed under suspension and fails to submit approved corrective action plans within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension
- Has falsified its records
- Fails to maintain the integrity of the SQF certificate
- Has an administrator, receiver, receiver and manager, official manager or provisional liquidator appointed over its assets or where an order is made or a resolution passed for the closure of the site (except for the purposes of amalgamation or reconstruction) or the site ceases to carry on business or becomes bankrupt, applies to take the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors or makes any arrangement or composition with its creditors.

When the site's certificate is withdrawn, BSI shall immediately amend the site's details on the SQFI Database to a "withdrawn" status indicating the reason for the withdrawal and the date of effect; and in writing:

- Inform the site that the SQF certificate has been withdrawn, the reason for such action and the date of effect
- Copy SQFI on the notice of withdrawal sent to the site
- Instruct the site to return the certificate within thirty (30) days of notification.

A site that has their certificate withdrawn will not be permitted to apply for certification for twelve (12) months from the date the certificate was withdrawn.

The withdrawn site will be posted on the SQFI website (sqfi.com) for twelve (12) months.

7 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

8 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.

9 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 organizational details require updating.

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

11 Confidentiality

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

12 Additional Obligations

Following certification, there are a number of managerial responsibilities which your organization will need to fulfil 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.

12.1 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.

12.2 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.

12.3 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.

12.4 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.

12.5 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

12.6 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.

12.7 SQFI website

It is an SQFI requirement for your organization's details to be displayed on the SQFI website.

13 Complaints and Appeals

Appeals against certification decisions and / or complaints against service delivery levels may be raised with your auditor. 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

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