

Introduction

The Safe Quality Food (SQF) Program is recognized by food retailers, foodservice providers, and buyers around the world as a rigorous, credible food safety management system. The program follows the requirements outlined by internationally recognized organizations such as the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). SQFI uses stakeholder feedback to develop programs that focus on food safety and quality along the supply chain. The SQF Code edition 9 was released in October 2020 with all audits starting on May 24th, 2021.

Purpose and Scope of the SQF Guidance Documents

The purpose of the SQF Guidance Document series is to assist sites with designing, developing, documenting, implementing, and maintaining an SQF Food Safety System using the SQF Food Safety or Quality Codes.

The guidance documents are topic-specific and provide direction on the intent of the Code requirements identified within the document. This encourages the user to look at the Code requirements as programs supporting a systems approach versus a checklist approach. Topic-focused guidance also allows SQF to be more flexible and timelier in developing new guidance for additional system elements or emerging issues.

Guidance is intended to support the SQF Codes but does not replace it. It is not an auditable document, nor is it definitive and applicable in every situation. Sites, consultants, trainers, and auditors are required to understand the risks in a given industry sector and are able to apply the intent of the SQF Codes to effectively control those risks.

How to Use the SQF Guidance Documents

The guidance is to be used a resource to better understand and interpret the SQF Code requirements.

The guides should be used an evolving tool with the user updating knowledge with additional learnings, industry guidance, and relevant information to a particular industry scope.

Examples how the guidance can be used:

- Interpretation guide
- Internal audit tool
- Enhance in-house training
- Supplement for external training

The following page explains the layout and design of the SQF Guidance Documents.

Format of the SQF Guidance Documents

The SQF guidance documents were designed to provide the key information to the food safety or quality program or topic.

Each guidance document is titled with the SQF Code topic and includes the date the guidance document was developed or revised. The following information is contained in each guidance document:

Definition

Typically, the definition will be from the SQF Code Glossary found in Appendix 2.

Applicable Code Requirements

Reference to the SQF Code requirements that are impacted by and affect the topic. The SQF Code requirements are inter-related, and this section identifies those Code requirements that are relevant to the topic.

Review Glossary Terms

The SQF Code Glossary found in Appendix 2 is a helpful resource in understanding the Code terminology. Additional glossary terms to look up will be cited in this section.

Implementation & Audit Guidance

This section will include the interpretive comments and include suggestions of what could be done by the site to document and implement this topic. This information is not considered exhaustive and may not apply in every situation. It is meant to provide guidance and interpretation.

RIO Road to Audits (Records, Interviews, and Observations)

Included in this section is a table that outlines the records, interviews and observations that would assist in preparing, implementing, and reviewing the SQF Code topic. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a working document by the user (e.g., site, auditor, consultant, trainer) as they move through their food safety journey.

Additional References

Links to books, websites, documents, templates, webinars, etc. are included in this section to provide additional resources on the topic. It is by no means an official or exhaustive list.