

## Chapter 15

# Process of certification, accreditation, and benchmarking of FSMS standards

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### Certification

Certification, according to ISO/IEC 17000:2004, is "third party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons." According to The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Guidance Document Accreditation is a process by which an authoritative body gives formal recognition of the competence of a certification body to provide certification services against an international standard.

Certification process enable an organization to comply with the customer requirements/buyer specification. Certification ensure independent check of conformity and indicates an effective Food Safety Management System. Certification provides a competitive advantage for the firm, improve the firm's reputation and provides a worldwide recognition. The process of certification involves the following steps:

1. Request for registration
2. Document review
3. Pre-assessment
4. Registration audit
5. Corrective action
6. Registration decision
7. Certification, publicizing the registration
8. Maintenance of registration & Surveillance audit

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is a division of the Consumer Goods Forum and a collaboration of retailers, manufacturers and food service companies that has been working on harmonization of food safety standards. GFSI benchmarks the various food safety standards against a basic set of criteria. Standards meeting the criteria are recognized. Many large retailers and manufacturers are requesting their suppliers to register to a GFSI recognized scheme. One of the benchmarked standards is FSSC 22000.

Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000 is an ISO 22000 and PRP based certification scheme for food manufacturers. It includes both the requirements for a Food Safety Management System found in ISO 22000 and the requirements for Prerequisite Programs found in TS/ISO 22002-2. ISO and FSSC have the same food safety management system requirements. They differ in the way they define PRP requirements:

ISO 22000 requires that PRPs, appropriate to the organization and product, are implemented to control the likelihood of introducing hazards. The standard does not specify required PRPs and details of the PRPs, but asks the organization to consider and use appropriate information (statutory,

regulatory and customer requirements and more). FSSC 22000 has the above requirements, but includes the TS/ISO 22002-1 which gives specific requirements for PRPs that manufacturers must address.

The Foundation Food Safety System Certification 22000 (FSSC 22000) offers a complete certification Scheme for the auditing and certification of Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) or FSMS and Quality Management Systems (FSSC 22000-Quality). The Scheme uses international and independent standards such as ISO 22000, ISO 9001, ISO/TS 22003 and technical specifications for sector specific Pre-Requisite Programs (PRPs), such as ISO/TS 22002-1 for certification. These standards were developed through a wide and open consultation with a large number of international stakeholders. Besides these standards, the Scheme also contains additional requirements known as FSSC Additional Requirements.

Through meeting the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Benchmarking Requirements, the FSSC 22000 Scheme meets the highest standards globally leading to international food industry acceptance. The FSSC 22000 Scheme sets out the requirements for Certification Bodies, Accreditation Bodies and Training Organizations to develop and implement its operations for auditing and certification of food safety management systems of organizations within the entire food supply chain. The issued certificate confirms that the organizations food safety management system is in conformance with the Scheme requirements and that the organization is able to maintain compliance with these requirements. To get ISO 22000 or FSSC 22000 certification, the organization need to implement food safety management system processes to meet the requirements of the standard. The FSSC 22000 certification process involves the following steps:

The Scheme documents contain the requirements for organizations in the food and feed supply chain to gain certification. They shall be used by the applicant organization to assess, develop, implement and improve its food and feed safety management system prior to application for certification. The requirements of the food and feed safety management system also serve as the normative documents for certification of the organization. The normative documents shall be used to assess the continuous compliance of the food and feed safety management system of the applicant organization with the required performance.

FSSC 22000 certification have general rules for all categories, and specific rules for individual categories. The FSSC 22000 certification scheme outlines the requirements for the audit and certification of food safety management systems (FSMS) or FSMS and Quality Management Systems (QMS) of organizations in the food supply chain. The certificate confirms that the organization's FSMS (FSSC 22000) or FSMS and QMS (FSSC 22000-Quality) is in conformance with the Scheme requirements

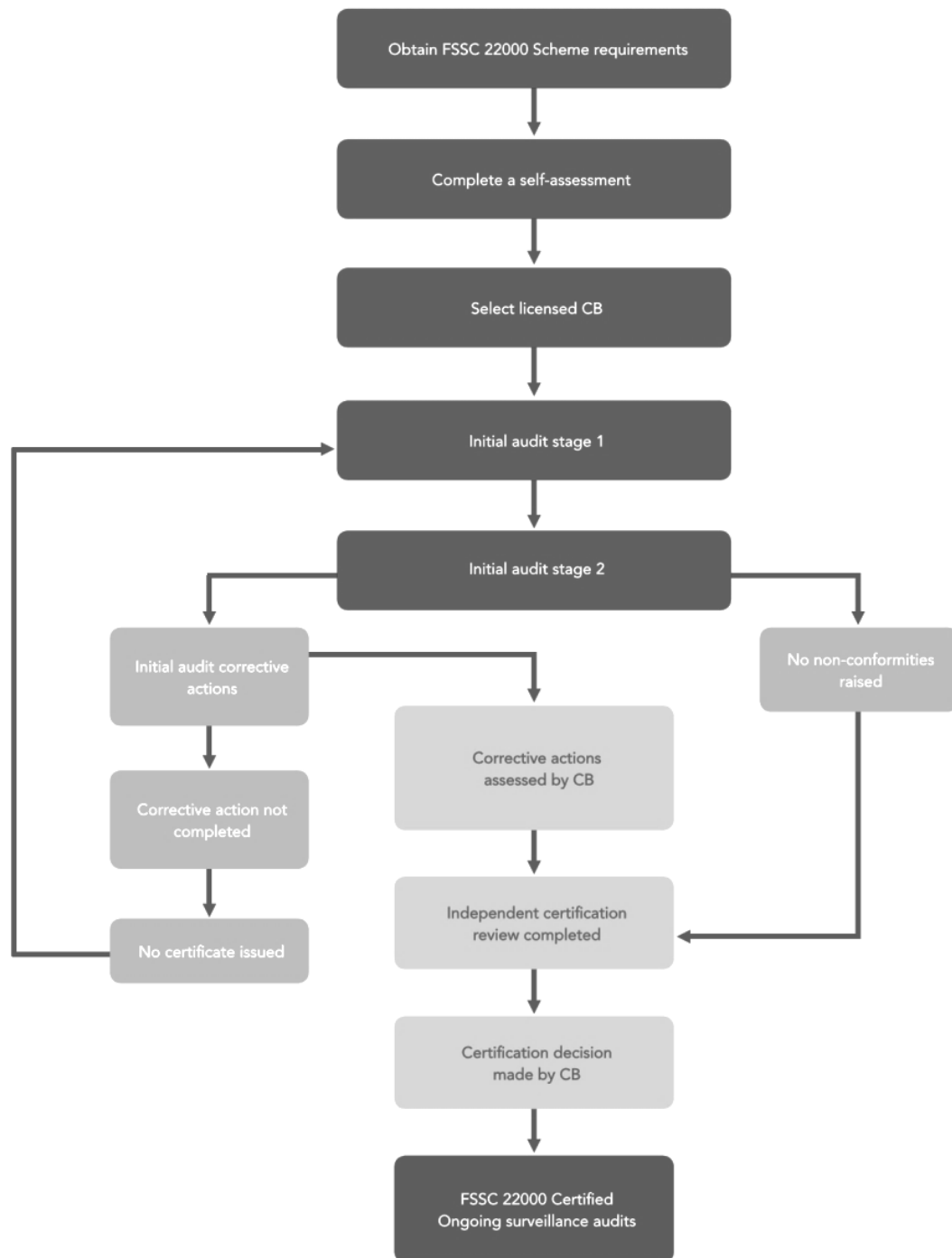


Fig1. Process flow for FSSC 22000 certification

- . The Scheme is based on the publicly available standards/technical specifications:
- ISO 22000 requirements for any organization in the food chain;
  - ISO 9001 requirements (where FSSC 22000-Quality is required);
  - Relevant prerequisite programs (PRPs) based on technical specifications for the sector (e.g. ISO/TS 22002-x; PAS xyz); and

- FSSC 22000 Additional Requirements as determined by our stakeholders.

The Scheme provides a voluntary certification model that can be applied across the entire food supply chain. It can cover supply chain sectors where specific prerequisite programs (PRPs) have been developed and accepted. The aim of the Scheme is to ensure that it continuously meets international food industry requirements resulting in a certification that assures that organizations provide safe food to its customers.

The specific Scheme objectives are to:

- a) establish and maintain an accurate and reliable Register of certified organizations that have demonstrated to comply with the Scheme requirements;
- b) promote the accurate application of food safety and quality management systems;
- c) promote national and international recognition and general acceptance of food safety and food safety quality management systems;
- d) provide information and campaigns on food safety and quality management systems;
- e) provide support for the certification of food safety management systems in the field of food safety and quality

*Nature of the scheme:*

The Scheme provides an independent ISO-based Scheme for third party auditing and certification. The Scheme:

- a) incorporates ISO standards, sector specific technical specifications for PRPs, market driven additional requirements as well as statutory and regulatory requirements;
- b) is recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative;
- c) allows the integration with other management system standards such as environmental, health and safety etc.;
- d) is governed by a non-profit Foundation and managed by an independent Board of Stakeholders;
- e) increases transparency throughout the food supply chain;
- f) offers a “FSSC 22000 Register of certified organizations” which is publicly accessible

The Scheme is intended for the audit, certification and registration of organizations for the various food chain (sub)categories such as farming animals for meat/milk/eggs/honey, farming of fish and seafood, processing of perishable animal products, processing of perishable plant products, processing of ambient stable products, production of feed etc.

## **Accreditation**

While, accreditation activities are conducted by Accreditation Bodies (ABs), which are not-for-profit organisations, either government owned or under agreement with government, charged with ensuring that participating Certification Bodies in the country are subject to oversight by an authoritative body. ABs may not be high profile in each country, but play a key role in the accredited certification process and ensuring international consistency in conformity assessment. GFSI recognises two ISO standards for accreditation purposes. One is ISO/IEC Guide 65, and the other ISO/IEC 17021, supplemented by ISO/TS 22003. Both of these standards contain similar operational requirements for a certification body. They both address issues of preventing conflict of interest, managing customer information, properly qualifying personnel, auditor calibration, and many other aspects involved with the certification process. Both ISO/IEC Guide 65 and ISO/IEC 17021/ISO22003, require the accreditation body to observe auditors in the field as well as conduct a detailed office review of policies,

procedures, and document control. It is only after the successful assessment of auditors and the certification body operations that accreditation can be granted.

ISO/IEC 17021 covers conformity assessment of ‘management systems’, and is applied in combination with ISO/TS 22003, which covers audit and certification of food safety management systems. ISO 17021/ISO 22003 is not product specific. While, ISO/IEC Guide 65, is concerned with verifying that particular products or services meet specified requirements. The Accredited Certification framework is a tried and tested process that applies credibility and robustness to third party food certification audits. The process is continually under review and revision by GFSI to ensure fitness and appropriateness to food safety certification and the GFSI objectives.

## **Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is the process by which companies look at ‘best practice’ in the industry and try to imitate such strategies and procedures. Benchmarking enables identification of the gap between current and optimal, or ‘best practice’ performance levels. The Benchmarking requirements are built through consensus of experts and members and based on internationally-recognised standards such as ISO and Codex Alimentarius. The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Benchmarking requirements were first created in 2001 by a group of retailers motivated by the necessity of harmonising food safety standards across the global supply chain. These requirements are frequently updated with input from food safety experts around the world to keep up to date with food safety trends. The main objectives are objectives:

1. Reduce food safety risks by delivering equivalence and convergence between effective Food Safety Management Systems.
2. Manage cost in the global food system by eliminating redundancy and improving operational efficiency.
3. Develop competencies and capability in food safety to create consistent and effective global food systems.
4. Provide a unique international stakeholder platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and networking.

Four popular GFSI benchmarked schemes available to food manufacturers viz. the BRC Global Standard for Food Safety, Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000, International Featured Standards (IFS) Food standard, and Safe Quality Foods (SQF) Food Safety Code for Manufacturing. Benchmarking document requires scheme owners to develop standards that contain a core set of FSMS programs based on current, global regulation/ guidance and industry best practices. Some of these programs include a food safety (HACCP) plan, good manufacturing practices (GMPs), food defence plan, food fraud vulnerability assessment, and supplier management program. Each scheme offers a unique structure, set of requirements, and protocol for assessing a manufacturing site’s food safety system to meet GFSI requirements. The BRC, IFS, and SQF schemes are product and process certification schemes, set forth specifications for the production of food products. FSSC 22000 is a management system certification scheme, sets forth requirements for implementing a system of policies and objectives that direct and manage food safety activities of the site.

FSSC 22000 includes the requirements of ISO 22000:2005 in addition to sector specific prerequisite programs (defined in ISO technical specifications) and nine additional requirements as stated in part II of the FSSC 22000 standard. ISO 22000:2005 is divided into five main sections covering (1) General requirements of FSMS, (2) Management responsibility, (3) Resource Management, (4)

Planning and realization of safe products (including HACCP), and (5) Validation, verification and improvement of the FSMS.

The GFSI Benchmarking requirements are always evolving. They are continually kept updated, adapting to changes in industry and government, reflecting best practices across the board from individuals to institutions. GFSI-recognised certification covers the entire Supply Chain – from Farm to Fork to ensure food safety.

*References:*

1. GFSI benchmarking requirements
2. Global Food Safety Initiative- Enhancing Food Safety Through Third Party Certification