

# Implementing GLOBALLY ACCEPTED

## Food Safety Management Systems



### WHAT IS GFSI?

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is an international consortium of retailer CEOs, representing more than 70 percent of retail food sales worldwide. They cooperate to determine which food safety audit systems meet their recommended guidance for excellence in food safety and quality management. Any GFSI audit system that has been benchmarked (approved) is generally accepted by global retailers.

### WHAT IS SQF?

SQF (Safe Quality Food) is a certification program that meets the requirements set by the Global Food Safety Initiative for food safety management systems. The SQF Program is a complete food safety and quality management certification system applicable at all levels of the food supply chain. SQF provides independent accredited certification to demonstrate compliance with international, regulatory and other specified standard(s). It enables food suppliers to give assurances that food has been produced, prepared and handled according to the highest standards and encourages trade.

While SQF is first and foremost a food safety program, the audit also covers product quality. Assuring consistent quality and meeting buyer specifications are important aspects of the buyer-supplier relationship. The SQF Program is owned by the Food Marketing Institute, the world's leading association representing the food retail and wholesale industry. SQF certification is supported by an increasing number of U.S. and international retailers and foodservice providers, many of whom are expressing a preference for SQF-certified suppliers because of its U.S. headquarters.

SQF is unique in that it offers first time certifications an opportunity to have their documents reviewed without having an impact on the final score of the first certification audit.

## WHAT BENEFITS DOES SQF OFFER SUPPLIERS?

- It can reduce the need for inconsistent, costly and multiple audits.
- It is accepted and endorsed by major U.S. and international retailers.
- It creates greater confidence and trust between buyers and sellers.
- It helps ensure compliance with regulatory and product traceability requirements such as those in the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- It is an internationally recognized standard endorsed by the Global Food Safety Initiative.
- It is suitable for all types of food suppliers operating in both domestic and global markets.
- It provides a comprehensive farm-to-retail food safety and quality assurance system.
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## HOW TO ACHIEVE CERTIFICATION

Certification is essential to your business. HCG recommends using a consultant to ensure your resources (time and money) lead confidently to a successful SQF audit. HCG understands the importance of simplicity and efficiency. We know what it takes to gain certification in a practical manner. Our experience of having assisted many companies through this process gives us the ability to provide tools and suggestions tailored to your company. We have a former SQF High-Risk Auditor on staff that can answer your questions and help ensure you stay on track. We are an SQF Training Center and provide licensed SQF Training. The typical steps to certification are as follows.

- Determine the level of certification to be achieved (generally requested by the customer).
- Hire a consultant or designate a staff member as an SQF practitioner or food safety system coordinator, who should attend a SQF Systems training course and HACCP course.
- Conduct a Gap Analysis or have one conducted for you to determine the status of your system.
- Select a licensed and accredited certification body to perform a certification audit.
- Develop, validate, verify and implement your system. Consider outside help for your preparatory internal reviews.
- Participate in the audit. For first-time applicants, there will be a document audit (often off-site) followed by an on-site certification audit.
- If the auditor recommends certification, it is valid for 12 months, and is issued after review by the Certification Body.
- If certification is not recommended, corrective action must be taken before requesting a second audit.
- Re-certification audits are conducted annually and within 30 days of the scheduled audit date. Audit frequency can be either annual or less depending on the audit score achieved.

**For more details, contact us and please refer to our SQF Training information.**

**HACCP Consulting Group, 4022 Nicholas Court, Fairfax, VA 22033  
Office: 703-385-1989/FAX 703-385-9175/Email: savager3@verizon.net**

**[www.haccpcg.com](http://www.haccpcg.com)**

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