



Criteria for SQF Consultants

2nd Edition
DECEMBER 2008

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Edition N°2 – December 2008

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REGISTRATION CRITERIA FOR SQF CONSULTANTS

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Disclaimer

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that the process for evaluating applicants for registration is effective, FMI does not accept liability for services provided by certified SQF Consultants that fail to meet the requirements of all clients of the services.

1 INTRODUCTION

The SQF (Safe Quality Food) Program, consisting of the **SQF 1000 Code** and the **SQF 2000 Code**, is a third party audited food safety and quality program implemented by Suppliers.

The development of the SQF Program has been a significant move towards the recognition of the importance of independent third party assurance of food safety and quality at all levels of the food supply. The Program focuses on the benefits to both industry and the consumer, whereby improved product quality enhances marketability and profitability.

The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) acquired the rights to the SQF Program in August 2003 and has established the SQF Institute (SQFI) Division to manage the Program.

The SQFI has established a Technical Advisory Council (TAC) to review and recommend changes to the SQF Program. This latest edition of the "Criteria for SQF Consultants" has been reviewed by the TAC to ensure it is in line with the requirements of the global food sector.

SQF Consultant Registration is conducted by SQFI. It is designed to enhance the integrity of the SQF Program by providing the food industry with a register of consultants who have the appropriate qualifications and work experience necessary for developing, validating and verifying SQF Systems.

1.1 Registration Category

The criterion described in this document is for

- SQF Consultant

1.2 Registration Level

- General Processes
- High Risk Processes

1.3 Overview of the Requirements for SQF Consultant Registration (Guidance Table)

| Education and Experience | General Processes | High Risk Processes |
|---|--|---|
| Formal qualifications | - | ✓ |
| On-the-Job training | ✓ | ✓ |
| Recognized HACCP Training | ✓ | ✓ |
| Recognized SQF Systems Training | ✓ | ✓ |
| Food Industry Work Experience | 2 years | 4 years |
| Food Safety Work Experience | 1 year | 2 years |
| Demonstrated experience in development of Pre-requisite programs | ✓ | ✓ |
| Demonstrated experience in developing, validating, verifying, maintaining or documenting HACCP, or other food safety control systems. | Involvement in the application of the HACCP Method in the food industry. | Involvement in the application of the HACCP Method for High Risk Processes. |

1.4 Definitions

For the purpose of these criteria the relevant definitions given in the "SQF Program - Vocabulary" document together with the following definitions apply:

Applicant(s) means SQF Consultant.

HACCP Training means training that meets the CODEX guidelines outlined in the "WHO (1996). Training aspects of the hazard analysis critical control point system (HACCP). Report of a Workshop on Training in HACCP with the participation of FAO, Geneva, 1–2 June 1995. Geneva, World Health Organization". And this training is:

1. HACCP training course used extensively in a country.
2. Administered and delivered by an institution recognized as a food safety training centre of excellence and issues a certificate of attendance to attendees.
3. Should be a minimum of three days (24 hrs) in duration.
4. Should be examinable.

SQF Consultant means a Person who is registered by SQFI to develop, validate, verify, implement and maintain SQF Systems on behalf of clients and in the Food Sector Categories appropriate to their scope of registration.

2 KEY COMPETENCIES FOR APPLICANTS

- a. The ability to identify and assess potential food safety hazards and quality defects at all links in the food supply chain including:
 - Biological hazards
 - Chemical hazards (including allergens)
 - Physical hazards
- b. The ability to assess the effectiveness of methodologies for controlling food safety hazards and quality defects identified in Clause (a.)
- c. An understanding of the current principles and practices of HACCP to the current edition of the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines or to the USA National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF) Guidelines.
- d. Experience and a sound technical knowledge of the product, commodity and the process under SQF study.
- e. Knowledge of relevant Pre-requisite programs, industry codes of practice, legal requirements, industry guidelines and standards.
- f. The ability to develop, document and maintain procedures for the control of food safety and quality risks in relation to regulatory and market requirements.
- g. The ability to identify food safety and quality objectives.
- h. Personal attributes and professional integrity necessary for the effective implementation of SQF Systems.

3 FOOD INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

To assist organizations in selecting Applicants with the specialized technical knowledge that relates to specific experience within the food industry sectors, Applicants will be registered and listed according their relevant experience. The Categories list is not exhaustive and is to be used as a guide. Examples are included in each industry group and a detailed list of Food Sector Categories is provided in the "SQF Program: Food Sector Categories" document. In those instances where an Applicant considers that the Food Sector Categories listed do not fit their requirements they should indicate this on the application and the SQFI will assess the request and create a new category if required.

4 REQUIREMENTS FOR REGISTRATION

The following educational, training, work and food safety experience requirements apply to all Applicants unless otherwise specified.

The training and work experience that needs to be demonstrated to gain registration as a SQF Consultant is detailed in "Overview of the Requirements for SQF Consultant Registration (Guidance Table) found at 1.3. Applicants should address each criterion with details of relevant compliance.

4.1 Education

Applicants must demonstrate that, through their qualifications and/or work experience, they have achieved a satisfactory level of knowledge and experience in a particular food industry sector. This knowledge and experience shall be described and substantiated in writing and shall cover the food safety hazards and quality defects and their control within a food industry sector.

Applicants working with High Risk Processes should have attained a bachelors degree in food science or a related discipline from a recognized tertiary institution and applicable to the food sector category under consideration as well as appropriate industry experience. Applicants who do not hold tertiary qualifications are eligible for registration in High Risk Processes provided they demonstrate they have the skill and knowledge required for the particular category. In addition appropriate qualification for specific processes (e.g. the completion of an Approved Schedule Process Course for determining the scheduled process of canned food) can apply for some food sector categories.

4.2 Training

Prior to applying for SQF registration Applicants shall have successfully completed the following training courses:

4.2.1 HACCP Training with certificate issued

All applicants must have successfully completed SQF Systems Training from a Registered SQF Training Center or SQFI Designee. This can be obtained by successfully completing either one of the following, including examination administered by the SQFI on-line examination and achieving the SQF certificate through the on-line examination service available through the SQFI web site, <http://www.sqfi.com>.

4.2.2 Implementing SQF Systems Training

4.2.3 SQF Systems Training – Auditing of SQF Systems

A list of training course providers is listed on the SQFI web site.

Note: The training required for registration does not alone address the needs required to demonstrate competence of particular food sector categories.

4.3 Food Industry Work Experience

Applicants shall have work experience in a technical, professional or supervisory position involving accountability and the exercise of judgment. (See "Overview of the Requirements for SQF Consultant Registration (Guidance Table) at 1.3 for the minimum time expected).

When an applicant wishes to obtain registration outside of their normal scope of operations (for example, a person with a meat processing background wishing to operate in the produce pack house industry), they must demonstrate they have upgraded their knowledge in this area through, for example completion of appropriate short courses. All Applicants are required to demonstrate operational experience with food hygiene and food safety based programs involving HACCP or other appropriate risk management systems. Alternatively, demonstrated experience involving equivalent practices that are deemed to provide experience relevant to the system being developed and the competencies described in this document for SQF Consultants may be considered. Provision is made for this to be described in Part D of the application form.

4.4 Management System Development using HACCP

All SQF Consultants shall maintain a HACCP Plan Development Log as a record of their HACCP experience. HACCP experience shall be verified (on the HACCP Plan Development Log) by the Applicant's employer, supervisor, HACCP team leader or the application sponsor. The purpose of this verification is to confirm the scope of registration and the satisfactory performance of the Applicant. The reference number(s) of the relevant food sector category(s) (as detailed in Clause 3) should be included for each activity under the heading 'Commodity Under HACCP Study' in the HACCP Plan Development Log.

HACCP experience may have been acquired at any time prior to application. Experience shall be with management systems within the food sector that have used HACCP, Pre-Requisite Programs, GMP, GAP, and ICM or a combination of these systems.

High Risk Processes: Applicants seeking to be registered to work with High Risk Processes must demonstrate experience and involvement of HACCP Plan development for High Risk Processes.

All Applicants are assessed on their individual experience and the assessment will include overall consideration of the Applicant's ability to meet the competencies described in Clause 3, their Food Industry Work Experience, completed HACCP Plans as well as any HACCP Plans that may be currently under development.

Note:

- 1 The work experience shall be appropriate to the Scope of Registration claimed and Submission of objective evidence for each category nominated is required under Part D of the application form.
- 2 It is preferred that evidence of HACCP Plan development is verified by a SQF Practitioner with experience in that food Sector category or by individuals with experience and authority on the HACCP Plan Development Log to attest to the Applicant's competence to implement HACCP plans.

5 APPLICATION PROCESS

The SQFI assesses the competencies of Applicants for SQF Consultant registration by evaluating education, training, work experience and food safety experience against the requirements specified in these criteria. Application forms are available from the SQF website, <http://www.sqfi.com>.

Applicants should ensure that their application includes evidence of all competencies detailed in the criteria, evidence of required training and other relevant educational qualifications and that all other information requested has been provided. Applications will only accepted in the format provided which is available from the SQF Institute, <http://www.sqfi.com>.

Completed applications will only be accepted typed and in the format provided as an MS Word or PDF file via e-mail. Supporting documents such as certificates should be scanned and saved in PDF format and sent with the application. Signature pages, including the signed Code of Conduct, can be either scanned and sent via email or faxed to SQFI. The application fee (non-refundable) must accompany the application.

Applications will not be processed unless all information required is provided.

5.1 HACCP Plans

Applicants may be required to provide examples of HACCP plans they have developed. This can be achieved by providing an outline of a HACCP plan (including details of the hazard analysis and the HACCP audit table) that has been implemented. Any information provided is treated as commercial in confidence.

5.2 Sponsors

Each application for initial registration shall be sponsored by two persons who have a food industry business relationship with the Applicant. Sponsors must have evidence and/or personal knowledge of the relevant information contained within the application that they have verified.

5.3 Personal Declaration

Each Applicant for initial registration is required to sign a declaration personally attesting they have complied with the SQF Consultant Code of Conduct ("Application Form for SQF Consultants" Part G) and that any complaints regarding their performance have been fully dealt with in a manner to prevent recurrence.

6 EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

On receipt of an application, the SQFI checks all information for accuracy, including documentary evidence of training and formal qualifications, and verifies on a sample basis the experience claimed by the Applicant to establish the validity of such claims.

Applications are evaluated by a SQFI Review Panel who, in considering registration level and scope, evaluate the applicant's qualifications, any food sector related training courses undertaken and the applicant's food sector work and HACCP Plan development experience. The Panel also reviews the feedback received on the performance of the applicant. Applicants with less than two-four years work experience should not be discouraged from applying for SQF Consultant registration as the **overriding consideration will be to establish the Applicant's competence to audit within the food sector categories nominated**.

The Panel may request additional supporting information from the Applicant or from other industry representatives as required. If the SQFI is unable to obtain satisfactory verification of information and experience from competent referees, an interview may be required. In addition Applicants wishing to be certified for High Risk Processes may be required to be interviewed by the Panel.

Interviews will be arranged with consideration being given to convenience for all parties, however, costs to attend an interview will be at the Applicant's own expense.

The Panel will decide whether to grant registration and the appropriate registration level and scope. The SQFI maintains a file on each Applicant, which will remain confidential. The file will include the original application documentation; check sheets, records of investigations, appeals and complaints, HACCP Plan Development Logs and re-registration documents.

6.1 Certificate of Registration and ID Card

Each successful Applicant receives a Certificate of Registration and ID card issued by the SQFI. Certificates and ID cards have an expiry date, which is the date that re-registration falls due. The terminology to be used by SQF Consultants in describing their registration on business cards, letterhead etc. is: "Registered SQF Consultant".

6.2 Publication of Registration

A register of SQF Consultants is displayed on the SQF Institute website, <http://www.sqfi.com>.

7 APPEALS

Written appeals against the outcome of an application for registration will be investigated by the Technical Director, SQFI and if necessary, impartially reviewed by the SQFI Review Panel. Decisions made by the Technical Director relating to any appeal are final.

8 COMPLAINTS AGAINST REGISTERED SQF CONSULTANTS

Complaints regarding an SQF Consultant's conduct will be acknowledged and investigated by the SQF Institute's Technical Director and, if necessary, forwarded to members of the SQFI Review Panel for consideration and a ruling. Substantiated evidence of misconduct may result in withdrawal of registration.

9 ADVANCEMENT TO ANOTHER CATEGORY

Advancement to another Food Sector Category (Clause 3) can be achieved at any time, provided suitable qualifications and / or experience for that category has been gained. To gain registration for an extra food sector category, Applicants will need to submit:

1. Supporting documentation demonstrating additional qualifications and/or experience that substantiate the Applicant's ability to work in the nominated additional category(s).
2. The appropriate Advancement Fee.

10 MAINTAINING REGISTRATION

Re-registration is required every year from the anniversary date of initial registration. Requirements for re- registration include submission of the following with the annual fee:

1. Evidence of HACCP Plan development, as detailed below.
2. Evidence of professional development, as detailed below.
3. Participation in SQFI Professional Update

10.1 HACCP Plan Development

Applicants are required to provide evidence of continuing involvement in the development and implementation of HACCP Plans. Each Registered SQF Consultant must maintain a HACCP Plan Development Log and submit it as supporting documentation for re- registration.

10.2 Professional Development

SQF Consultants also need to undertake at least 15 hours of continuing professional development annually, that is relevant to their food safety work and their personal needs for skills and knowledge. Professional Development information shall be provided on the Professional Development Record. The following activities are examples of professional development, if related to the food industry, which can be included:

- Formal short course participation;
- In-house course / workshop participation;
- Conference / seminar attendance;
- Professional Body / Association meeting attendance;
- Relevant committee and working group meeting attendance;
- Preparation and public presentation of papers;
- Preparation and publication of articles;

Note: In the selection of appropriate professional development, SQF Consultants need to consider their personal strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for personal improvement. These activities should target new or the improving of existing food safety and quality management methodologies. Consulting, training, development of programs, or other activities completed in the execution of work product are not considered professional development and should not be included.

10.3 SQFI 4 Hour Professional Update

All SQF credentialed professionals, including SQF Consultants, are required to participate in an annual 4 hour professional update delivered by SQFI. This update will be delivered via webinar for general participation or delivered directly to organizations upon request. The update will consist of SQFI updates, programs updates, standards updates and additional relevant SQFI related information.

11 CODE OF CONDUCT

All registered SQF Consultants have an obligation to maintain the integrity of the SQF Program by observing the following Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of their registration. The Code of Conduct is detailed in Part G of the "Application Form for SQF Consultants" and must be signed and faxed to SQFI.

11.1 Fundamental Principles

- 11.1.1 Act professionally, accurately, honestly and impartially and in an unbiased manner.
- 11.1.2 Not to act in any way that would prejudice the reputation of the SQF Program and to co-operate fully with an inquiry in the event of any alleged breach of the SQF Program.

11.2 Relations with the Public

- 11.2.1 Use their best endeavors to promote the worth of the SQF Program.
- 11.2.2 Act with professionalism and integrity when promoting their services.
- 11.2.3 Make it clear when dealing with the public, the capacity in which they are acting and on whose behalf (if any) they are acting.

11.3 Relations with their Employer Colleagues/Clients

- 11.3.1 Act in professional matters as a faithful operator to each employee/client.
- 11.3.2 Inform employees and clients of any business connections, interest or affiliations, which might influence judgment or impair the equitable character of its services.
- 11.3.3 Indicate to their employer or clients the adverse consequences to be expected if their professional judgment is overruled.

- 11.3.4 Not disclose information concerning the business affairs or technical process of any present or former client without the client's consent.
- 11.3.5 Not accept compensation from more than one party for the same service without the consent of all parties.

11.4 Relations with Peers

The SQF Consultant will assist those under their supervision to develop their professional skills.