



# Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production

Edition 9



### **About SQFI**

SQFI is a division of FMI, established to administer the SQF Program, a leading, global food safety, and quality certification and management system. Our mission is to deliver consistent, globally-recognized food safety and quality certification programs based on sound scientific principles, applied across all industry sectors and valued by all stakeholders. [www.sqfi.com](http://www.sqfi.com)

### **About FMI**

As the food industry association, FMI works with and on behalf of the entire industry to advance a safer, healthier and more efficient consumer food supply chain. FMI brings together a wide range of members across the value chain – from retailers that sell to consumers, to producers that supply food and other products, as well as the wide variety of companies providing critical services – to amplify the collective work of the industry. [www.fmi.org](http://www.fmi.org)

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FMI

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For permission contact FMI at [www.fmi.org](http://www.fmi.org), or 2345 Crystal Drive, Suite 800, Arlington, VA, 22202, USA. Care should be taken to ensure current edition of the Code is used and that material be updated whenever the Code is amended or revised. The date of the Code should be clearly identified in materials.

First Printed May 1995.

*SQF Code, Edition 9* improvement suggestions are encouraged from all parties. Written comments should be sent to SQFI at 2345 Crystal Drive, Suite 800, Arlington, VA, 22202, USA.

# SQFI

## One World. One Standard.

Globalization has revolutionized the food supply chain. This globalization has brought many companies a whole world of opportunities but also more risks. Consumers and retailers are demanding the highest levels of safety, quality, and responsibility from companies. They expect companies to follow all the stringent industry and regulatory standards. The SQF (Safe Quality Food) Institute is your trusted partner to achieve universal recognition of the safety and quality of your products, services, and processes.

At SQFI, our goal is always food safety and quality – and we are dedicated to writing a rigorous standard and developing comprehensive training, cohesive guidance materials, and free educational resources to help you along the way. Success does not happen in a vacuum, and neither does food safety. Together, we can help to build a safer supply chain, one food producer at a time.

### **SQF Code Edition 9**

SQFI has updated the SQF Code from Edition 8.1 to Edition 9 to:

1. Consolidate requirements to create a simpler, more streamlined experience without a negative impact on standard integrity.
2. Meet updated GFSI requirements for implementation beyond 2020.

*SQF Edition 9* comes with several enhancements and improvements to the Code structure, methodology, and technical requirements. From dietary supplements to pet food, several primary and manufacturing industries now have dedicated Codes to provide a more specific set of requirements and risk assessment for each.

All enhancements made to the SQF Codes are to build a better overall audit experience that adds even more value to SQF certification.

### **The SQFI Commitment**

SQF certification assesses and assures the implementation of a site's food safety and quality plan and confirms the site has the necessary tools and training to manage food safety and quality.

A site's achievement of SQF food safety certification indicates a commitment to:

1. Produce safe, quality food.
2. Comply with the requirements of the SQF Code.
3. Comply with applicable food legislation.

By implementing an SQF Food Safety Management System, sites become equipped to address a buyer's food safety and quality requirements. The SQF Code provides a solution for businesses supplying local and global food markets. Products produced and manufactured via the SQF Code certification process retain a high degree of acceptance in global markets, benefiting both certified sites and their customers.

## **About the SQF Program**

The SQF Program was first developed in Australia in 1995 and has been owned and managed by FMI, The Food Industry Association, since 2003. In 2004, GFSI first recognized our standard as one that meets its benchmark requirements.

## **SQFI Vision**

To be the single most trusted source for global food safety and quality certification.

## **SQFI Mission**

Our mission is to deliver consistent, globally-recognized food safety and quality certification programs based on sound scientific principles, applied across all industry sectors and valued by all stakeholders.

## **Contact SQFI**

At SQFI, we incorporate retailer and stakeholder feedback to address the many global food safety, and quality issues society faces every day. We recognize pursuing a certification program for your business is a big commitment – regardless of your food safety and quality experience levels.

Visit [www.sqfi.com](http://www.sqfi.com) for the SQF certified site directory, SQF guidance, tip sheets and checklists, training opportunities, tools to find a certification body and to register in the SQFI assessment database.

The SQFI assessment database is an audit management and data capture solution developed to contain costs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of food safety audits. This innovative technology represents significant progress in how audit data is captured, managed and made available, and sets the SQF program apart from other similar GFSI programs.

Customer Service – [info@sqfi.com](mailto:info@sqfi.com) | 202-220-0635 | 1-877-277-2635

Database Assistance – [info@sqfi.com](mailto:info@sqfi.com)

Compliance – [compliance@sqfi.com](mailto:compliance@sqfi.com)

## **Disclaimers**

Certification of a site's SQF System by a Safe Quality Food Institute licensed certifying body does not guarantee a site's product safety or constant adherence to all food safety regulations.

This reference document is published in English and is available in several other languages. If the translated content differs, the original English version is to be referenced for final interpretation.

Feel free to use the Glossary included in the Appendix for further context and clarification of terminology used in this document.

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# *Part*

**A**

## Implementing and Maintaining the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production



# A1: Food Sector Categories in This Code

FOOD SECTOR CATEGORY		APPLICABLE GMP/GAP MODULES
 2	Indoor Growing and Harvesting of Fresh Produce and Sprouted Seed Crops	Module 18: GAP for Indoor Farming of Plant Products
 3	Growing and Production of Fresh Produce and Nuts	Module 7: GAP for Outdoor Farming of Plant Products
 4	Fresh Produce, Grain, and Nut Packhouse Operations	Module 10: GMP for Pre-processing of Plant Products
 5	Extensive Broad Acre Agricultural Operations	Module 8: GAP for Farming of Grains and Pulses

The Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI) publishes a suite of globally recognized food safety and quality codes that cover all aspects of the food supply chain from primary production through to retail and foodservice. All standards are available free of charge at [www.sqfi.com](http://www.sqfi.com).

Before embarking on the SQF journey, sites are encouraged to download and review the SQF code that best fits their needs.

## Food Safety Fundamentals

SQF Fundamentals for Primary Production – Basic	All Primary food sector categories (FSCs)
SQF Fundamentals for Primary Production – Intermediate	All Primary food sector categories (FSCs)
SQF Fundamentals for Manufacturing – Basic	All Manufacturing and Storage and Distribution food sector categories (FSCs)
SQF Fundamentals for Manufacturing – Intermediate	All Manufacturing and Storage and Distribution food sector categories (FSCs)

## HACCP-based Food Safety Codes

\*Denotes SQF Food Safety Codes that are GFSI benchmarked

Primary Production	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production*	FSC 1: Production, Capture, and Harvesting of Livestock and Game Animals, and Apiculture
The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production*	FSC 2: Indoor Growing and Harvesting of Fresh Produce and Sprouted Seed Crops (NEW!) FSC 3: Growing and Production of Fresh Produce and Nuts FSC 4: Fresh Produce, Grain, and Nut Packhouse Operations FSC 5: Extensive Broad Acre Agricultural Operations
The SQF Food Safety Code: Aquaculture	FSC 6: Intensive Farming of Seafood

**PART A:** Implementing and Maintaining the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production

Manufacturing	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing*	FSC 10: Dairy Food Processing FSC 11: Honey Processing FSC 12: Egg Processing FSC 13: Bakery and Snack Food Processing FSC 14: Fruit, Vegetable, and Nut Processing, and Fruit Juices FSC 15: Canning, UHT, and Aseptic Operations FSC 16: Ice, Drink, and Beverage Processing FSC 17: Confectionery Manufacturing FSC 18: Preserved Foods Manufacturing FSC 19: Food Ingredient Manufacturing FSC 20: Recipe Meals Manufacturing FSC 21: Oils, Fats, and the Manufacturing of Oil or Fat-based Spreads FSC 22: Processing of Cereal Grains FSC 25: Repackaging of Product Not Manufactured On-site FSC 33: Food Processing Aides Manufacturing
The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing*	FSC 7: Slaughtering, Boning, and Butchery FSC 8: Manufactured Meats and Poultry FSC 9: Seafood Processing
The SQF Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplements Manufacturing*	FSC 31: Dietary Supplements Manufacturing
The SQF Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing*	FSC 32: Pet Food Manufacturing
The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing*	FSC 34: Animal Feed Manufacturing
Food Packaging	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging*	FSC 27: Manufacture of Food Packaging
Storage and Distribution	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution*	FSC 26: Storage and Distribution
Retail	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Retail	FSC 24: Food Retailing
Foodservice	
The SQF Food Safety Code: Foodservice	FSC 23: Food Catering and Foodservice

**HACCP-based Food Quality**

Quality	
The SQF Quality Code	Applies to all GFSI-recognized and equivalent standards and other Food Safety Management Standards including HACCP certification and ISO 22000

## A2: Steps to Achieving SQF Certification (steps 1 – 10)

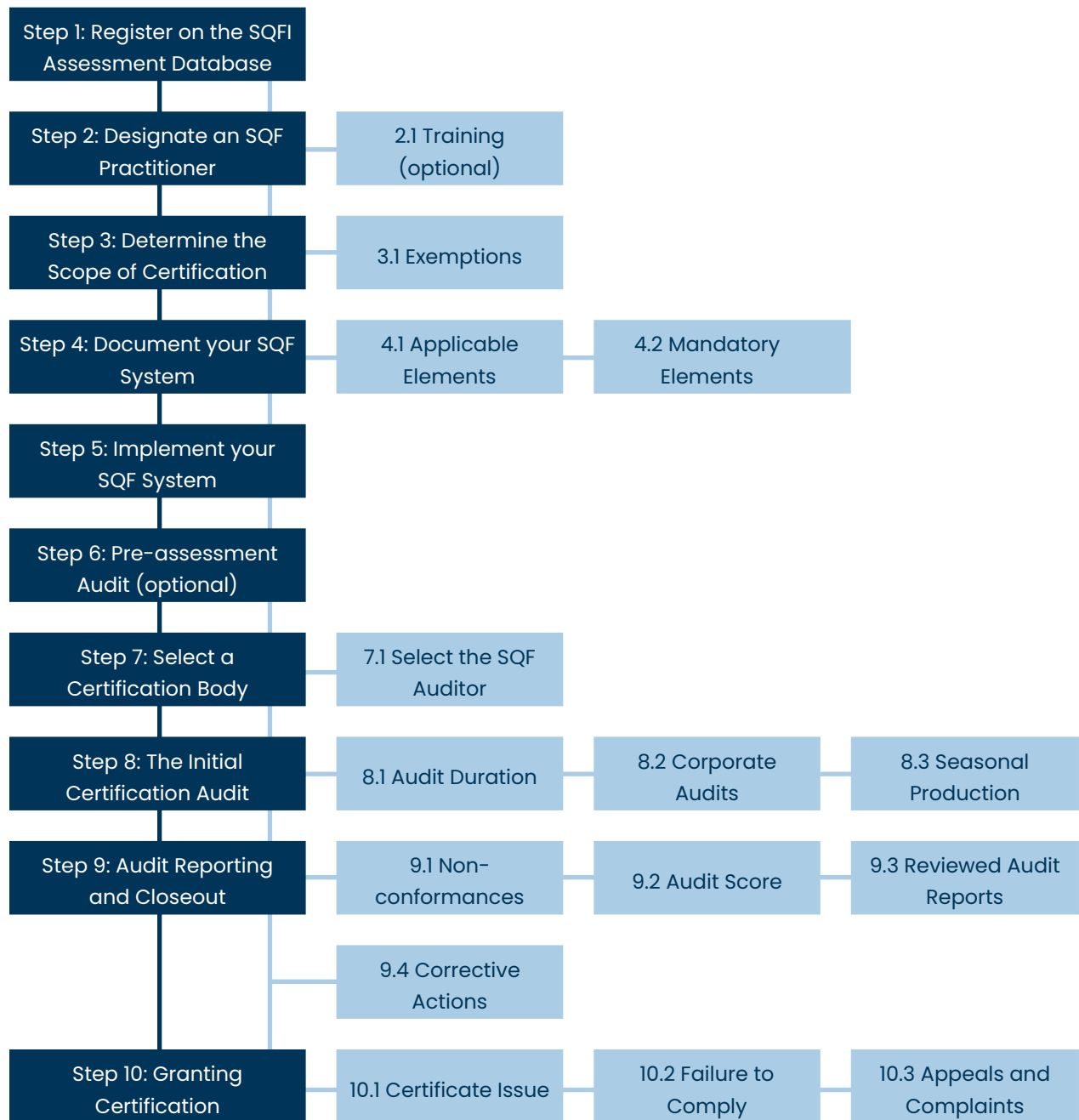
The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites involved in growing, harvesting, and packaging of plant products grown indoors and outdoors.

- Part A (this part) sets out the steps you need to take to implement and maintain certification to the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, and
- Part B is the auditable standard. It details the SQF system elements for primary plant production that must be met (module 2), and the relevant Good Agricultural/Operating Practices (GAP/ GOP) for growing, harvesting, and packaging of plant products (modules 7, 8, 10, or 18).

If you are in a site management or technical role and are responsible for implementing the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, you can learn how to get started and implement your SQF System in several ways.

- SQFI has an online “Implementing SQF Systems” training course, which can be accessed from [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com). It is a web-based education tool where you can enroll and complete SQF Systems training in your own time and at your own pace.
- An “Implementing SQF Systems” training course is available through the SQFI network of licensed training centers. Details about the training centers and the countries in which they operate are available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com).
- Although training is recommended, you can train yourself by downloading the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production from [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com) free of charge and applying it to your industry sector, site, and processes.
- Your management may choose to utilize the services of a registered SQF consultant. All SQF consultants are registered by SQFI to work in specific food sector categories (FSCs) and are issued with an identification card indicating the FSCs in which they are registered. The criteria outlining the requirements necessary to qualify as an SQF consultant and the application forms are available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com). The SQF Consultant Code of Conduct outlines the practices expected of SQF consultants.
- Guidance documents are available for some SQF Codes and FSCs from [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com). These documents can help you interpret the requirements of the SQF Codes and assist with documenting and implementing an SQF System. The documents are developed with the assistance of food sector technical experts. The guidance documents are available to assist you but are not auditable documents. Where there is a divergence between the guidance document and the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, the SQF Code prevails.

The steps in achieving SQF certification are as follows:



## **Step 1: Register on the SQFI Assessment Database**

To be considered for SQF certification, you are required to register your site on the SQFI assessment database. The database can be accessed at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com).

There is a fee for each site, payable at registration and annual renewal. The fee scale is dependent on the size of the site, as determined by gross annual sales revenue and by industry sector. The fee scale is available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com).

You need to register your site with SQFI prior to the start of the initial certification audit and remain registered at all times to retain your site certification. If you do not maintain registration, the site certificate will be invalid until the site is properly registered on the SQFI assessment database.

## **Step 2: Designate an SQF Practitioner**

The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production requires that every certified site has a suitably qualified SQF practitioner to oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of the SQF System, including the system elements, Good Agricultural/Operating Practices (GAP/GOP's), and food safety plans. The requirements for an SQF practitioner are described in the system elements, Part B: 2.1.1.4 and 2.1.1.5.

You may choose to have more than one SQF practitioner to meet shift and operational requirements.

An alternative staff member should also be identified to manage the SQF System in the absence of the designated SQF practitioner.

## **2.1 Training (optional)**

An "Implementing SQF Systems" training course is available online and through the SQFI network of licensed training centers. SQF practitioners, who are responsible for designing, implementing, and maintaining the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are encouraged to participate in a training course. The "Implementing SQF Systems" training course is not mandatory for SQF practitioners but is strongly recommended.

Details of the training courses are available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com)

SQF practitioners are required to successfully complete HACCP training that is provided by a recognized training institution and assessed.

Training in other food industry disciplines, HACCP for Primary Production, (GAP/GOP), and Internal Auditing may also be beneficial and licensed SQF training centers can provide details of the other training courses they provide.

### Step 3: Determine the Scope of Certification

Before implementing the SQF Code, you must decide the scope of certification – in other words, the food sector categories, products, and processes to be included in your SQF System.

The scope of certification determines which elements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are to be documented and implemented and will be audited by the certification body. The scope needs to be agreed between your site and the certification body before the initial certification audit and cannot be changed during or immediately following a certification or re-certification audit.

The scope of certification specifies:

- **The site.** SQF certification is site specific. The entire site, including all premises, support buildings, silos, tanks, loading and unloading bays, and external grounds are identified and included in the scope of certification.

If 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.

- **Food sector categories (FSCs).** SQFI has a list of food sector categories to classify product groups and ensure that the auditor who audits your site has the requisite knowledge and skills. The SQF food sector categories, or FSCs, are aligned with GFSI industry sectors. A full list of food sector categories for all SQF Food Safety Codes is provided in Appendix 1. The FSCs that apply to the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are:

- FSC 2: Indoor Growing and Harvesting of Fresh Produce and Sprouted Seed Crops
- FSC 3: Growing and Production of Fresh Produce and Nuts
- FSC 4: Fresh Produce, Grain, and Nut Packhouse Operations
- FSC 5: Extensive Broad Acre Agricultural Operations

- **The products.** SQF certification is product specific. Within each applicable food sector category, you need to identify the products (e.g., apples, spinach, peas, mushrooms) that are included in your SQF System. The production of all listed products will be audited for compliance to SQF and will be listed on the certificate if compliant unless you request an exemption (refer to Part A 3.1).

For requirements on changing the scope of certification, refer to Part A, 15.2.

## 3.1 Exemptions

If you wish to exempt any products processed or handled on-site or part of the premises, the request for exemption needs to be submitted to the certification body in writing prior to the certification audit, detailing the reason for exemption.

If approved by the certification body, exemptions are listed in the site description in the SQFI assessment database and in audit reports. However, all parts of the premises and process that are involved with the growing, harvesting, storage, and packaging of products included in the scope cannot be exempted.

Exempted products and parts of the site cannot be promoted as being covered by the certification. Instances where the promotion of exempted products, equipment, or areas of the site are identified and substantiated (either through the regular audit or by other means) will result in the immediate withdrawal of the SQF certification.

You need to demonstrate that exempted parts of the site, processes, or products do not put certificated products at food safety risk.

## **Step 4: Document Your SQF System**

To achieve SQF food safety certification, you need to document and implement the system elements (module 2) and the relevant GAP/GOP requirements (module 7, 8, 10, or 18) of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production. This is a two-stage process:

First, you need to prepare the policies, procedures, work instructions, and specifications that meet the system elements and GAP/GOP modules of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production. In other words, “Say what you do.”

### **4.1 Applicable Elements**

The auditable requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are described in the following hierarchy:

- Module, Module 2 (system elements) and Module 7, 8, 10, or 18 (GAP/GOP requirements)
- Section, e.g., 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 etc.
- Clause, e.g., 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, etc.
- Element, e.g., 2.1.1.1, 2.1.1.2, 2.1.1.3, etc.

The applicable elements are the elements of the relevant SQF Food Safety Code that must be documented and implemented to assure the safety of products within the scope of certification. Not all elements are applicable. There may be some sections or clauses that do not apply to your site.

All applicable system elements and GAP/GOP requirements are assessed during the certification audit.

Where an element is not applicable and this can be appropriately justified, it is stated as “not applicable” or “N/A” by the SQF food safety auditor in the audit report.

## 4.2 Mandatory Clauses

Mandatory clauses are requirements within module 2 (system elements) that must be documented, implemented, and audited for a site to achieve SQF certification; system elements that cannot be exempted during a certification or re-certification audit.

Mandatory elements cannot be reported as “not applicable” or “exempt” and must be audited and compliance/non-compliance reported.

Mandatory elements are designated with “Mandatory” in the system elements in the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production. They are:

2.1.1	Management Responsibility	2.5.1	Validation and Effectiveness
2.1.2	Management Review	2.5.2	Verification Activities
2.1.3	Complaint Management	2.5.3	Corrective and Preventative Action
2.2.1	Food Safety Management System	2.5.4	Internal Audits and Inspections
2.2.2	Document Control	2.6.1	Product Identification
2.2.3	Records	2.6.2	Product Withdrawal and Recall
2.3.3	Approved Supplier/Input Purchasing Program	2.7.1	Food Defense Plan
2.4.1	Food Legislation	2.7.2	Food Fraud
2.4.2	Good Agricultural/Operating Practices	2.8.1	Allergen Management
2.4.3	Food Safety Plan	2.9.2	Training Program
2.4.7	Product Release		

### Step 5: Implement Your SQF System

Once you are satisfied that the policies, procedures, work instructions, and specifications are in place to meet the SQF requirements, you need to make sure that all documents are being followed and records are being kept demonstrating compliance to the relevant modules of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production.

In other words, “Do what you say.” SQFI recommends that a minimum of ninety (90) days of records is available before a site audit is conducted.

### Step 6: Pre-assessment Audit (optional)

A pre-assessment audit is not mandatory but is suggested as a way to provide a “health check” of the site’s implemented SQF Food Safety System. A pre-assessment audit may include an on-site or off-site review of your documentation and can assist in identifying gaps in your site’s SQF Food Safety System so that corrective action can occur before engaging the selected certification body for a full certification audit.

The pre-assessment audit can be conducted using a variety of means, such as internal resources, a registered SQF consultant, or a registered SQF food safety auditor.



## **Step 7: Select a Certification Body**

Certification bodies are licensed by SQFI to conduct SQF audits and issue SQF certificates. SQFI-licensed certification bodies are accredited to the international standard ISO/IEC 17065:2012 (or subsequent versions as applicable) and are subject to annual assessments of their certification activities by SQFI-licensed accreditation bodies.

Your site needs to have an agreement with a certification body in place at all times, which outlines the agreed SQF certification services to be provided. At a minimum, these include:

- The scope of certification (refer to step 3) including any approved exemptions;
- The expected audit duration and the reporting requirements;
- The certification body's fees structure, including audit costs, travel time and expenses, report writing, ancillary costs, and costs for closeout of non-conformances;
- The conditions under which the SQF certificate is issued, withdrawn, or suspended;
- The certification body's appeals and complaints process, and
- The availability of auditor(s) for the site's FSC(s).

A list of licensed certification bodies that operate in your region or country is available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com). Certification bodies are also listed in the SQFI assessment database, and you can request a quote or select a certification body online once you have registered (refer to Part A, step 1).

Note that if you are seeking to implement an SQF multi-site program, you need to indicate this in your application to the certification body. The agreed multi-site program, including the identification of the central site and number and names of the sub-sites, needs to be included in the agreement with the certification body. Refer to Appendix 4 for the requirements for multi-site certification.

### **7.1 Select the SQF Auditor**

The SQF food safety auditor is selected by the certification body. The auditor is required to be employed by or contracted to the certification body and registered with SQFI for the same food sector category(ies) as the site's scope of certification (refer to Part A, step 3). In the event the SQF auditor does not have the required food sector category(ies), a technical expert may be used to assist the registered SQF food safety auditor (refer to Part A, 15.7).

The certification body is required to ensure that no SQF food safety auditor conducts audits of the same site for more than three (3) consecutive certification cycles.

The certification body has to advise you of the name of the SQF food safety auditor at the time that the SQF audit is scheduled (except for unannounced audits). You can check the registration and food sector category(ies) of the SQF food safety auditor at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com).

An SQF food safety auditor cannot audit a site where he/she has participated in a consulting role or has a conflict of interest with anyone at the site within the last two (2) years. You can refuse the service of an SQF food safety auditor if you think the auditor has a conflict of interest, or for other reasons. In such circumstances, you need to outline the reasons in writing to the certification body.

## **Step 8: The Initial Certification Audit**

An SQF audit of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production is an assessment by a qualified and registered SQF food safety auditor (or audit team) to ensure that your documentation (refer to step 4) complies with the SQF Code and that your food safety, hygiene, and management activities are carried out according with your documented policies, procedures, and specifications. A full definition of the SQF audit is in Appendix 2: Glossary.

Once the audit scope (refer to step 3) is agreed with your certification body, it cannot be changed after the audit has started.

The initial certification audit is conducted by the SQF food safety auditor(s) appointed by the certification body. Part of the audit may be conducted remotely using information and communication technology (ICT), but at least half of the allocated audit duration must be on-site. Remote activities can only be conducted by agreement between you and your certification body and are dependent on your ICT capability and information security requirements.

The off-site and on-site parts are conducted at a time agreed between you and the certification body, and the on-site component only when the main processes are operating.

Activities that may be conducted during the remote part of the audit process include:

- Review of qualifications of the SQF practitioner(s) and the food safety (HACCP) team;
- Review of policies, procedures, food safety plans, work instructions, and registers/listings;
- Interviews with key personnel;
- Food safety plans, HACCP programs, and food safety management personnel;
- Review of internal audits, corrective actions, complaints, recalls;
- Traceability and mock recall exercise; and
- Threat and vulnerability assessments for food defense and food fraud programs.

On-site activities may include the following, as appropriate:

- Follow-up on disputed documents and records from the remote activities;
- Follow-up on interviews and observation of work procedures;
- The implementation of the food safety plan(s) and Good Agricultural/Operational Practices; and
- Verification that the food safety management system, including HACCP, addresses all products, processes, and facilities included within the certification scope.

Remote activities do not apply to unannounced audits (refer to 11.4).

## 8.1 Audit Duration

The audit duration is the expected total time that is required for the SQF auditor to complete the assessment of the SQF System. It may or may not include the time necessary for report writing. You should confirm with your certification body the fees for the audit, including report writing time.

The duration for a certification or re-certification audit is no less than a half (1/2) day, including both remote and on-site activities (refer to step 8).

The audit duration is calculated by the certification body based on the size of the facility, the number of employees, the complexity of your processes, and the food safety risk. The certification body will discuss and agree on the audit duration with you to ensure complete coverage of your SQF System.

Factors that can impact on the audit duration include:

- The scope of the audit and/or certification;
- The size of the site, including acreage and/or size or packing operation;
- The number and complexity of commodities, crops, packing lines;
- The complexity of the SQF System design and documentation;
- The level of mechanization and labor intensiveness;
- The ease of communication with company personnel (consider different languages spoken)

The certification body is required to document the justification for the audit duration in their agreement with you.

## 8.2 Corporate Audits

If your site is part of a larger corporation and some food safety functions are conducted at a corporate head office (i.e., an office that does not process or handle products), an optional corporate audit of the Code elements managed by that office can be conducted by the certification body. This part of the assessment may also be conducted remotely using ICT.

The decision on whether a separate corporate audit should be conducted is made by agreement between the certification body and the corporation and communicated by the corporate office to SQF-certified sites managed by the corporate office.

When a corporate audit is conducted, the audit evidence shall be reviewed and all identified corporate non-conformances must be closed out before the site audits are conducted. Any open non-conformances, which are not closed out, are attributed to the site or sites.

The SQF food safety auditor audits the application of the corporate functions relative to the site's scope of certification during the audit of each site managed by the corporate office. All mandatory and applicable elements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are audited at each site regardless of the findings of the corporate audit.

Corporate head office audits do not apply to designated central sites within an SQF multi-site program. (refer to Appendix 4.)

## 8.3 Seasonal Production

If your site is involved in seasonal production (i.e., a period in which the major harvest activity is conducted over not more than five consecutive months), your initial certification audit will need to be conducted during the peak operational part of the season, i.e., when you are harvesting or packaging your largest (major) crop.

If you are seeking to include products from more than one season or commodity within your scope of certification, you need to agree with the certification body to conduct the initial certification audit during the highest risk and/or highest volume crop activities.

Documentation and records for other seasonal production are reviewed as part of the certification audit. Re-certification audits in subsequent years should be scheduled during other crop harvesting or packing times so that all crops or commodities within the scope of certification have been audited within at least three years.

### Step 9: Audit Reporting and Closeout

The SQF food safety auditor(s) review your documentation and the effective implementation of your documented policies, procedures, and specifications. The auditor(s) collect evidence of compliance or non-compliance against all mandatory and applicable elements of the SQF Code by means of review of documentation and records, interviews with key staff, and observation of growing, harvesting, and packing activities.

The on-site activities include the entire site, including representative fields/plots of production/harvesting, the inside and outside of storage and operational buildings, regardless of the scope of certification and agreed exemptions.

When remote audit activities are used, SQFI expects that the auditor spends 80% of on-site audit time making observations and conducting interviews.

## 9.1 Non-conformances

Where the SQF food safety auditor(s) find deviations from the requirements of relevant modules of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, the SQF food safety auditor(s) advises you of the number, description, and extent of the non-conformances. Non-conformances are also referred to as non-conformities.

Non-conformances against the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are graded as follows:

- A minor non-conformance is evidence of a random or infrequent failure to maintain compliance with a requirement, but does not indicate a breakdown in the food safety management system or that food safety is compromised. It is evidence of an incomplete or inappropriate implementation of SQF requirements, which, if not corrected, could lead to system element breakdown.
- A major non-conformance is a failure of a system element, a systemic breakdown in the food safety management system, a serious deviation from the requirements, and/or absence of evidence demonstrating compliance to an applicable system element or Good Agricultural/

Operating Practices. It is evidence of a food safety risk to products included in the scope of certification.

- A critical non-conformance is a breakdown of control(s) at a critical control point, a prerequisite program, or other process steps and judged likely to cause a significant public health risk and/or product is contamination.

A critical non-conformance is also raised if the certification body deems that there is systemic falsification of records relating to food safety controls and the SQF System.

If the SQF food safety auditor considers that a critical non-conformance exists during a certification audit, the SQF food safety auditor is required to immediately advise you and notify the certification body.

A critical non-conformance raised at an initial certification audit results in an automatic failure of the audit, and your site is required to re-apply for certification (refer to 10.2).

## 9.2 Audit Score

Based on the evidence collected by the SQF food safety auditor, each applicable clause of the SQF certification food safety audit is automatically scored in the audit report.

The score is based on the following factors:

0 - aspect meets the criteria

1 - aspect does not meet the criteria due to minor variations (minor non-conformance)

5 - aspect does not meet the criteria (major non-conformance)

50 - aspect does not meet the criteria (critical non-conformance)

A single rating is calculated for your site audit as  $(100 - N)$  where N is the sum of the individual rating criteria allocated. The rating provides an indication of the overall condition of your site against the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production and provides a guideline on the required level of surveillance by the certification body. The audit frequency at each rating level is indicated as follows:

Score	Rating	Certification <sup>1</sup>	Audit Frequency
96 - 100	E - Excellent	Certificate issued	12 monthly re-certification audit
86 - 95	G - Good	Certificate issued	12 monthly re-certification audit
70 - 85	C - Complies	Certificate issued	6 monthly surveillance audit
0 - 69	F - Fails to comply	No certificate issued	Considered to have failed the SQF audit

## 9.3 Reviewed Audit Report

SQFI provides the certification body with the electronic audit checklist to be used by SQF food safety auditors when conducting your SQF food safety audit. It is available on the SQFI assessment database and is customized by the SQF industry sector. The checklist used for your audit is specific to your site.

The SQF checklist is designed to ensure the uniform application of SQF food safety audit requirements. It is used by SQF food safety auditors to record their findings and determine the extent to which your site operations comply with SQF requirements.

The audit report is in draft form, and the audit evidence is only recommended until technically reviewed and approved by the authorized certification manager of the certification body.

SQFI requires that:

- The food safety auditor must report (compliant/non-compliant) on all mandatory elements (refer to 4.2) for the SQF food safety audit report to be submitted;
- Non-conformances (refer to 9.1) identified during the site audit need to be accurately described in the SQF food safety audit report and include the element of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production and the reason for the non-conformance;
- The SQF food safety auditor is required to report all non-conformances to you before the close of the site audit;
- The draft audit report is completed by the SQFI food safety auditor and provided to the certification body for technical review; and
- The certification body reviews and approves the audit evidence record and makes it available to you within ten (10) calendar days from the last day of the audit.

## 9.4 Corrective Actions

You need to take appropriate corrective action for every non-conformance identified by the SQF food safety auditor. Corrective action is the action you take to eliminate the cause of a detected non-conformance to prevent its recurrence (a full definition is in Appendix 2: Glossary).

Evidence of your corrective actions is required to be sent to the SQF food safety auditor so that it can be verified and closed out within thirty (30) calendar days of the completion of your site audit.

If you fail to submit corrective actions, or the SQF food safety auditor does not verify your corrective actions within thirty days, the certification body is unable to certify your site, and you are required to re-apply for certification (refer to 10.2).

- Minor non-conformances (refer to 9.1) are required to be closed out in the SQFI assessment database within thirty (30) calendar days of the completion of the site audit. The certification body can grant additional time for closeout where there is no immediate threat to product safety and alternative temporary methods of control are initiated. Your site is advised of the extended time frame.

Where additional time is granted, the non-conformance is still closed out in the SQFI assessment database and the SQF food safety auditor documents all details of justification of the extension, how the risk is being controlled, and the agreed completion date.

A documented root cause analysis is required as part of the corrective action evidence for every minor non-conformance.

- **Major non-conformances** (refer to 9.1) are also required to be closed out in the SQFI assessment database within thirty (30) calendar days of the completion of the site audit. A documented root cause analysis is required as part of the corrective action evidence for every major non-conformance.

If the corrective action involves structural change or cannot be corrected due to seasonal conditions or installation lead times, additional time can be granted provided the corrective action time frame is acceptable to the certification body and temporary action is taken by your site to mitigate the risk to product safety.

In such cases, the non-conformance is closed out and the SQF food safety auditor documents all details of justification of the extension, how the risk is being controlled, and the agreed completion date.

## Step 10: Granting Certification

The certification body makes the certification decision based on the evidence of compliance and non-compliance recommended by the SQF food safety auditor during the SQF audit. Although SQFI provides guidance on certification, the certification body is responsible for deciding if certification is justified and granted, based on the objective evidence provided by the SQF food safety auditor.

Any certification decisions that are made outside the scope of this clause require the certification body to provide written justification to SQFI.

The final audit report with completed and approved corrective actions is made available to the site before the final certification decision is made. The SQF food safety audit report is the property of the site and cannot be distributed to other parties without your site's permission.

Certification of the SQF System is awarded to sites that achieve a "C - complies" audit rating or greater with no outstanding non-conformances. Your certification body makes the certification decision no more than forty-five (45) calendar days from the last day of the site audit. Once SQF certification is granted, the certification body issues a unique certification number, which is specific to that site.

## 10.1 Certificate Issue

Within ten (10) calendar days of granting certification, the certification body provides you with an electronic and/or hard copy of your site's certificate. The certificate is valid for seventy-five (75) days beyond the anniversary of the initial certification audit date.

The certificate remains the property of the certification body and can be in a form designed by the certification body, but it must include the following information:

- The name and address of your site as listed on the SQFI assessment database;
- The name, address, and logo of the certification body;
- The logo of the accreditation body and the certification body's accreditation number;
- The heading "certificate";
- The phrase "(site name) is registered as meeting the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, Edition 9";
- The scope of registration – food sector category(ies) and products;
- Dates of audit (last day), date of next re-certification audit, date of certification decision, and date of certificate expiry;
- Indication of unannounced re-certification audit (where applicable);
- Signatures of the authorized officer and issuing officer of the certification body; and
- The SQF logo

Certified site information is posted on [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com).

Certificates are published in English. However, certified sites in non-English-speaking countries may require a certificate in a local language. SQFI allows the certification body to issue local language certificates on request as long as:

- The certificate information listed above is included;
- The certification body has a protocol in place for translation and can verify the translation; and
- An English and a translated copy of the certificate are available if requested by SQFI.

## 10.2 Failure to Comply

If your site receives an "F – fails to comply" rating at an initial food safety certification audit or fails to correct identified non-conformances within the required time frame (refer to 9.4), your site is considered to have failed the SQF food safety audit and must then re-apply for another certification audit.



## 10.3 Appeals and Complaints

Your certification body needs to provide you with its documented procedure for handling and resolving appeals and complaints made by your site or by another party about your site.

**Appeals.** If you have reason to appeal a decision made by your SQF food safety auditor as a result of an audit or a decision taken by your certification body regarding your certification, you are required to lodge that appeal with your certification body. Your certification body is required to investigate and resolve this matter without delay and keep a record of all appeals and their resolution.

If the appeal cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the certification body, the matter is to be referred to SQFI via email to [compliance@sqfi.com](mailto:compliance@sqfi.com); however, this is only after the matter has been referred to the certification body and not satisfactorily resolved.

Appeals regarding decisions on the suspension and/or withdrawal of the SQF certification by a certification body do not delay the decision to suspend or withdraw the certification.

**Complaints** about the conduct or behavior of an SQF-registered auditor or other certification body personnel are to be lodged with the certification body, which is required to investigate and resolve the complaint without delay and keep a record of the resolution.

If the certification body receives a complaint about your site from other parties, the certification body is required to investigate and resolve the matter without delay and keep a record of the resolution.

If upon the investigation of a complaint, it is determined that there has been a substantiated breakdown of your site's SQF System or any other condition not in compliance with the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production and/or other supporting documents, the certification body is required to suspend certification as outlined in step 14.

Complaints about SQFI, the SQF Codes, the SQFI assessment database, SQF training centers, and SQF professionals and unresolved complaints lodged with certification bodies can be referred to SQFI via email to [compliance@sqfi.com](mailto:compliance@sqfi.com).

# A3: Maintaining Your SQF Certification (steps 11 – 15)

## Step 11: Re-certification

To maintain your certification to the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production, your site is required to attain a “C – complies” audit rating or greater at your certification and re-certification audits, ensure that surveillance and/or re-certification audits occur within the required timeframe, ensure that no critical non-conformances are raised at surveillance or re-certification audits, and that all major and minor non-conformances are corrected within the time frame specified.

### 11.1 Re-certification Audits

Your site’s re-certification audit is conducted within thirty (30) calendar days either side of the anniversary of the last day of the initial certification audit. It is conducted to verify the continued effectiveness of your site’s SQF System.

As per the initial certification audit, part of the re-certification audit may be conducted remotely using ICT, but a minimum of 50% of the allocated audit duration must be on-site. Remote activities can only be conducted by agreement with your certification body and are dependent on your ICT capability and information security requirements. Examples of off-site and on-site activities are listed under Step 8: The Initial Certification Audit.

The re-certification audit score is calculated in the same way as the initial certification audit, and the same rating system is applied (refer to 9.2).

The purpose of the re-certification audit is to:

- Verify the continued efficacy of corrections and corrective actions closed out at your previous audits;
- Verify that your SQF Food Safety System continues to be implemented as documented;
- Verify that your internal audits, annual reviews of the crisis and food defense plans and recall system, and management reviews have been effectively completed;
- Verify that corrective and preventative actions have been taken on all non-conformities;
- Ensure you have taken appropriate action where changes to your site’s operations have been made that impact the site’s SQF Food Safety System;
- Verify all critical steps and the effective interactions among all elements of your SQF System remain under control;
- Verify the overall effectiveness of the SQF System in its entirety in light of changes within your operations;
- Verify that you continue to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the effectiveness of your SQF System and to meeting regulatory and customer requirements; and
- Ensure contribution to the continued improvement of your site’s SQF System and business operation.

## 11.2 Variations from the Initial Certification Process

The requirements for the re-certification audit are the same as those described in step 8 for the initial certification audit, with the following exceptions:

- If your site fails to permit the re-certification audit within the agreed timeframe, the certification body is required to immediately suspend your site's certificate.
- If your site receives an "F – fails to comply" rating at the re-certification audit, the certification body is required to immediately suspend your site's certificate.
- If your site fails to closeout non-conformities within thirty (30) days, the certification body is required to immediately suspend your site's certificate.

Refer to 15.1 for temporary or permanent changes of re-certification audit dates and certificate extensions.

## 11.3 Re-certification Audits – Seasonal Operations

The re-certification audit of seasonal operations follows the requirements of step 11.1. However, where there is a significant change in seasonal operations, whereby your re-certification audit's sixty (60) day window cannot be met, you can agree with your certification body to temporarily reset your re-certification audit date so that it falls during the peak operational part of the season.

If you wish to permanently change the re-certification audit date due to seasonal conditions, the request must be made in writing to the SQF Compliance Manager.

## 11.4 Unannounced Audits

The certification body is required to conduct an unannounced audit of your site once every three years. Your first three-year cycle commences with your initial certification audit date. Within the first three years of certification, you are required to have one unannounced audit. Thereafter, you will have an unannounced audit every three years.

The protocol for SQF unannounced re-certification audits is as follows:

- The unannounced food safety audit occurs within the sixty (60) day re-certification window (i.e., the anniversary date of the initial certification audit +/- thirty (30) days);
- If you change certification bodies, the site's unannounced re-certification audit schedule does not change;
- Central site and sub-sites in an SQF multi-site program (refer to Appendix 4) are exempted from unannounced audits;
- The initial unannounced audit year is determined between your site and the certification body. Thereafter, the unannounced audit is every three years;
- The date of the unannounced audit is determined by the certification body within the sixty (60) day re-certification audit window;

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- A defined blackout period may be established by negotiation between your site and your certification body to prevent the unannounced re-certification audit from occurring out-of-season or when the site is not operating for legitimate business reasons;
- Unannounced audits are on-site audits. Remote activities using ICT do not apply to unannounced audits;
- If you refuse entry to an SQF food safety auditor for an unannounced audit, the certification body is required to immediately suspend your certificate; and
- Certificates issued following unannounced re-certification audits indicate that the audit was unannounced (refer to 10.1)

Your site may forgo the three-year certification cycle and voluntarily elect to have annual unannounced re-certification audits. If annual unannounced re-certification audits are conducted at your site, then the protocol outlined for the three-year certification cycle audit is to be followed for each audit.

Sites with annual unannounced re-certification audits are recognized on the SQF certificate as an “SQFI Select Site.”

### **Step 12: Surveillance Audits**

A surveillance audit is conducted if your site attains a “C - complies” rating at a certification audit or re-certification audit.

The surveillance audit is conducted within thirty (30) calendar days on either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the last certification or re-certification audit.

A new score and rating are issued at the surveillance audit, but the site’s re-certification audit date is not affected.

The surveillance audit is a full SQF System audit. In particular, the surveillance audit is intended to:

- Verify the continued efficacy of corrections and corrective actions closed out at your previous audits;
- Verify that your SQF System continues to be implemented as documented;
- Verify you have taken appropriate action where changes to your site’s operations have been made that impact the site’s SQF Food Safety System;
- Confirm continued compliance with the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production;
- Verify all critical steps remain under control; and
- Contribute to continued improvement of your site’s SQF System and business operation.

Major or minor non-conformities raised at the surveillance audit are required to be closed out, as indicated in Part A, 9.4.

## 12.1 Surveillance Audit – Seasonal Operations

Seasonal operations occur at sites where the major production activities are conducted over a shorter time duration that does not exceed more than five consecutive months in any calendar year.

Seasonal operations that attain a “C – complies” rating at a certification or re-certification audit are required to have a surveillance audit.

Where the surveillance audit date falls within the operational season, your surveillance audit is required within thirty (30) days either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the previous certification or re-certification audit.

If the due date of your surveillance audit falls outside the operational season, then the certification body is required to conduct a pre-operational audit no less than thirty (30) days prior to the next season. The pre-operational audit comprises a full review of corrective actions from the last audit and preparedness for the next re-certification audit.

### Step 13: Suspending Certification

The certification body is required to suspend your SQF certificate if your site:

- Fails to permit the re-certification or surveillance audit within the audit window;
- Fails to take corrective action within the timeframe specified in 9.4;
- Fails to permit an unannounced audit or refuses entry to an SQF food safety auditor for an unannounced audit; or
- Receives an “F – fails to comply” rating at a surveillance or re-certification audit.

The certification body may also suspend certification if in the opinion of the food safety auditor and supported by the technical reviewer the site fails to maintain the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production.

## 13.1 Reporting Suspension

If your site’s certificate is suspended, the certification body immediately amends the site details on the SQFI assessment database to “suspended” status, indicating the reason for the suspension and the effective date. The certification body also:

- Informs your site in writing of the reasons for the action taken and the effective date. Acknowledgment of receipt of the suspension notification is required; and
- Notifies SQFI about the suspension using the online change and notification form 13.2 Corrective Action Following Suspension.

The following action is required, dependent on the reason for suspension:

IF	THEN
<p>i. Your site does not permit the re-certification or surveillance audit to occur within the audit window:</p>	<p>The certification body requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a plan detailing the justification for the delay and the time table for the rescheduled audit (must be no more than thirty (30) days from the audit window).</p> <p>The certification body conducts an announced on-site re-certification or surveillance audit (as applicable) within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan.</p> <p>If your site successfully completes the SQF audit with an E, G, or C rating, the certification body reinstates your site status on the SQFI assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p> <p>Regardless of the rating and because the site failed to permit the re-certification audit in the designated time frame, the certification body conducts an additional unannounced surveillance audit no more than six (6) months after the suspension to verify continued compliance with the SQF Code.</p>
<p>ii. Your site does not take corrective action within the time frame specified:</p>	<p>The certification body requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken to resolve the outstanding non-conformances.</p> <p>The certification body verifies that the corrective action plan has been implemented through an on-site visit within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan.</p> <p>When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the certification body reinstates your site status on the SQFI assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p>
<p>iii. Your site does not permit an unannounced audit or refuses entry to an SQF food safety auditor for an unannounced audit:</p>	<p>The certification body requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a plan detailing the justification for the refusal to permit an unannounced audit and an agreement to proceed with an unannounced audit within the next thirty (30) days.</p> <p>The certification body conducts an on-site re-certification audit within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the site confirmation.</p> <p>If your site successfully completes the unannounced audit with an E, G, or C rating, the certification body reinstates your site status on the SQFI assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p> <p>Additionally, an unannounced surveillance audit is conducted no more than six (6) months after the above unannounced re-certification audit to verify continued compliance with the SQF System.</p>

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<p>iv. Your site receives an “F – fails to comply” rating at a surveillance or re-certification audit:</p>	<p>The certification body requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken to resolve the outstanding non-conformances.</p> <p>The certification body verifies that the corrective actions have been implemented by means of an on-site visit within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan.</p> <p>When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the certification body reinstates your site status on the SQFI assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p> <p>If the suspension is the result of a re-certification audit, the certification body conducts an unannounced surveillance audit no more than six (6) months after the suspension to verify the effective implementation of the corrective action plan.</p>
<p>v. Your site does not maintain the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production:</p>	<p>The certification body requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken regarding the failure to maintain the SQF Food Safety Code.</p> <p>The certification body verifies the corrective actions have been implemented by means of an on-site visit within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan.</p> <p>When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the certification body re-instates your site status on the SQFI assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p>

If your site’s SQF certificate is suspended, your site cannot represent itself as holding an SQF certificate for the duration of the suspension.

Appeals regarding decisions on the suspension and/or withdrawal of your SQF certification by a certification body shall not delay the decision to suspend or withdraw the certification (refer to 10.3).

**Step 14: Withdrawing Certification**

The certification body withdraws the certificate if your site:

- Has been placed under suspension and fails to follow the suspension protocol, as defined by the certification body in your notice of suspension;
- Fails to take approved corrective action within the time frames specified, as determined by the certification body (refer to step 13.1);
- Has intentionally and systemically falsified its records;
- Fails to maintain the integrity of the SQF certificate; or
- 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 your site (except for the purposes of amalgamation or reconstruction) or the site ceases to carry on business or becomes bankrupt or 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.

If your site's certificate is withdrawn, the certification body immediately amends your site's details on the SQFI assessment database to a "withdrawn" status, indicating the reason for the withdrawal and the effective date. The certification body also:

- Informs you in writing that the SQF certificate has been withdrawn, the reason for such action, and the effective date. Acknowledgment of receipt of the withdrawal notification is required.
- Notifies SQFI about the withdrawal using the online change and notification form; and
- Instructs you to return the certificate within thirty (30) days of notification.

If your certificate is withdrawn, you are not permitted to re-apply for certification for twelve (12) months from the date the certificate was withdrawn by the certification body. The withdrawn site is posted on sqfi.com for twelve (12) months.

## **Step 15: Changes to Site SQF Requirements**

The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production enables you to change your requirements based on your changing business arrangements. These include changes and additions in product scope, changing your certification body, site relocation, and changes in business ownership.

If your site experiences a recall of products included in its scope of certification or has regulatory intervention, SQFI and your certification body are required to be notified.

The SQF requirements are listed here. If you need assistance with any of these changes, you can contact the SQFI customer service team at [info@sqfi.com](mailto:info@sqfi.com)

## **15.1 Temporary or Permanent Change of Audit Dates**

Written approval by the SQF Compliance Manager is required to issue an extension to your site's certificate or a temporary or permanent change to your site's re-certification audit time frame, including changes due to extraordinary events such as acts of nature or extreme weather.

All change requests are required to be sent by the certification body that issued your site's most recent SQF certificate.

All requests regarding temporary or permanent certification changes for legitimate business reasons are to be submitted to SQFI by the certification body using the Change Request and Notification Form (available at [sqfi.com](http://sqfi.com)). Using this online form enables SQFI to track and manage all incoming requests and respond in a timely manner.



## 15.2 Changing the Scope of Certification

If you wish to add food sector categories or new products to your scope of certification, you may request the increased scope of certification in writing to the certification body.

If the scope change is a new process or a major change to an existing process, a new product line, or a significant change in personnel, raw materials, packing materials, or ingredients, the certification body is required to be advised in writing. The certification body conducts a site audit of the additional process or products and either issues a new certificate or advises you in writing why a new certificate cannot be issued.

An audit for an expansion in scope does not change the re-certification date or certificate expiry date. When a new certificate is issued, the re-certification audit date and certificate expiry date remain the same as on the original certificate.

When the scope of certification has been changed, the certification body makes the appropriate scope changes to your site record in the SQFI assessment database.

If your request is received within thirty (30) days prior to the re-certification audit window, the certification body may defer the scope extension to the upcoming re-certification audit and advise you accordingly. No new certificate is issued until after a successful re-certification audit.

## 15.3 Changing the Certification Body

If you are not satisfied with the arrangements or performance of your certification body, you can change to another SQF-licensed certification body after one certification cycle and only after closure of all outstanding non-conformances, and as long as the certification is not suspended or under threat of suspension or withdrawal.

If your site requires a surveillance audit, you can change certification bodies only after the surveillance audit is conducted or by written approval from the SQF Compliance Manager ([compliance@sqfi.com](mailto:compliance@sqfi.com)).

When a site changes certification bodies, the certificate issued by the previous certification body remains valid until the expected expiration date.

Your certification number and re-certification date are transferred with your site to the new certification body.

The new certification body is required to undertake a review of your site's certification before the transfer is complete to:

- Confirm the certificate is current, valid, and relates to the SQF System as certified;
- Confirm your site's food sector category falls within the new certification body's scope of accreditation;
- Confirm any complaints received are actioned;

- Review your site's audit history (where you can demonstrate such history to the satisfaction of the new certification body by way of copies of audit reports completed by any previous certification body(ies) and the impact of any outstanding non-conformances);
- Confirm the stage of the current certification cycle.

If you require to change your certification body, you need to make the last re-certification audit report and surveillance audit report (if applicable) available to the new certification body.

## 15.4 Relocation of Premises

SQF certification is site specific (refer to step 3), so if you relocate your business premises, your site's certification does not transfer to the new site.

A successful certification of the new premises is required. An initial certification audit must be completed for the new facility.

## 15.5 Change of Business Ownership

If the ownership of a certified site changes (e.g., the site's business has been sold), within thirty (30) calendar days of the change of ownership, the new owner is required to notify the certification body and apply to retain the SQF certification and the existing certification number.

If the staff with major responsibility for the management and oversight of the SQF Food Safety System has been retained, the certification body may retain the existing audit frequency status.

If there are significant changes in site management and personnel, the certification body is required to complete an initial certification audit and issue a new certificate and a new certification number. The audit frequency applicable to a new certification applies.

## 15.6 Notification of Recalls and Regulatory Infringements

If your site initiates a food safety event that requires public notification, such as a Class I or Class II recall or receives a regulatory warning letter, you must notify your certification body and SQFI in writing at [foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com](mailto:foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com) within twenty-four (24) hours of the event.

Your certification body and SQFI are required to be listed in your essential contacts lists as defined in system element 2.6.3 of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production.

Your certification body is required to notify SQFI within a further forty-eight (48) hours of any action it intends to take to ensure the integrity of the certification.

## 15.7 Use of a Technical Expert

Technical experts may be used to assist SQF food safety auditors in audits where the auditor is SQF registered but does not possess some or any site's food sector category(ies) or for products/processes where the audit would benefit from expert technical advice.

The use of a technical expert to assist an SQF food safety auditor in the performance of an SQF audit is permitted, provided your site has been notified before the audit and accepts the expert's participation. The technical expert must sign a confidentiality agreement with the certification body.

Before the audit, the certification body must submit the technical qualifications of the technical expert and the justification for use of the technical expert to SQFI. Approval, if granted, is for one site audit only.

Technical experts are required to:

- Hold a university degree in a discipline related to the food sector category for high-risk sectors or a higher education qualification for low-risk categories;
- Have received HACCP training with certificate of attainment issued; and
- Have five years' full-time experience in a technical, professional, or supervisory position related to the food sector category and specific products.

If the audit includes remote activities, the assigned technical expert may make use of ICT during the audit process. The registered SQF auditor is required to be present, either in person or remotely.

## 15.8 Language Used During the Audit

The certification body is required to ensure that the SQF food safety auditor conducting the audit can competently communicate in the oral and written language of the site being audited.

In circumstances where a translator is required, the translator must be provided by the certification body and have knowledge of the technical terms used during the audit, be independent of the site being audited, and have no conflict of interest. The site is to be notified of any increase in audit duration and cost associated with the use of a translator.

If there is a conflict, the English version of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production prevails.

## 15.9 The SQFI Compliance and Integrity Program

To meet the requirements of SQFI's Compliance and Integrity Program, SQFI may randomly monitor the activities of the certification bodies and their auditors through techniques that include but are not limited to validation and/or witness audits.

While conducting these additional monitoring activities, your site is required to allow SQFI-authorized representatives into the site during or after the audit has taken place.

The attendance of an SQFI representative does not interfere with the site's operations or result in additional audit time or non-conformances, and it will not increase the cost charged by the certification body for the audit.

**B**

# Part

## The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production

## 2.1 Management Commitment

### 2.1.1 Management Responsibility (Mandatory)

2.1.1.1 Senior site management shall prepare and implement a policy statement that outlines at a minimum the commitment of all site management to:

- i. Supply safe food;
- ii. Establish and maintain a food safety culture within the site;
- iii. Establish and continually improve the site's food safety management system; and
- iv. Comply with customer and regulatory requirements to supply safe food.

The policy statement shall be:

- v. Signed by the senior site manager and displayed in prominent positions; and
- vi. Effectively communicated to site personnel in language(s) understood by all staff.

2.1.1.2 Senior site management shall lead and support a food safety culture within the site that ensures at a minimum:

- i. The establishment and documentation of clear and concise food safety objectives and performance measures and their communication to all relevant staff;
- ii. Adequate resources are available to meet food safety objectives and performance measures;
- iii. Food safety practices and all applicable requirements of the SQF System are adopted and maintained;
- iv. Staff are informed and are aware of their food safety and regulatory responsibilities;
- v. Staff are informed and held accountable for their food safety and regulatory responsibilities;
- vi. Staff are positively encouraged and required to notify management of actual or potential food safety issues; and
- vii. Staff are empowered to act to resolve food safety issues within their scope of work.

2.1.1.3 The reporting structure shall identify and describe the site personnel with specific responsibilities for tasks within the food safety management system and identify backup for absence of key personnel. Job descriptions for the key personnel shall be documented.

2.1.1.4 Senior site management shall designate a primary and substitute SQF practitioner for each site with responsibility and authority to:

- i. Oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of the SQF System, including Good Agricultural/Operating Practices outlined in 2.4.2, and the food safety plan outlined in 2.4.3.
- ii. Take appropriate action to ensure the integrity of the SQF System; and
- iii. Communicate to relevant personnel all information essential to ensure the effective implementation and maintenance of the SQF System.

2.1.1.5 The primary and substitute SQF practitioner shall:

- i. Be employed by the site;
- ii. Hold a position of responsibility in relation to the management of the site's SQF System;
- iii. Be competent to implement and maintain HACCP-based food safety plans; and
- iv. Have an understanding of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production and the requirements to implement and maintain an SQF System relevant to the site's scope of certification.

2.1.1.6 Senior site management shall ensure the training needs of the site are resourced, implemented, and meet the requirements outlined in system elements 2.9 and that site personnel have met the required competencies to carry out those functions affecting the legality and safety of food products.

2.1.1.7 Senior site management shall ensure the integrity and continued operation of the food safety system in the event of organizational or personnel changes within the company or associated facilities.

2.1.1.8 Senior site management shall designate defined blackout periods that prevent unannounced re-certification audits from occurring out of season or when the site is not operating for legitimate business reasons. The list of blackout dates and their justification shall be submitted to the certification body a minimum of one (1) month before the sixty (60) day re-certification window for the agreed-upon unannounced audit.

## **2.1.2 Management Review (Mandatory)**

2.1.2.1 The SQF system shall be reviewed by senior site management at least annually and include:

- i. Changes to food safety management system documentation (policies, procedures, specifications, food safety plan);
- ii. Food safety culture performance;
- iii. Food safety objectives and performance measures;
- iv. Corrective and preventative actions and trends in findings from internal and external audits, customer complaints, and verification and validation activities;
- v. The hazard and risk management system; and
- vi. Follow-up action items from previous management review.

Records of all management reviews and updates shall be maintained.

2.1.2.2 The SQF Practitioner(s) shall update senior site management on at least a monthly basis on matters impacting the implementation and maintenance of the SQF System. The updates and management responses shall be documented.

### **2.1.3 Complaint Management (Mandatory)**

- 2.1.3.1 The methods and responsibility for handling, investigating, and resolving complaints from commercial customers, consumers, and authorities arising from products grown or handled on-site, shall be documented and implemented.
- 2.1.3.2 Adverse trends of customer complaint data shall be investigated and analyzed, and root cause established by personnel knowledgeable about the incidents.
- 2.1.3.3 Corrective and preventative action shall be implemented based on the seriousness of the incident and the root cause analysis as outlined in 2.5.3.

Records of customer complaints, their investigation and resolution shall be maintained.

## **2.2 Document Control and Records**

### **2.2.1 Food Safety Management System (Mandatory)**

- 2.2.1.1 The methods the site uses to meet the requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production shall be maintained in electronic and/or hard copy documentation. They will be made available to relevant staff and include:

- i. Food safety policies and organization chart;
- ii. Products covered under the scope of certification;
- iii. Food safety regulations that apply to the site and to the country of sale if known;
- iv. Agricultural inputs/materials, packaging materials, and finished product specifications; and
- v. Written procedures and programs (Good Agricultural Practices and/or Good Operational Practices) and other documentation necessary to support the development, implementation, maintenance, and control of the SQF System (e.g., food safety plans, validation, and verification).

- 2.2.1.2 Food safety plans, Good Agricultural/Operating Practices, and all relevant aspects of the SQF System shall be reviewed, updated, and communicated as needed when any potential changes implemented have an impact on the site's ability to deliver safe food. The reason for the change shall be documented.

### **2.2.2 Document Control (Mandatory)**

- 2.2.2.1 The methods and responsibility for maintaining document control, including records, shall be documented and implemented. They shall ensure that documents and records are

- i. Controlled;
- ii. Current;
- iii. Safely stored to prevent unauthorized access, loss, damage, and deterioration;
- iv. Organized in a registry or listing form; and

- v. Readily accessible in a manner that ensures employees use up-to-date and current policies, procedures (work instructions/task lists), and forms when documenting food safety related activities.

### **2.2.3 Records (Mandatory)**

- 2.2.3.1 All manual or electronic/digital records shall be legible, suitably authorized, and/or signed by those undertaking activities to demonstrate that inspections, supervisory reviews, testing, and other essential activities have been completed.
- 2.2.3.2 Records shall be retained in accordance with periods specified by a customer or regulations or at a minimum no less than product shelf life.

## **2.3 Specifications, Product/Hybrid Development, and Supplier Approval**

### **2.3.1 Plant Variety/Hybrid or Product Development**

- 2.3.1.1 The methods and responsibility for designing, developing, and converting product concepts (e.g. new varieties, hybridization, crops, species) to commercial realization shall be documented and implemented and comply with regulatory and customer requirements.

Records for new products testing, shelf life, and final approvals shall be maintained.

- 2.3.1.2 The food safety plan shall be reviewed and revised accordingly for each new product and its associated process through conversion to commercial production and distribution, or where a change to inputs, process, or packaging occurs that may impact food safety.
- 2.3.1.3 New products shall be tested and inspected to ensure they meet stated shelf life, maximum residue limits (MRLs), and other regulatory and customer requirements (e.g., potency, strength, purity).
- 2.3.1.4 The process flows for all new and existing processes shall be designed to ensure that products meet specifications and to prevent cross-contamination.

### **2.3.2 Specifications (Agricultural Inputs, Packaging, Harvested Product, and Contract Services)**

- 2.3.2.1 Specifications and/or descriptions for seeds, agricultural inputs, packaging, and contract services that impact finished product safety shall be documented, approved, comply with relevant legislation, and kept current through a review process.
- 2.3.2.2 Food contact packaging, seeds, and agricultural inputs shall be verified to ensure product safety is not compromised and the material is fit for its intended purpose. Verification shall include certificates of conformance, certificate of analysis, or sampling and testing (refer to 2.4.4.1).



2.3.2.3 Finished product specifications shall be documented, approved by the site and its customer where applicable, accessible to relevant staff, and kept current through a review process. Specifications shall include, where applicable:

- i. Microbiological, purity, strength, composition, and agricultural chemical limits;
- ii. Maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides; and
- iii. Labeling and packaging regulatory and customer requirements.

2.3.2.4 The methods and responsibilities for managing contract farms, services (e.g., spraying), packers, or storage and distribution facilities shall be documented and implemented to ensure the following are being met:

- i. Contract farms and services shall comply with the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production and relevant regulatory and customer requirements;
- ii. Changes to contractual agreements are approved by both parties and communicated to relevant personnel; and
- iii. Records of all contract reviews and changes to contractual agreements and their approvals are maintained.

2.3.2.5 A register or listing of all specifications and/or descriptions for seeds, agricultural inputs, packaging, and labels, finished products, and contract services shall be maintained and kept current.

### **2.3.3 Approved Supplier/Input Purchasing Program (Mandatory)**

2.3.3.1 Seeds, agricultural inputs, harvested product, market-ready product, and packaging materials that impact finished product food safety shall be supplied by an approved supplier. The methods and responsibility for selecting, evaluating, approving, and monitoring an approved supplier shall be documented and implemented. The approved supplier program shall contain at a minimum:

- i. A risk level assigned to each supplier that is based on the past performance of the supplier, criticality to the site, food safety risk, and other relevant factors determined by the site;
- ii. Agreed specifications;
- iii. A summary of the food safety controls implemented by the approved supplier, including regulatory compliance and licensing where applicable;
- iv. Methods for granting approved supplier status;
- v. Methods and frequency of monitoring approved suppliers, which may include testing, receiving inspection, and/or supplier audits;
- vi. Methods and frequency of reviewing approved supplier performance and status.

Where supplier audits are used as a monitoring tool, they shall be based on risk and conducted by individuals knowledgeable of applicable regulatory and food safety requirements and trained in auditing techniques.

A register or list of approved suppliers and records of monitoring activities shall be maintained.

- 2.3.3.2 The receipt of seeds, agricultural inputs, harvested product, market-ready product, and packaging materials from non-approved suppliers shall be acceptable in an emergency situation, provided they are inspected or analyzed before use.
- 2.3.3.3 Agricultural inputs, harvested product, market-ready product, and packaging materials received from other sites under the same corporate ownership shall be subject to the same specification requirements (refer to 2.3.2), approved supplier requirements, and receiving inspections as all other material providers.

## **2.4 Food Safety System**

### **2.4.1 Food Legislation (Mandatory)**

- 2.4.1.1 The owner/senior site manager shall ensure that, at the time of delivery to its customer, the food supplied shall comply with food safety and production legislation applicable in the country of use and sale, if known. Any specific licensing requirements or commodity-specific regulations shall be maintained and kept current.
- 2.4.1.2 The methods and responsibility for ensuring the organization is kept informed of changes to relevant legislation, scientific and technical developments, emerging food safety issues, and relevant industry codes of practice shall be documented and implemented.
- 2.4.1.3 SQFI and the certification body shall be notified in writing within twenty-four (24) hours as a result of a regulatory warning or event. Notification to SQFI shall be by email to [foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com](mailto:foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com).

### **2.4.2 Good Agricultural/Operating Practices (Mandatory)**

- 2.4.2.1 The site shall ensure the applicable Good Agricultural Practices described in modules 7, 8, or 18 and the Good Operating Practices described in module 10 of this Food Safety Code are documented and implemented (refer to 2.2.1.1), or exempted according to a written risk analysis outlining the justification for exemption or evidence of the effectiveness of alternative control measures to ensure that food safety is not compromised.

### **2.4.3 Food Safety Plan (Mandatory)**

- 2.4.3.1 A HACCP-based referenced food safety plan, developed by a responsible authority, shall be implemented in the absence of a specifically developed food safety plan for the site. The site shall:
- i. Maintain current records indicating that the food safety plan has been reviewed and its scope of hazard analysis, risk assessments, and control measures, such as Good Agricultural or Operational Practices, cover all products produced and sold by the site and are within the scope of certification; and
  - ii. Document when changes in the food safety plan have impacted their Good Agricultural or Operational Practices.

Note: Sites shall choose either 2.4.3.1 or 2.4.3.2 with the subsequent 2.4.3 requirements as the mandatory element.

2.4.3.2 Where a site has developed its own food safety plan, either by choice or due to product(s) not included within the scope of a HACCP-based model as per 2.4.3.1, it shall be implemented and maintained and outline how the organization controls and assures food safety of the products or product groups and their associated processes that are included in the scope of the SQF certification.

More than one HACCP food safety plan may be required to cover all products included in the scope of certification.

2.4.3.3 The food safety plan(s) shall be developed and maintained by a team that includes the SQF practitioner and those site personnel with agricultural, technical, and/or machinery knowledge relevant to the commodities and products.

Where the relevant expertise is not available on-site, advice may be obtained from other sources to assist the food safety team.

2.4.3.4 The scope of each food safety plan shall be developed and documented including the start and endpoints of the processes under consideration and all relevant inputs and outputs.

2.4.3.5 Product descriptions shall be developed and documented for all products included in the scope of the food safety plans. These shall reference and/or include:

- i. The finished product specifications;
- ii. Information relevant to product safety, such as it is ready-to-eat, requires further processing, and/or storage conditions; and
- iii. The intended use of each product, which includes target consumer groups, the potential for consumption by vulnerable groups of the population, requirements for further processing if applicable, and potential alternative use of the product.

2.4.3.6 The food safety team shall develop and document a flow diagram covering the scope of each food safety plan. The flow diagram shall include every step in the process of primary production, all agricultural inputs, packaging material, service inputs (e.g., water, steam, gasses as appropriate), process delays, and all process outputs, including feed, waste, and rework. Each flow diagram shall be confirmed by the food safety team to cover all stages and hours of operation.

2.4.3.7 The food safety team shall identify and document all food safety hazards that can reasonably be expected to occur at each step in the processes, including agricultural inputs.

2.4.3.8 The food safety team shall conduct a hazard analysis for every identified hazard to determine which hazards are significant, i.e., their elimination or reduction to an acceptable level is necessary to control food safety. The methodology for determining hazard significance shall be documented and used consistently to assess all potential hazards.

2.4.3.9 The food safety team shall determine and document the control measures that must be applied to all significant hazards. More than one control measure may be required to control an identified hazard, and more than one significant hazard may be controlled by a specific control measure.

- 2.4.3.10 Based on the results of the hazard analysis (refer to 2.4.3.8), the food safety team shall identify the steps in the process where control must be applied to eliminate a significant hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level (a critical control point or CCP). In instances where a significant hazard has been identified at a step in the process, but no control measure exists, the food safety team shall modify the process to include an appropriate control measure.
- 2.4.3.11 For each identified CCP, the food safety team shall identify and document the critical limits that separate safe from unsafe product. The food safety team shall validate all of the critical limits to ensure the level of control of the identified food safety hazard(s) and that all critical limits and control measures, individually or in combination, effectively provide the level of control required (refer to 2.5.2.1).
- 2.4.3.12 The food safety team shall develop and document procedures to monitor CCPs to ensure they remain within the established limits (refer to 2.4.3.11). Monitoring procedures shall identify the personnel assigned to conduct testing, the sampling and test methods, and the test frequency.
- 2.4.3.13 The food safety team shall develop and document deviation procedures that identify the disposition of affected product when monitoring indicates a loss of control at a CCP. The procedures shall also prescribe actions to correct the process step to prevent recurrence of the safety failure.
- 2.4.3.14 The documented and approved food safety plan(s) shall be implemented in full. The effective implementation shall be monitored by the food safety team, and a full review of the documented and implemented plans shall be conducted at least annually, or when changes to the process, equipment, inputs, or other changes affecting product safety occur.
- 2.4.3.15 Procedures shall be in place to verify that critical control points are effectively monitored and appropriate corrective actions are applied. Implemented food safety plans shall be verified as part of SQF System verification (refer to 2.5).
- 2.4.3.16 Critical control point monitoring, corrective action, and verification records shall be maintained and appropriately used.
- 2.4.3.17 Where food safety regulations in the country of production and destination (if known) prescribe a food safety control methodology other than the Codex Alimentarius Commission HACCP guidelines, the food safety team shall implement food safety plans that meet both Codex and food regulatory requirements.

#### **2.4.4 Product Sampling, Inspection, and Analysis**

- 2.4.4.1 The sampling, inspecting, and/or analyzing of agricultural inputs and finished product shall be documented and implemented. The procedures applied shall ensure:
- i. Inspections and analyses are completed at regular intervals as required and to agreed specifications (e.g., MRLs, purity, strength, composition as per 2.3.2) and regulatory and labeling requirements;
  - ii. Records of all inspections and analyses are maintained; and

- iii. All analyses are conducted to nationally recognized methods or alternative methods which are validated as equivalent to the nationally recognized methods.

Where external laboratories are used to conduct input or product analyses, the laboratories shall be accredited to ISO 17025 or an equivalent national standard, licensed or recognized by a regulatory authority if required, and shall be included on the site's contract service specifications register (refer to 2.3.2.1).

Where internal laboratories are used to conduct input or product analyses, sampling and testing methods shall be used in accordance with the applicable requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 or an equivalent national standard, including annual proficiency testing for personnel conducting analyses.

2.4.4.2 On-site laboratories conducting chemical and microbiological analyses that may pose a risk to product safety shall ensure the following:

- i. Be located separate from any food handling or packaging activity and designed to limit access only to authorized personnel;
- ii. Provisions shall be made to isolate and contain all laboratory waste and to manage laboratory waste separately from food waste;
- iii. Laboratory wastewater outlets shall at a minimum be downstream of drains that service food processing and handling areas; and
- iv. Signage is displayed that identifies the laboratory area as a restricted area, accessible only by authorized personnel.

#### **2.4.5 Non-conforming Agricultural Inputs and Products**

2.4.5.1 The methods and responsibility for how to control non-conforming products, agricultural inputs, and packaging shall be documented and implemented. The procedures shall ensure:

- i. Items are quarantined (held), identified, handled, re-worked, and/or disposed of in a manner that minimizes the risk of inadvertent use, improper use, or risk to the integrity of finished product;
- ii. All relevant personnel are aware of the site's hold and release instructions and approvals; and
- iii. Records of non-conforming product holds, release, and dispositions are maintained.

#### **2.4.6 Product Rework**

2.4.6.1 The responsibility and methods outlining how harvested or packaged product or packaging are reworked shall be documented and implemented. The methods applied shall ensure:

- i. Reworking operations are supervised by qualified personnel;
- ii. Reworked product is clearly identified and traceable;
- iii. Each batch/lot of reworked product is inspected or analyzed as required before release;
- iv. Inspections and analyses conform to the requirements outlined in element 2.4.4.1; and
- v. Records of all reworking operations are maintained.

### **2.4.7 Product Release (Mandatory)**

2.4.7.1 The methods and responsibility for releasing finished products shall be documented and implemented. The methods applied shall ensure:

- i. The product is released by authorized personnel;
- ii. The product is released only after all inspections and analyses have been successfully completed, reviewed, and documented; and
- iii. The product meets regulatory and other established food safety controls.

Records of all product releases shall be maintained.

### **2.4.8 Environmental Monitoring**

2.4.8.1 A risk-based environmental monitoring program shall be in place for all products grown indoors and packhouse operations and include all processes and immediate surrounding areas.

The methods and responsibility for the environmental monitoring program shall be documented and implemented.

2.4.8.2 An environmental sampling and testing schedule shall be prepared. It shall at a minimum:

- i. Detail the applicable pathogens or indicator organisms to test for in that industry;
- ii. List the number of samples to be taken and the frequency of sampling;
- iii. Outline the locations in which samples are to be taken and the rotation of locations as needed; and
- iv. Describe the methods to handle elevated or undesirable results.

2.4.8.3 Environmental testing results shall be monitored, tracked, and trended, and preventative actions (refer to 2.5.3.1) implemented where unsatisfactory trends are observed.

## **2.5 SQF System Verification**

### **2.5.1 Validation and Effectiveness (Mandatory)**

2.5.1.1 The methods, responsibility, and criteria for ensuring the effectiveness of all applicable elements of the SQF Program shall be documented and implemented. The methods applied shall ensure that:

- i. Good Agricultural/Operating Practices are confirmed to ensure they achieve the required results;
- ii. Critical food safety limits are reviewed annually and re-validated or justified by regulatory standards when changes occur; and
- iii. Changes to the processes or procedures are assessed to ensure the controls are still effective.

Records of all validation activities shall be maintained.

## **2.5.2 Verification Activities (Mandatory)**

- 2.5.2.1 The methods, responsibility, and criteria for verifying monitoring of Good Agricultural/ Operating Practices, critical control points, other food safety controls, and the legality of certified products shall be documented and implemented. The methods applied shall ensure that personnel with responsibility for verifying monitoring activities authorize each verified record.
- 2.5.2.2 A verification schedule outlining the verification activities, their frequency of completion, and the person responsible for each activity shall be prepared and implemented.

Records of the verification of monitoring activities shall be maintained.

## **2.5.3 Corrective and Preventative Action (Mandatory)**

- 2.5.3.1 The methods and responsibility for outlining how corrective and preventative actions are determined, implemented, and verified shall be documented and implemented. The procedures shall include:

- i. The identification of the root cause, and
- ii. Resolution of non-compliances of critical food safety limits and deviations from food safety requirements that are deemed significant.

Records of all investigation and resolution of non-conformities, including their corrections and preventative actions, shall be maintained.

## **2.5.4 Internal Audits and Inspections (Mandatory)**

- 2.5.4.1 The methods and responsibility for scheduling and conducting internal audits to verify the effectiveness of the SQF System shall be documented and implemented. Internal audits shall be conducted in full and at least annually. The methods applied shall ensure:

- i. All applicable requirements of the SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production are audited per the SQF audit checklist or a similar tool, and objective evidence is recorded to verify compliance and/or non-compliance;
- ii. Corrective and preventative actions of deficiencies identified during the internal audits are undertaken (refer to 2.5.3);
- iii. Audit results are communicated to relevant management personnel and personnel responsible for implementing and verifying corrective and preventive actions; and
- iv. Changes implemented from the internal audit that have an impact on the site's ability to deliver safe food result in a review of applicable aspects of the SQF System (refer to 2.3.1.3).

Records of internal audits and any corrections and corrective action taken as a result of internal audits are maintained.

- 2.5.4.2 Personnel conducting internal audits shall be trained and competent in internal audit procedures. Where practical, personnel conducting internal audits shall be independent of the function being audited.

2.5.4.3 Regular inspections during growing and harvesting of products, packing of products, plant production, and/or equipment used shall be planned and carried out to verify Good Agricultural/Operating Practices and building/equipment maintenance are compliant to the applicable SQF Food Safety Code. The site shall:

- i. Take corrections or corrective and preventative actions; and
- ii. Maintain records of inspections and any corrective actions taken.

## 2.6 Product Traceability and Crisis Management

### 2.6.1 Product Identification (Mandatory)

2.6.1.1 The methods and responsibilities for the product identification system shall be documented and implemented to ensure:

- i. Agricultural inputs, work-in-progress, and finished product are clearly identified during all stages of receipt, operations, storage, shipping, and transportation;
- ii. Finished product is labeled to the customer specification and/or regulatory requirements; and
- iii. Product identification records are maintained.

2.6.1.2 The responsibility and methods used to trace product shall be documented and implemented to ensure:

- i. Finished product is traceable to the customer (one up) and provides traceability through the process to the agricultural input supplier and date of receipt of inputs, food contact packaging and materials, and other inputs (one back);
- ii. Traceability is maintained where product is reworked (refer to 2.4.3); and
- iii. The effectiveness of the product trace system is reviewed at least annually as part of the product recall and withdrawal review (refer to 2.6.2.1).

Records for the receipt and use of agricultural inputs and packaging material and for finished product dispatch and destination are maintained.

### 2.6.2 Product Withdrawal and Recall (Mandatory)

2.6.2.1 The methods and responsibility to withdraw or recall product shall be documented and implemented. The procedure shall:

- i. Identify those responsible for initiating, managing, and investigating a product withdrawal or recall;
- ii. Describe the procedures to be implemented by site management;
- iii. Outline a communication plan to inform customers, consumers, authorities, and other essential bodies in a timely manner appropriate to the nature of the incident;
- iv. Describe how the withdrawal and recall system is reviewed, tested, and verified least annually (mock recall); and
- v. Ensure that SQFI, the certification body, and the appropriate regulatory authority are listed as essential organizations and are notified in instances of a food safety incident of a public nature or product recall.



Records of all product withdrawals, recalls, and mock recalls shall be maintained.

2.6.2.2 Investigation shall be undertaken to determine the cause of a withdrawal or recall, and details of investigations and any actions taken shall be documented and recorded.

2.6.2.3 SQFI and the certification body shall be notified in writing within twenty-four (24) hours upon identification of a food safety event that requires public notification. SQFI shall be notified at [foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com](mailto:foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com).

### **2.6.3 Crisis Management Planning**

2.6.3.1 The methods and responsibility for execution of a crisis management plan shall be documented and implemented. The plan shall include:

- i. A list of known potential dangers (e.g., flood, drought, fire, tsunami, or other severe weather or regional events such as pandemic, warfare, or civil unrest) that can impact the site's ability to deliver safe food;
- ii. Designated site management responsible for decision making, oversight, communications, and management of the crisis management plan; and
- iii. Control measures to ensure any affected product is identified, isolated, and dispositioned appropriately.

2.6.3.2 The crisis management plan shall be reviewed, tested, and verified at least annually with gaps and appropriate corrective actions documented.

Records of reviews of the crisis management plan shall be maintained.

## **2.7 Food Defense and Food Fraud**

### **2.7.1 Food Defense Plan (Mandatory)**

2.7.1.1 A food defense threat assessment shall be conducted to identify potential threats caused by a deliberate act of sabotage or terrorist-like incident.

2.7.1.2 A food defense plan shall be documented, implemented, and maintained based on the threat assessment (refer to 2.7.1.1). The food defense plan shall meet legislative requirements as applicable and shall include at a minimum:

- i. The methods, responsibility, and criteria for preventing food adulteration caused by a deliberate act of sabotage or terrorist-like incident;
- ii. The name of the senior site management person responsible for food defense;
- iii. The methods implemented to ensure only authorized personnel have access to production equipment and vehicles, manufacturing, and storage areas through designated access points;
- iv. The methods implemented to protect sensitive processing points from intentional adulteration;
- v. The measures taken to ensure the secure receipt and storage of raw materials, ingredients, packaging, equipment, and hazardous chemicals to protect them from deliberate acts of sabotage or terrorist-like incidents;

- vi. The measures implemented to ensure raw materials, ingredients, packaging (including labels), work-in-progress, process inputs, and finished products are held under secure storage and transportation conditions; and
- vii. The methods implemented to record and control access to the premises by personnel, contractors, and visitors.

2.7.1.3 Instruction shall be provided to all relevant personnel on the effective implementation of the food defense plan (refer to 2.9.2.1).

2.7.1.4 The food defense threat assessment and prevention plan shall be reviewed and tested at least annually or when the threat level as defined in the threat assessment changes.

Records of reviews of the food defense plan shall be maintained.

## **2.7.2 Food Fraud (Mandatory)**

2.7.2.1 The methods, responsibility, and criteria for identifying the site's vulnerability to food fraud shall be documented, implemented, and maintained. The food fraud vulnerability assessment shall include the site's susceptibility to product substitution, mislabeling, dilution, and counterfeiting or stolen goods that may adversely impact food safety.

2.7.2.2 A food fraud mitigation plan shall be developed and implemented, which specifies the methods by which the identified food fraud vulnerabilities shall be controlled and how the plan is communicated to relevant personnel to ensure effective implementation.

2.7.2.3 The food fraud vulnerability assessment and mitigation plan shall be reviewed and verified at least annually with gaps and corrective actions documented.

Records of reviews shall be maintained.

## **2.8 Allergen Management**

### **2.8.1 Allergen Management (Mandatory)**

2.8.1.1 The methods and responsibility for the control of allergens and to prevent sources of allergens from contaminating product shall be documented and implemented. The allergen management program shall include:

- i. A hazard and risk analysis and control measures of those agricultural inputs and processing aids, including food grade lubricants, that contain food allergens (refer to food safety plan 2.4.3);
- ii. An assessment of workplace-related food allergens that may originate from change rooms, vending machines, lunchrooms, and visitors;
- iii. A list of allergens that is applicable in the country of production and the country (ies) of destination if known;
- iv. A list of allergens that is accessible by relevant personnel; and
- v. Individual management plans for control of the identified allergens.

2.8.1.2 Product labeling, in accordance with regulatory requirements, shall include allergens where risks from cross-contamination have been documented.

## 2.9 Training

### 2.9.1 Training Requirements

2.9.1.1 The responsibility for establishing and implementing the training needs of the organization's personnel to ensure they have the required competencies to carry out those functions affecting products, legality, and safety shall be defined and documented (refer to 2.1.1.6).

2.9.1.2 Appropriate training shall be provided for personnel carrying out the tasks essential to the effective implementation of the SQF System and the maintenance of food safety and regulatory requirements.

### 2.9.2 Training Program (Mandatory)

2.9.2.1 A training program shall be documented and implemented. It shall outline the necessary competencies for specific duties and the training methods to be applied to relevant personnel upon initial hire and for ongoing refresher training. The training program shall include at a minimum:

- i. Appropriate HACCP training for personnel involved in developing and maintaining food safety plans;
- ii. Monitoring and corrective action procedures for all personnel engaged in operating critical control points (CCPs);
- iii. Personal hygiene training for all personnel involved in the handling of food products and food contact surfaces;
- iv. Good Agricultural/Operating Practices for all personnel engaged in food handling operations;
- v. Allergen management, food defense and food fraud for all relevant on-site personnel; and
- vi. Identification and implementation of refresher training.

2.9.2.2 Training materials, the delivery of training, and work instructions on all tasks critical to meeting regulatory compliance and the maintenance of food safety shall be provided in language(s) understood by personnel.

2.9.2.3 Training records shall be maintained and include:

- i. Participant name;
- ii. Skills description;
- iii. Description of the training provided;
- iv. Date training completed;
- v. Trainer or training provider; and
- vi. Verification that the trainee is competent to complete the required tasks.

# Module 7: Good Agricultural Practices for Outdoor Farming of Plant Products

## 7.1 Site Requirements

### 7.1.1 Property Location

7.1.1.1 Production and growing sites shall conduct a risk assessment to evaluate and document the risk to crops due to prior land use, adjacent land use, and other environmental factors, including structures and equipment. Consideration shall be given to the following:

- i. History of land use;
- ii. Topography;
- iii. Adjacent land use; and
- iv. Other factors that may impact the ability to supply safe product.

Where risks are identified, control measures shall be implemented to reduce the identified hazards to an acceptable level, and the risks shall be re-evaluated in the event of any circumstances or changes that may impact the production of safe product.

7.1.1.2 Records shall be maintained for each production site listing what crops have been planted and harvested on the site.

## 7.2 Buildings, Storage, and Equipment

### 7.2.1 Field and Storage Buildings

7.2.1.1 All buildings used to store equipment, field chemicals, field packaging materials, and/or field products shall be designed and constructed to enable compliance with good hygiene practices, avoid product contamination, and in a manner that does not affect the purity, strength, and composition of final products.

7.2.1.2 Buildings designated to store field product or packaging shall be of durable construction. Internal surfaces shall be smooth and impervious with a light-colored finish and shall be kept clean.

7.2.1.3 Storage rooms shall be designed and constructed to allow for the separate, hygienic storage of harvesting and packing utensils away from farm machinery and hazardous chemicals and toxic substances.

## **7.2.2 Controlled Temperature and Atmosphere Storage**

7.2.2.1 The producer shall ensure any chilling, cold storage and controlled atmosphere facility is of suitable size, design, and construction, and is capable of effective operational performance, which includes sufficient refrigeration and controlled atmosphere capacity for chilling or storing the maximum anticipated throughput of products with allowance for periodic cleaning of storage.

7.2.2.2 Chilling, cold storage, and controlled atmosphere storage facilities shall ensure the following design and construction standards are being maintained:

- i. Floors are constructed of smooth, dense, impact-resistant material that is impervious to liquid and easily cleaned;
- ii. Floors are effectively graded to allow the effective removal of all overflow or wastewater under normal conditions;
- iii. Walls, ceilings, doors, frames, and hatches are of solid construction, and internal surfaces are smooth, impervious, and with a light-colored finish;
- iv. Lighting is shatter-proof, non-breakable, or provided with protective covers;
- v. Discharge from defrosting and condensate lines is controlled and discharged to the drainage system; and
- vi. Loading dock areas are appropriately sealed, drained, and graded.

7.2.2.3 Chilling, cold storage, and controlled atmosphere facilities shall be fitted with temperature monitoring equipment or a suitable temperature monitoring device that is properly located to monitor the warmest part of the room and is fitted with a temperature gauge that is easily read and accessible.

## **7.2.3 Storage of Agricultural Chemicals, Soil Amendments, and Toxic Substances**

7.2.3.1 Agriculture chemicals, fertilizers, manure, soil amendments, and other toxic substances shall be stored so as not to present a hazard to personnel, product, product handling equipment, or areas in which product is handled, stored, or transported. Specifically, they shall not be stored inside food handling areas and product and packaging storage rooms.

7.2.3.2 Chemical storage locations shall:

- i. Be compliant with national and local legislation;
- ii. Be designed to ensure there is no cross-contamination between chemicals, proper ventilation to the exterior, and spill control or containment (including tank capacity);
- iii. Be equipped with details of purchase, appropriate and compliant labels, vendor approval, and an up-to-date inventory of all chemicals contained within and removed from the storage location; and
- iv. Be equipped with personnel health and safety requirements, such as signage, safety data sheets, instruction, emergency wash facilities, and other labor law requirements.

- 7.2.3.3 Product contact chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, rodenticides, fumigants, insecticides, sanitizers, and detergents shall be stored separately and in their original containers.
- 7.2.3.4 Soil amendments shall be stored separately from crop, field, or irrigation water sources, so that contamination from runoff is avoided either by locating the soil amendments a reasonable distance from the crop or through the use of other physical barriers.
- 7.2.3.5 The site shall dispose of chemical waste and empty containers in accordance with regulatory requirements and ensure that:
- i. Empty chemical containers are not re-used;
  - ii. Empty containers are labeled or rendered unusable, isolated, and securely stored while awaiting collection; and
  - iii. Unused and obsolete chemicals are stored under secure conditions while awaiting authorized disposal by an approved vendor.

#### **7.2.4 Farm Machinery, Product Handling Equipment, and Utensils**

- 7.2.4.1 The methods and responsibilities to ensure that farm machinery, equipment, vehicles, tools, utensils, harvest containers, and other items or materials used in farming operations that may contact produce do not pose a risk to product safety, shall be documented and implemented. Procedures shall ensure that these items are:
- i. Designed and constructed to allow for the efficient handling of product and that surfaces in direct contact with product are constructed of materials that will not contribute a food safety risk;
  - ii. Identified and included in preventive maintenance and cleaning schedules;
  - iii. Stored to avoid contamination of inputs or products; and
  - iv. Not used for non-harvest purposes, unless this is clearly identified, and the items or materials are not returned to use for harvest.
- 7.2.4.2 Vehicles used for the transport of produce shall be adequate for that purpose and shall not be used to carry waste materials, manure, chemicals, or other hazardous substances that could cause produce contamination without thorough cleaning and inspection.
- 7.2.4.3 Tractors, harvesters, field packing equipment, and machinery driven over ground crops shall be fitted with drip trays to prevent contamination of the crop by lubricants and oils.

## 7.3 Farm Maintenance, Cleaning, and Pest/Animal Control

### 7.3.1 Equipment Maintenance and Calibration

7.3.1.1 The maintenance of equipment and buildings shall be planned, scheduled, and carried out in a manner that prevents any risk of contamination of product or equipment.

Maintenance and calibration records shall be maintained.

7.3.1.2 The calibration and re-calibration of chemical application, measuring, testing, and inspection equipment used in the growing and harvesting process shall be documented and implemented.

7.3.1.3 Equipment shall be calibrated against manufacturer, national or international reference standards, methods, and schedules. In cases where such standards are not available, the site shall indicate this and provide evidence to support the calibration reference method used.

### 7.3.2 Pest Prevention

7.3.2.1 The property adjacent to buildings, storage facilities, machinery, and equipment shall be kept free of waste or accumulated debris so it does not attract pests and vermin. Harvested products and food contact packaging materials shall be free of evidence of pest and vermin infestation.

7.3.2.2 The pest prevention program shall:

- i. Describe the methods and responsibility for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the pest prevention program;
- ii. Record pest sightings and trend the frequency of pest activity to target pesticide applications;
- iii. Outline the methods used to prevent pest problems;
- iv. Outline the methods used to eliminate pests when found;
- v. Outline the frequency with which pest status is to be checked;
- vi. Include on a site map the identification, location, number, and type of bait stations set; and
- vii. List the chemicals used. Chemicals are required to be approved by the relevant authority and their Safety Data Sheets (SDS) made available.

Records of pest inspections and pest applications shall be maintained.

### 7.3.3 Animal Control

7.3.3.1 The operation shall have a written risk assessment on animal activity in and around the production of produce that has been implemented and monitored.

7.3.3.2 Measures shall be in place to control domestic and wild animals in the growing fields and to prevent the presence of domestic or wild animals in storage and product handling areas.

### **7.3.4 Cleaning**

7.3.4.1 The cleaning of product contact surfaces, field harvesting equipment, and sanitary facilities shall be documented and implemented. Cleaning procedures and schedules shall include:

- i. A list of equipment, harvesting tools, sanitary facilities, and storage areas that require periodic cleaning;
- ii. Instructions on how cleaning is to be performed for the various areas and equipment;
- iii. The frequency of when cleaning is to be completed;
- iv. Personnel responsible for performing and evaluating the cleaning; and
- v. Records of cleaning activities.

7.3.4.2 A schedule shall be prepared that indicates the frequency of verifying the effectiveness of cleaning product contact surfaces, field harvesting equipment, and sanitary facilities, and who is responsible for completing verification activities.

## **7.4 Personal Hygiene**

### **7.4.1 Personnel Practices**

7.4.1.1 A documented and implemented procedure for personal hygiene and personnel practices shall ensure that personnel engaged in the handling of product use appropriate personal hygiene practices. The procedure shall include instructions that

- i. Jewelry and other loose objects that pose a threat to the safety of the product are not worn or taken onto any growing, product handling, or storage operations;
- ii. Fingernail polish, artificial nails, and long nails are not permitted where product is handled with bare hands;
- iii. False eyelashes and eyelash extensions are not permitted; and
- iv. Smoking, chewing, eating, drinking (except for water which shall be available to all personnel), or spitting is not permitted in any growing areas including on field harvesting rigs and during harvesting and packing operations.

Personnel and visitor practices shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions shall be implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices (refer to 7.5.3.3).

7.4.1.2 Personnel who are suffering from or are carriers of an infectious disease that can be transferred through food shall not engage in growing, product handling, or field harvesting operations.

7.4.1.3 A medical screening procedure shall be in place for all personnel who handle product or food contact materials and shall also apply to all visitors and contractors.

7.4.1.4 Procedures, including methods and responsibilities, shall be in place that specify the handling of product and/or product contact surfaces that have been in contact with or exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.



7.4.1.5 Personnel with exposed cuts, sores, or lesions shall not engage in handling product or product contact surfaces. Minor cuts or abrasions on exposed parts of the body shall be covered with a suitable waterproof and colored dressing.

#### **7.4.2 Sanitary Facilities and Handwashing**

7.4.2.1 Toilet facilities shall be provided and designed, constructed, and located in a manner that minimizes the potential risk for product contamination.

- i. There shall be sufficient toilet facilities for the maximum number of personnel, and they shall be constructed so they can be easily cleaned and maintained;
- ii. Handwash basins with clean and potable water, hand soap, disposable towels or effective hand drying devices, waste bins, and a tank that captures used handwash water for disposal (if not connected to drains) shall be provided inside or adjacent to toilet facilities;
- iii. Signage in appropriate languages shall be provided adjacent to handwash basins instructing personnel to wash their hands after each toilet visit;
- iv. Racks for protective clothing used by personnel shall be provided;
- v. Toilets shall be located to provide easy access for farmworkers; and
- vi. Toilet and wash stations shall be maintained in clean and sanitary conditions.

Tools/equipment used for cleaning toilet rooms shall not be used to clean operational areas.

7.4.2.2 Personnel shall have clean hands, and hands shall be washed by all personnel:

- i. Before handling product;
- ii. Before putting on gloves;
- iii. After each visit to a toilet;
- iv. After using a handkerchief, handling dirty or contaminated material; and
- v. After smoking, eating, or drinking.

#### **7.4.3 Protective Clothing**

7.4.3.1 Protective clothing (e.g., uniforms and smocks) shall be effectively maintained, stored, laundered, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.

7.4.3.2 Where applicable, clothing (i.e., any outer garment), including footwear, shall be in good condition, cleaned, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.

7.4.3.3 If rubber or disposable gloves are used, the operation shall have a glove-use policy in place, and personnel shall still adhere to the handwashing practices outlined above.

#### **7.4.4 Visitors**

7.4.4.1 All visitors, including management and maintenance personnel, shall follow all personnel practices designated by the site when entering or close to fields, sheds, packing facilities, or storage locations. These practices include, but are not limited to, the removal of jewelry and other loose objects and wearing suitable protective clothing.

7.4.4.2 Visitors who are exhibiting visible signs of illness or have been in recent direct contact with other sites, animals, or agricultural commodities, shall be prohibited from entering any growing or product handling or field harvesting operation.

7.4.4.3 Unsupervised children shall not be permitted to enter any harvesting, packing, or food storage areas.

#### **7.4.5 Personnel Food, Drink, and Personal Storage**

7.4.5.1 Provision shall be made to store personal belongings away from crops, harvesting, field and packing operations, and harvesting equipment.

7.4.5.2 Areas for meal breaks shall be designated and located away from food contact/handling zones and harvesting equipment.

## **7.5 Harvesting, Field Packaging, Product Handling Practices, and Transport**

### **7.5.1 Growing and Harvesting Inspection**

7.5.1.1 The methods and responsibility for conducting inspections to assess biological, chemical, and physical hazards and their risks to products being harvested shall be documented and implemented. Inspections shall occur prior to and during harvesting and through to the transport of product to its next destination (refer to 7.5.2 and 2.5.4.3).

Records of field and harvesting inspections shall be maintained.

### **7.5.2 Foreign Matter and Glass Hazard Control**

7.5.2.1 The methods and responsibility for the prevention of foreign matter and glass contamination shall be documented and implemented. Procedures shall ensure:

- i. Containers, equipment, and other utensils made of glass, porcelain, ceramic, brittle plastic, or similar materials are not permitted where exposed product is handled unless clearly identified, required for effective operational controls, and regularly inspected;
- ii. Regular inspections are conducted to ensure food handling/contact zones areas are free of glass and brittle plastic and any items made from the previously identified materials are in good repair;
- iii. Product harvesting and handling areas are routinely inspected to remove risks from foreign materials such as debris, wood, stones, metal, and other physical hazards; and
- iv. Personnel are made aware of their responsibility to adhere to the site's foreign matter and glass controls.

Records of foreign material and glass inspections shall be maintained.

### **7.5.3 Harvesting and Field Packing Practices**

7.5.3.1 Personnel conducting activities where harvested product is being packaged in the field shall ensure that utensils, personal effects, and inputs/materials used during field packaging do not pose a food safety risk to products. These can include:

- i. Aprons and gloves are kept clean and not left on product, work surfaces, equipment, or packaging material but hung on apron and glove racks provided;
- ii. Harvest containers, if used, are inspected prior to use to ensure they are clean and free from physical debris or materials;
- iii. Knives and cutting instruments where used are approved for use, controlled, and kept clean and well maintained;
- iv. Cloths, towels, or other cleaning materials that pose a risk of cross-contamination are not used to wipe produce;
- v. All packaging materials are appropriate for their intended use, kept off the ground out in the fields and off the floor of transport vehicles; and
- vi. Non-food waste is contained in bins identified for this purpose. Waste does not come into contact with produce and is removed regularly and not allowed to accumulate (refer to 7.8).

7.5.3.2 Personnel conducting harvesting activities shall ensure product is not contaminated during the harvesting process. Work instructions and training shall include the following practices:

- i. Commodity specific handling and harvesting instructions;
- ii. Personnel access and controls on movement/traffic flow;
- iii. Ensuring damaged or decayed product is not harvested or culled; and
- iv. Ensuring product that contacts the ground is not harvested (unless that product typically contacts the ground).

7.5.3.3 Personnel practices and activities, including those listed in 7.5, shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

#### **7.5.4 Transport**

7.5.4.1 Personnel conducting loading and transporting of harvested and/or packaged product shall ensure that product integrity is maintained. Work instructions and training shall include the following practices:

- i. Inspections for ensuring vehicles are clean, in good repair, suitable for the purpose, and free from odors or other conditions that may impact negatively on products;
- ii. Securing vehicles (e.g., trucks/vans/containers) from tampering using a seal or other agreed-upon and acceptable device or system;
- iii. Verification that appropriate storage conditions are maintained during transportation to final destinations;
- iv. Prevention of cross-contamination with other hazards and potential spoilage;
- v. Use of appropriate stock rotation practices; and
- vi. Recording and maintaining documents for vehicle inspection, transport conditions, and stock rotation.

## 7.6 Water Management

### 7.6.1 Water Systems

- 7.6.1.1 A water description plan shall be prepared that describes the water sources and the production blocks they serve, and shall include one or more of the following: maps, photographs, drawings, or other means to communicate the location of the water sources, permanent fixtures, and the flow of the water system. The plan shall be kept current and revised when changes occur.
- 7.6.1.2 Agricultural water shall be sourced from a location and in a manner that is compliant with applicable regulations.
- 7.6.1.3 Water system intended to convey untreated human or animal waste shall be separated from conveyances utilized to deliver agricultural water.

### 7.6.2 Irrigation Water

- 7.6.2.1 Agricultural water shall be drawn from a known clean source or treated to make it suitable for use. Irrigation during growing and/or harvesting periods shall be conducted so that it does not contaminate the crop and shall include documentation of the source, type, and timing for each commodity and field or plot location. Hazards and risk associated with irrigation water, including types, sources, storage, proximity to concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), untreated soil amendments, wildlife, pre-harvest intervals, and resulting preventive controls will be in accordance with the water management plan outlined in 7.6.3.
- 7.6.2.2 In circumstances where irrigation water is treated to render it acceptable, the water after treatment shall conform to the microbiological standards as outlined in element 7.6.3.

### 7.6.3 Water Management Plan

- 7.6.3.1 The water description plan described in 7.6.1.1 shall have a documented hazard analysis conducted annually and whenever changes occur to its sources, methods of transportation, storage conditions, or environmental conditions impacting it (refer to 2.4.3). Control methods applied to minimize risks associated with the hazards shall be included in the water management plan (refer to 7.6.3.2).
- 7.6.3.2 A water management plan describing the methods and responsibilities for managing the different types and uses of water at the site (farm) shall be documented and implemented. The plan shall include:
- i. Description of where and how water is used (e.g., washing and treating products, irrigation, pesticide application, etc.);
  - ii. Maintenance and cleaning of the water system (refer to 7.3.1 and 7.3.4);
  - iii. The hazard analysis and preventive controls that are to be applied for the use of water during growing and harvesting, including monitoring, corrective action, and verification for each control measure; and
  - iv. Documentation and records referenced.

Control measures may include:

- i. Water treatment and/or testing;
- ii. Water temperature;
- iii. Re-circulation, aeration;
- iv. Source alteration or change scheduling;
- v. Timing of use or application; and
- vi. Temporary or permanent protection of water sources from possible contamination (e.g., livestock [CAFO], sewage treatment, human habitation, heavy rains, flooding).

7.6.3.3 Water used for washing and treating product, cleaning of product contact surfaces, and handwashing shall be monitored to ensure it complies with potable water microbiological and chemical standards or criteria established in the country of production and destination. The monitoring procedures shall include:

- i. A schedule indicating the location and frequency of monitoring (refer to 7.6.3.2), which shall be decided by the risk assessment, best practices within the country of production, or applicable legislation;
- ii. Reference to the potable water criteria or standards;
- iii. List of microbiological and/or chemical testing being conducted;
- iv. Reference to the approved laboratory that is accredited to ISO 17025 or equivalent;
- v. Corrective actions that will be taken if water and/or ice do not meet established criteria or standards including further water treatment, other source possibilities, non-conforming products that might be affected, or other alternative actions; and
- vi. Records maintained for monitoring and/or corrective actions.

Where ice is purchased and/or made on-site, it shall meet the microbiological and quality standards stated above.

## **7.7 Fertilizers, Agriculture Chemicals, and Soil Amendments**

### **7.7.1 Purchasing Chemicals**

7.7.1.1 Purchased fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, and soil amendments shall be approved for use in the country of production (site location), the country of destination, and for the specific commodity. Purchased chemicals, where required by regulation, shall be labeled with the active ingredient(s), applicable dosage rates, and application instructions.

Where no regulations or partial regulations govern the use of chemicals, the grower/producer shall have a documented risk assessment on the justification for use of non-regulated chemicals.

7.7.1.2 Chemicals that are specifically banned for use in the country of production or the country of destination shall not be purchased or stored.

7.7.1.3 Suppliers of chemicals shall be included in the approved supplier program (refer to 2.3.4), and a current inventory of all chemicals purchased and used shall be maintained (refer to 7.2.3).

## **7.7.2 Soil Amendments**

7.7.2.1 The methods and responsibility for soil amendment preparation and/or treatment shall be documented, implemented, and designed to prevent contamination of product. The procedures or work instructions shall outline how to treat manure and other untreated organic fertilizers ensuring:

- i. Treatments and application methods are verified as being in compliance with the approved or recommended methods applied and do not pose a hazard to the soil amendment;
- ii. Treatment methods applied are validated as being appropriate and effective at inactivating pathogens in organic soil amendments;
- iii. No raw untreated manure is used; and
- iv. Records of the approvals, validation, and verification of organic soil amendment treatments are maintained.

7.7.2.2 The methods and responsibility for soil amendment applications shall be documented and implemented to ensure organic soil amendment applications are timed to pose minimum risk to product safety including:

- i. All applications of soil amendments are in accordance with national or local guidelines best practices and codes of Good Agricultural Practice;
- ii. Equipment used for soil amendment application is maintained in good condition and calibrated to ensure accurate application (refer to 7.3.1);
- iii. Records of all equipment maintenance and calibration are maintained;
- iv. Signage complies with national and local codes of practice; and
- v. Records of soil amendment applications are maintained and contain sufficient detailed data.

## **7.7.3 Agricultural Chemicals**

7.7.3.1 A spray or crop protection program indicating the applications used for a target pest or disease and the threshold levels that initiate application shall be documented and implemented.

Records of all chemical applications include:

- i. The chemical used;
- ii. Crop information;
- iii. Date, method, concentration, and frequency of application; and
- iv. Evidence that the timing between chemical application and harvest complies with the approved harvest interval for the chemical application.

7.7.3.2 The person making decisions on chemical applications shall:

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of and access to information regarding chemical applications and the maximum residue limits allowable in destination markets;
- ii. Use only chemicals approved for cultivation of the specified products and approved for use in the intended market; and
- iii. Demonstrate competence and knowledge of chemical applications and crop withholding periods.

## 7.8 Waste Disposal

### 7.8.1 Waste Handling and Disposal

7.8.1.1 The methods and responsibility that describes the effective and efficient disposal of all waste shall be documented and implemented. Waste includes:

- i. Inedible material;
- ii. Unusable packaging, including trademarked material; and
- iii. Liquid and unsanitary waste from the farm.

7.8.1.2 Waste systems shall be designed and constructed, and waste shall be regularly removed from the farm, field, and packing facility so that it does not become a food safety risk to finished product, growing, harvesting, and packing operations and adjoining or adjacent waterways and fields.

7.8.1.3 Inedible waste designated for animal feed shall be stored and handled so it does not cause a risk to the animal or further processing for human consumption.

# Module 8: Good Agricultural Practices for Farming of Grains and Pulses

## 8.1 Site Requirements

### 8.1.1 Property Location

8.1.1.1 Production and growing sites shall conduct a risk assessment to evaluate and document the risk to crops due to prior land use, adjacent land use, and other environmental factors including structures and equipment. Consideration shall be given to the following:

- i. History of land use;
- ii. Topography;
- iii. Adjacent land use; and
- iv. Other factors that may impact the ability to supply safe product.

Where risks are identified, control measures shall be implemented to reduce the identified hazards to an acceptable level and the risks shall be re-evaluated in the event of any circumstances or changes that may impact the production of safe product.

8.1.1.2 Records shall be maintained for each production site listing what crops have been planted and harvested on the site.

## 8.2 Buildings, Storage, and Equipment

### 8.2.1 Silos, Bins, and Storage Buildings

8.2.1.1 All buildings used to store equipment, field chemicals, and/or field products shall be designed and constructed to enable compliance with good hygiene practices and avoid product contamination.

8.2.1.2 Buildings designated to store field product or packaging shall be of durable construction. Internal surfaces shall be smooth and impervious with a light-colored finish and shall be kept clean.

8.2.1.3 Silos or bins used to store seed or food crops shall be constructed of approved materials and designed to remain dry, clean, and free from any dirt residues, enable safe fumigation practices, and prevent the invasion of pests, so the stored products remain fit for purpose and in an acceptable condition.



8.2.1.4 Storage rooms shall be designed and constructed to allow for the separate, hygienic storage of harvesting and packing utensils and packing materials (e.g., bulk bags) away from farm machinery and hazardous chemicals and toxic substances.

## **8.2.2 Storage of Agricultural Chemicals, Soil Amendments, and Toxic Substances**

8.2.2.1 Agriculture chemicals, fertilizers, manure, soil amendment, and other toxic substances shall be stored so as not to present a hazard to personnel, product, product handling equipment, or areas in which product is handled, stored, or transported. Specifically, they shall not be stored inside product handling areas and product and packaging storage rooms.

8.2.2.2 Chemical storage locations shall be:

- i. Compliant with national and local legislation;
- ii. Designed to ensure there is no cross-contamination between chemicals, proper ventilation to the exterior, and spill control or containment (including tank capacity);
- iii. Equipped with details of purchase, appropriate and compliant labels, vendor approval, and an up-to-date inventory of all chemicals contained within and removed from the storage location; and
- iv. Equipped with personnel health and safety requirements, such as signage, safety data sheets, instruction, emergency wash facilities, and other labor law requirements.

8.2.2.3 Product contact chemicals, such as pesticides, herbicides, rodenticides, fumigants, insecticides, sanitizers, and detergents shall be stored separately and in their original containers.

8.2.2.4 Soil amendments shall be stored separately from crop, field, or irrigation water sources so that contamination from run-off is avoided either by locating the soil amendment a reasonable distance from the crop or through the use of other physical barriers.

8.2.2.5 The site shall dispose of chemical waste and empty containers in accordance with regulatory requirements and ensure that:

- i. Empty chemical containers are not re-used;
- ii. Empty containers are labeled or rendered unusable, isolated, and securely stored while awaiting collection; and
- iii. Unused and obsolete chemicals are stored under secure conditions while awaiting authorized disposal by an approved vendor.

## **8.2.3 Farm Machinery, Product Handling Equipment, and Utensils**

8.2.3.1 The methods and responsibilities to ensure that farm machinery, equipment, vehicles, tools, utensils, harvest containers, and other items or materials used in farming operations that may contact product, do not pose a risk to product safety, shall be documented and implemented. Procedures shall ensure that these items are:

- i. Designed and constructed to allow for the efficient handling of product, and that surfaces in direct contact with product are constructed of materials that will not contribute a food safety risk;
- ii. Identified and included in preventive maintenance and cleaning schedules;
- iii. Stored to avoid contamination of inputs or products; and
- iv. Not used for non-harvest purposes unless this is clearly identified and the items or materials are not returned to use for harvest.

8.2.3.2 Vehicles used for the transport of product shall be adequate for that purpose and not used to carry waste materials, manure, chemicals, or other hazardous substances that could cause product contamination without thorough cleaning and inspection.

8.2.3.3 Tractors, harvesters, and machinery driven over ground crops shall be fitted with drip trays to prevent contamination of the crop by lubricants and oils.

## **8.3 Farm Maintenance, Cleaning, and Pest/Animal Control**

### **8.3.1 Equipment Maintenance and Calibration**

8.3.1.1 The maintenance of equipment and buildings shall be planned, scheduled, and carried out in a manner that prevents any risk of contamination to product or equipment.

Maintenance and calibration records shall be maintained.

8.3.1.2 The calibration and re-calibration of chemical application, measuring, testing, and inspection equipment used in the growing and harvesting process shall be documented and implemented.

8.3.1.3 Equipment shall be calibrated against manufacturer, national or international reference standards, methods, and schedules. In cases where such standards are not available, the site shall indicate this and provide evidence to support the calibration reference method used.

### **8.3.2 Pest Prevention**

8.3.2.1 The property adjacent to buildings, storage facilities, machinery, and equipment shall be kept free of waste or accumulated debris so it does not attract pests and vermin. Harvested products and food contact packaging materials shall be free of evidence of pest and vermin infestation.

8.3.2.2 The pest prevention program shall:

- i. Describe the methods and responsibility for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the pest prevention program;
- ii. Record pest sightings and trend the frequency of pest activity to target pesticide applications;
- iii. Outline the methods used to prevent pest problems;
- iv. Outline the methods used to eliminate pests when found;

- v. Outline the frequency with which pest status is to be checked;
- vi. Include on a site map the identification, location, number, and type of bait stations set; and
- vii. List the chemicals used. Chemicals are required to be approved by the relevant authority and their Safety Data Sheets (SDS) made available.

Records of pest inspections and pest applications shall be maintained.

### **8.3.3 Animal Control**

8.3.3.1 The operation shall have a written risk assessment on animal activity in and around the production of product that has been implemented and monitored.

8.3.3.2 Measures shall be in place to control domestic and wild animals in the growing fields and do not allow the presence of domestic or wild animals in storage and product handling areas.

### **8.3.4 Cleaning**

8.3.4.1 The cleaning of product contact surfaces, field harvesting equipment, and sanitary facilities shall be documented and implemented. Cleaning procedures and schedules shall include:

- i. A list of equipment, harvesting tools, sanitary facilities, and storage areas that require periodic cleaning;
- ii. Instructions on how cleaning is to be performed for the various areas and equipment;
- iii. The frequency of when cleaning is to be completed;
- iv. Personnel responsible for performing and evaluating the cleaning; and
- v. Records of cleaning activities.

8.3.4.2 A schedule shall be prepared that indicates the frequency of verifying the effectiveness of cleaning product contact surfaces, field harvesting equipment, and sanitary facilities, and who is responsible for completing verification activities.

## **8.4 Personal Hygiene**

### **8.4.1 Personnel Practices**

8.4.1.1 A documented and implemented procedure for personal hygiene and personnel practices shall ensure that personnel engaged in the handling of product use appropriate personal hygiene practices. The procedure shall include instructions that:

- i. Jewelry and other loose objects that pose a threat to the safety of the product shall not be worn or taken onto any product handling or storage operations.
- ii. Smoking, chewing, eating, drinking (except for water which shall be available to all personnel), or spitting is not permitted in any growing areas including on field harvesting rigs and during harvesting and packing operations.

Personnel and visitor practices shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

Note: The wearing of plain bands with no stones or jewelry accepted for religious or cultural reasons and prescribed medical alert bracelets can be permitted; however, the site will need to consider its customer requirements and the applicable food legislation.

- 8.4.1.2 Personnel who are suffering from or are carriers of an infectious disease that can be transferred through food shall not engage in growing, product handling, or field harvesting operations.
- 8.4.1.3 A medical screening procedure shall be in place for all personnel who handle product or food contact materials and shall also apply to all visitors and contractors.
- 8.4.1.4 Procedures, including responsibilities, shall be in place that specify the handling of product and/or product contact surfaces that have been in contact with or exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.
- 8.4.1.5 Personnel with exposed cuts, sores, or lesions shall not engage in handling product or product contact surfaces. Minor cuts or abrasions on exposed parts of the body shall be covered with a suitable waterproof and colored dressing.

#### **8.4.2 Sanitary Facilities and Handwashing**

- 8.4.2.1 Toilet facilities shall be provided and designed, constructed, and located in a manner that minimizes the potential risk for product contamination.
  - i. There shall be sufficient toilet facilities for the maximum number of personnel, and they shall be constructed so they can be easily cleaned and maintained;
  - ii. Handwash basins with clean and potable water, hand soap, disposable towels or effective hand drying devices, waste bins, and a tank that captures used handwash water for disposal (if not connected to drains) shall be provided inside or adjacent to toilet facilities;
  - iii. Signage in appropriate languages shall be provided adjacent to handwash basins instructing personnel to wash their hands after each toilet visit;
  - iv. Racks for protective clothing used by farm personnel shall be provided;
  - v. Toilets shall be located s to provide easy access for farmworkers; and
  - vi. Toilet and wash stations shall be maintained in clean and sanitary conditions.

Tools/equipment used for cleaning toilet rooms shall not be used to clean operational areas.

- 8.4.2.2 Personnel shall have clean hands and hands shall be washed by all personnel:
  - i. Before handling product;
  - ii. Before putting on gloves;
  - iii. After each visit to a toilet;

- iv. After using a handkerchief, handling dirty or contaminated material; and
- v. After smoking, eating, or drinking.

### **8.4.3 Protective Clothing**

- 8.4.3.1 Protective clothing (e.g., uniforms and smocks) shall be effectively maintained, stored, laundered, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.
- 8.4.3.2 Where applicable, clothing, including outer garments and footwear, shall be in good condition, cleaned and sanitized, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.
- 8.4.3.3 If rubber or disposable gloves are used, the operation shall have a glove-use policy in place, and personnel shall still adhere to the handwashing practices outlined above.

### **8.4.4 Visitors**

- 8.4.4.1 All visitors (including management and maintenance personnel) shall follow all personnel practices designated by the site for personnel when entering or close to fields, sheds, packing facilities, or storage locations. These practices include, but are not limited to, the removal of jewelry and other loose objects and wearing suitable protective clothing.
- 8.4.4.2 Visitors who are exhibiting visible signs of illness or have been in recent direct contact with other sites, animals, or agricultural commodities, shall be prohibited from entering any growing or product handling or field harvesting operation.
- 8.4.4.3 Unsupervised children shall not be permitted to enter any harvesting, product handling, or storage areas.

### **8.4.5 Personnel Food, Drink, and Personal Storage**

- 8.4.5.1 Provision shall be made to store personal belongings away from crops, harvesting equipment, and product handling operations.
- 8.4.5.2 Areas for meal breaks shall be designated and located away from product handling areas and harvesting equipment.

## **8.5 Harvesting, Product Handling Practices, and Transport**

### **8.5.1 Harvesting Inspection, Product Handling, and Transport**

- 8.5.1.1 The methods and responsibility for conducting inspections to assess biological, chemical, and physical hazards and their risks to products being harvested shall be documented and implemented. Inspections shall occur prior to and during harvesting and through to the transport of product to its next destination (refer to 2.5.4.3).

Records of field and harvesting inspections shall be maintained.

- 8.5.1.2 The methods and responsibilities for the handling and packaging of crops, where applicable, shall be documented and implemented. It shall ensure:

- i. Inspection and removal of physical hazards;
- ii. Damaged or decayed product is not harvested or culled;
- iii. Personnel access and controls on movement;
- iv. Materials that come into contact with products are clean and in good repair; and
- v. Packaging materials are used and stored during use in a manner that prevents product contamination.

8.5.1.3 The methods and responsibilities for loading, transport, and unloading of crops to ensure product integrity is maintained shall be documented and implemented. Training and supervised personnel practices shall include:

- i. The inspection of vehicles or other modes of transport to ensure they are clean and functional;
- ii. Verification that appropriate storage conditions are maintained during transportation to final destinations;
- iii. Prevention of cross-contamination with other hazards and potential spoilage;
- iv. Use of appropriate stock rotation practices; and Recording and maintaining documents for vehicle inspection, transport conditions, and stock rotation.

## 8.6 Water Management

### 8.6.1 Water Systems

8.6.1.1 A water description plan shall be prepared that describes the water sources and the production blocks they serve and shall include one or more of the following: maps, photographs, drawings, or other means to communicate the location of the water sources, permanent fixtures, and the flow of the water system. The plan shall be kept current and revised when changes occur.

8.6.1.2 Agricultural water shall be sourced from a location and in a manner that is compliant with applicable regulations.

8.6.1.3 Water system intended to convey untreated human or animal waste shall be separated from conveyances utilized to deliver agricultural water.

### 8.6.2 Irrigation Water

8.6.2.1 Agricultural water shall be drawn from a known clean source or treated to make it suitable for use. The producer shall conduct an analysis of the hazards to the irrigation water supply from its source through to application, establish acceptance criteria for the monitoring of water, and validate and verify the integrity of the water used to ensure it is fit for the purpose. Records will be maintained as per 8.6.3.3.

8.6.2.2 In circumstances where irrigation water is treated to render it acceptable, the water after treatment shall conform to the microbiological standards as outlined in element 8.6.3.

### **8.6.3 Water Management Plan**

8.6.3.1 The water system plan described in 8.6.1.1. shall have a documented hazard analysis conducted annually and whenever changes occur to its sources, methods of transportation, storage conditions, or environmental conditions impacting it (refer to 2.4.3). Control methods applied to minimize risks associated with the hazards shall be included in the water management plan (refer to 8.6.3.2).

8.6.3.2 A water management plan describing the methods, responsibilities, and procedures for managing the different types and uses of water at the site (farm) shall be documented and implemented. The plan shall include:

- i. Description of where and how water is used (e.g., washing and treating products, irrigation, pesticide application, etc.);
- ii. Maintenance and cleaning of the water system (refer to 8.3.1 and 8.3.4);
- iii. The hazard analysis and preventive controls that are to be applied for the use of water during growing and harvesting, including monitoring, corrective action, and verification for each control measure; and
- iv. Documentation and records referenced.

Control measures may include:

- i. Water treatment and/or testing;
- ii. Water temperature;
- iii. Re-circulation, aeration;
- iv. Source alteration or change scheduling;
- v. Timing of use or application; and
- vi. Temporary or permanent protection of water sources from possible contamination (e.g., livestock [CAFO], sewage treatment, human habitation, heavy rains, flooding).

8.6.3.3 Water used for washing and treating product, cleaning of product contact surfaces, and handwashing shall be monitored to ensure it complies with potable water microbiological and chemical standards, or criteria established in the country of production and destination. The monitoring procedures shall include:

- i. A schedule indicating the location and frequency of monitoring (refer to 7.6.3.2), which shall be decided by the risk assessment, best practices within the country of production, or applicable legislation;
- ii. Reference to the potable water criteria or standards;
- iii. List of microbiological and/or chemical testing being conducted;
- iv. Reference to the approved laboratory that is accredited to ISO 17025 or equivalent;
- v. Corrective actions that will be taken if water and/or ice do not meet established criteria or standards including further water treatment, other source possibilities, non-conforming products that might be affected, or other alternative actions; and
- vi. Records maintained for monitoring and/or corrective actions.

Where ice is purchased and/or made on-site, it shall meet the microbiological and quality standards stated above.

## **8.7 Soil Management**

### **8.7.1 Purchasing Chemicals**

- 8.7.1.1 Purchased fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, and soil amendments shall be approved for use in the country of production (site location), the country of destination, and for the specific commodity. Purchased chemicals, where required by regulation, shall be labeled with the active ingredient(s), applicable dosage rates, and application instructions. Where no regulations or partial regulations govern the use of chemicals, the grower/producer shall have a documented risk assessment on the justification for use of non-regulated chemicals.
- 8.7.1.2 Chemicals that are specifically banned for use in the country of production or the country of destination shall not be purchased or stored.
- 8.7.1.3 Suppliers of chemicals shall be included in the approved supplier program (refer to 2.3.4), and a current inventory of all chemicals purchased and used shall be maintained (refer to 8.2.2).

### **8.7.2 Soil Amendments**

- 8.7.2.1 The methods and responsibility for soil amendment preparation and/or treatment shall be documented, implemented, and designed to prevent contamination of product. The procedures or work instructions shall outline how to treat manure and other untreated organic fertilizers ensuring:
- i. Treatments and application methods are verified as being compliant with the approved or recommended methods applied and do not pose a hazard to the soil amendment;
  - ii. Treatment methods applied are validated as being appropriate and effective at inactivating pathogens in organic soil amendment;
  - iii. No raw untreated manure is used; and
  - iv. Records of the approvals, validation, and verification, of organic soil amendment treatments are maintained.
- 8.7.2.2 The methods and responsibility for soil amendment applications shall be documented and implemented to ensure organic soil amendment applications are timed to pose minimum risk to product safety including:
- i. All applications of soil amendments are in accordance with national or local guidelines best practices and codes of Good Agricultural Practice;
  - ii. Equipment used for soil amendment application is maintained in good condition and calibrated to ensure accurate application (refer to 8.3.1);
  - iii. Records of all equipment maintenance and calibration are maintained;
  - iv. Signage complies with national and local codes of practice; and
  - v. Records of soil amendment applications are maintained and contain sufficient detailed data.



### **8.7.3 Agricultural Chemicals**

8.7.3.1 A spray or crop protection program indicating the applications used for a target pest or disease and the threshold levels that initiate application shall be documented and implemented.

Records of all chemical applications shall include:

- i. The chemical used;
- ii. Crop information;
- iii. Date, method, concentration, and frequency of application; and
- iv. Evidence that the timing between chemical application and harvest complies with the approved harvest interval for the chemical application.

8.7.3.2 The person making decisions on chemical applications shall:

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of and access to information regarding chemical applications and the maximum residue limits allowable in destination markets;
- ii. Use only chemicals approved for cultivation of the specified products and approved for use in the intended market; and
- iii. Demonstrate competence and knowledge of chemical application and crop withholding periods.

## **8.8 Waste Disposal**

### **8.8.1 Waste Handling and Disposal**

8.8.1.1 The methods and responsibility (procedure) that describes the effective and efficient disposal of all waste shall be documented and implemented. Waste includes:

- i. Inedible material;
- ii. Unusable packaging, including trademarked material; and
- iii. Liquid and unsanitary waste from the farm.

8.8.1.2 Waste systems shall be designed and constructed and waste shall be regularly removed from the farm so they do not become food safety risks to finished product, growing, harvesting, and packing operations and to adjoining or adjacent waterways and fields.

8.8.1.3 Inedible waste designated for animal feed shall be stored and handled so it does not cause a risk to the animal.

# Module 10: Good Operating Practices for Pre-processing of Plant Products (Packhouses)

## 10.1 Premises – Exterior, Buildings, and Interior

### 10.1.1 Premises Exterior

10.1.1.1 The location and construction of the premises and building shall ensure that:

- i. Adjacent and adjoining buildings, operations, and land use do not interfere with safe and hygienic operations; and
- ii. Relevant regulatory authority approval has been obtained and is on file.

10.1.1.2 The methods and responsibilities applied to maintain a suitable exterior environment shall be documented and implemented. These include:

- i. Effective, periodic monitoring and/or inspection of the premises, the surrounding areas, storage facilities, machinery, and equipment;
- ii. Controls to ensure that the exterior is kept free of waste and/or accumulated debris to prevent the attraction of pests and vermin;
- iii. Paths, roadways, loading and unloading areas are adequately drained and maintained; and
- iv. Records of inspections and correction actions are maintained.

### 10.1.2 Building Interior

10.1.2.1 Floors shall be constructed of smooth, dense, impact-resistant material that can be effectively graded, drained, easily cleaned, and is impervious to liquid. Floors shall be suitably sloped toward the floor drains at gradients to allow the effective removal of all overflow or wastewater under normal working conditions. Where floor drainage is not possible, plumbed options or other control measures shall be in place to handle overflow or wastewater.

10.1.2.2 Drains and waste/material trap systems shall be constructed and located so that they can be easily cleaned and not present a hazard to products.

10.1.2.3 Walls, partitions, ceilings, and doors shall be of durable construction. Internal surfaces shall have even, smooth light-colored finishes, be impervious to liquids, and shall be kept clean (refer to 10.2.5).

Wall-to-wall and wall-to-floor junctions shall be designed to be easily cleaned and sealed to prevent the accumulation of food debris.

Drop ceilings, where present, shall be constructed to enable monitoring for pest activity, facilitate cleaning, and provide access to utilities.

- 10.1.2.4 Ducting, conduit, and pipes that convey products or services, such as steam or water, shall be designed and constructed to prevent the contamination of food, ingredients, and food contact surfaces and allow ease of cleaning (refer to 10.3.2).
- 10.1.2.5 Adequate ventilation shall be provided in enclosed product handling and storage areas and meet commodity-specific regulations where applicable. All ventilation equipment and devices shall be adequately cleaned per the cleaning and sanitation program.
- 10.1.2.6 Pipes carrying sanitary waste or wastewater that are located directly over product lines or storage areas shall be designed and constructed to prevent the contamination of food, materials, ingredients, and food contact surfaces, and shall allow ease of cleaning.-
- 10.1.2.7 Doors, hatches, and windows and their frames in food handling or storage areas shall be of a material and construction that meets the same functional requirements for internal walls and partitions. Doors and hatches shall be of solid construction, and windows shall be made of shatterproof glass or similar material.
- 10.1.2.8 Stairs, catwalks, and platforms in food processing and handling areas shall be designed and constructed so they do not present a product-contamination risk and with no open grates directly above exposed food product surfaces. They shall be kept clean (refer to 10.3.2).
- 10.1.2.9 The inspection/quality control area shall be provided with facilities that are suitable for examination and testing of the type of product being handled/packed (refer to 2.4.4 for internal lab requirements). The inspection area shall:
- i. Have easy access to handwashing facilities;
  - ii. Have appropriate waste handling and removal; and
  - iii. Be kept clean to prevent product contamination.
- 10.1.2.10 Lighting and light fixtures in product handling areas, inspection stations, ingredient/ input and packaging storage areas, and all areas where the product is exposed shall be:
- i. Of appropriate intensity to enable personnel to carry out tasks efficiently and effectively; and
  - ii. Shatterproof, manufactured with a shatterproof covering, or fitted with protective covers. Where fixtures cannot be recessed, including in warehouses, structures must be protected from accidental breakage, manufactured from cleanable materials, and addressed in the cleaning and sanitation program.

### **10.1.3 Dust, Insect, and Pest Proofing**

- 10.1.3.1 All external windows, ventilation openings, doors, and other openings shall be effectively sealed when closed and proofed against dust, vermin, and other pests.

External personnel access doors shall be provided. They shall be effectively insect-proofed and fitted with a self-closing device and proper seals to protect against ingress of dust, vermin, and other pests.

10.1.3.2 External doors, including overhead dock doors in food handling areas used for product, pedestrian, or truck access, shall be designed and maintained to prevent pest entry by at least one or a combination of the following methods:

- i. A self-closing device;
- ii. An effective air curtain;
- iii. A pest-proof screen;
- iv. A pest-proof annex; and
- v. Adequate sealing around trucks in docking areas.

10.1.3.3 Electric insect control devices, pheromone, or other traps and baits shall be located and operated so they do not present a contamination risk to the product, packaging, containers, or operating equipment.

Poison rodenticide bait shall not be used inside packing rooms, product storage areas, or food handling areas.

## 10.2 Equipment and Maintenance

### 10.2.1 Equipment and Utensils

10.2.1.1 The methods and responsibility for purchasing and specifications development for equipment and utensils shall be documented and implemented. The methods shall ensure that equipment and utensils:

- i. Are designed, constructed, installed, and operated so as not to pose a threat to products; and
- ii. Meet any applicable regulatory requirements.

10.2.1.2 Product contact surfaces and those surfaces not in direct contact with product in product handling areas, raw material storage, packaging material storage, and cold storage areas shall be constructed of materials that will not contribute to a food safety risk.

10.2.1.3 Benches, tables, conveyors, shellers, graders, packers, and other mechanical equipment shall be hygienically designed and located for appropriate cleaning. Equipment surfaces shall be smooth, impervious, and free from cracks or crevices.

10.2.1.4 Product containers, tubs, and bins used for edible and inedible material shall be constructed of materials that are non-toxic, smooth, impervious, and readily cleaned per the cleaning and sanitation program. Bins used for inedible material shall be clearly identified.

10.2.1.5 All equipment and utensils shall be cleaned after use and be stored in a clean and serviceable condition to prevent microbiological or cross-contact allergen contamination.

10.2.1.6 Vehicles and/or other devices used to transport and move products in food contact, handling, or processing zones, or cold storage rooms shall be designed and operated so as not to present a food safety hazard.

## **10.2.2 Equipment Maintenance and Repair**

10.2.2.1 The methods and responsibility for the maintenance and repair of equipment and buildings and facilities shall be documented, planned, and implemented in a manner that minimizes the risk of product, packaging, or equipment contamination. The methods shall include procedures to ensure:

- i. Routine preventive maintenance of facilities and equipment in any food handling or storage area is performed according to a maintenance control schedule;
- ii. Preventive maintenance and repair of items identified as impacting food safety controls and practices are prioritized for completion according to defined schedules or immediately when they are not properly functioning; and
- iii. Records are maintained for all preventive maintenance and equipment failure/immediate repair activities and corrective actions.

The maintenance schedule shall cover buildings, equipment, and other areas of the premises critical to the maintenance of product safety and quality.

10.2.2.2 The maintenance supervisor and/or site supervisor shall be informed when repairs or maintenance are undertaken in product handling or storage areas and when the activities pose a potential threat to product safety (e.g., pieces of electrical wire, damaged light fittings, and loose overhead fittings). When possible, maintenance is to be conducted outside operating times.

10.2.2.3 Temporary repairs, where required, shall not pose a food safety risk, and shall be included in the cleaning program and/or routine inspections. There shall be a plan in place to address the completion of temporary repairs to ensure they do not become permanent solutions.

10.2.2.4 Equipment located over product or product conveyors shall be lubricated with food-grade lubricants, and their use shall be controlled to minimize the contamination of the product.

10.2.2.5 Paint used in a food handling or contact zone shall be suitable for use, in good condition, and shall not be used on any product contact surface.

10.2.2.6 Compressed air systems, and systems used to store or dispense other gases used in the operational process that come into contact with food or food contact surfaces, shall be maintained and regularly monitored for quality and applicable food safety hazards.

## **10.2.3 Maintenance Personnel and Contractors**

10.2.3.1 Maintenance personnel and contractors shall comply with the site's personnel and operational hygiene requirements (refer to 10.5).

10.2.3.2 All maintenance and other engineering contractors required to work on-site shall be trained in the site's food safety and hygiene procedures or shall be escorted at all times until their work is completed.

10.2.3.3 Maintenance personnel and contractors shall remove all tools and debris from any maintenance activity once it has been completed and inform the area supervisor and maintenance supervisor so appropriate hygiene and sanitation can be conducted and a pre-operational inspection completed prior to the restarting of site operations. Maintenance, operations, and/or sanitation shall sign-off on communications.

#### **10.2.4 Calibration**

10.2.4.1 The methods and responsibility for calibration and re-calibration of measuring, testing, and inspection equipment used for monitoring activities outlined in Good Operating Practices, food safety plans, and other process controls or to demonstrate compliance with customer specifications shall be documented and implemented. The procedures shall ensure:

- i. Calibration is performed according to regulatory requirements and/or the equipment manufacturer's recommended schedule;
- ii. Calibrated measuring, testing, and inspection equipment is protected from damage and unauthorized adjustment;
- iii. Affected product is handled according to non-conforming product procedures when equipment is found to be out of calibration;
- iv. Software used for calibration activities is effective and appropriate; and
- v. Records of calibration activities are maintained.

10.2.4.2 Equipment shall be calibrated against manufacturer, national or international reference standards and methods, or to an accuracy appropriate to its use. In cases where standards are not available, the site shall provide evidence to support the calibration reference method applied.

## **10.3 Cleaning and Sanitation and Pest Prevention**

### **10.3.1 Pest Prevention**

10.3.1.1 The methods and responsibility for pest prevention shall be documented and effectively implemented. The pest prevention program shall:

- i. Describe the methods and responsibility for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the pest prevention program;
- ii. Record pest sightings and trend the frequency of pest activity so as to target pesticide applications;
- iii. Outline the methods used to prevent pest problems;
- iv. Outline the pest elimination methods and the appropriate documentation for each inspection;
- v. Outline the frequency with which pest status is to be checked;
- vi. Include the identification, location, number, and type of bait stations set on a site map;
- vii. List the chemicals used. They are required to be approved by the relevant authority, and their Safety Data Sheets (SDS) made available;

- viii. Outline the methods used to make personnel aware of the bait control program and the measures to take when they come into contact with a bait station;
- ix. Outline the requirements for personnel awareness and training in the use of pest and vermin control chemicals and baits; and
- x. Measure the effectiveness of the program to verify the elimination of applicable pests and to identify trends.

10.3.1.2 Pest contractors and/or internal pest controllers shall:

- i. Be licensed and approved by the local relevant authority;
- ii. Use only trained and qualified operators, who comply with regulatory requirements;
- iii. Use only approved chemicals;
- iv. Maintain a site map indicating the location of bait stations, traps, and other applicable pest control/monitoring devices; and
- v. Report to a responsible authorized person on entering the premises and after the completion of inspections or treatments.

10.3.1.3 Inspections for pest activity shall be conducted on a regular basis by trained personnel and the appropriate action taken if pests are present. Identified pest activity shall not present a risk of contamination to food products, raw materials, or packaging.

Records of pest activity inspections and pest control devices shall be maintained.

10.3.1.4 Food products, raw materials, or packaging that are found to be contaminated by pest activity shall be effectively disposed of, and the source of pest infestation shall be investigated and resolved. Records shall be kept of the disposal, investigation, and resolution.

10.3.1.5 No domestic animals shall be permitted on the site in food handling or storage areas

### **10.3.2 Cleaning and Sanitation**

10.3.2.1 The methods and responsibility for cleaning of the product handling equipment and environment shall be documented and implemented. Cleaning procedures and schedules shall include:

- i. A list of equipment, utensils, and storage areas that require periodic cleaning;
- ii. Instructions on how cleaning is performed for the various areas and equipment;
- iii. The frequency of when cleaning is to be completed;
- iv. Personnel responsible and the methods used to verify the effectiveness of the cleaning and sanitation program (e.g., validation of procedures, concentration of detergents and sanitizers); and
- v. Records of cleaning activities and effectiveness reviews/inspections are maintained.

10.3.2.2 Detergents and sanitizers shall be suitable for use in a food handling environment, labeled according to regulatory requirements, and purchased in accordance with applicable legislation. The organization shall ensure:

- i. The site maintains a list of chemicals approved for use;
- ii. An inventory of all purchased and used chemicals is maintained;
- iii. Detergents and sanitizers are properly stored as per the storage program;
- iv. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are provided for all detergents and sanitizers purchased; and
- v. Only trained personnel handle sanitizers and detergents.

10.3.2.3 Detergents and sanitizers that are mixed for use shall be correctly mixed according to the manufacturer's instructions, stored in containers that are suitable for use, and clearly identified. Mix concentrations shall be verified, and records maintained.

10.3.2.4 Suitably equipped areas shall be designated for cleaning product containers, knives, cutting boards, and other utensils. Racks and containers for storing cleaned utensils and protective clothing shall be clearly identified and maintained in a manner that prevents contamination of products, equipment, or storage areas.

10.3.2.5 Pre-operational inspections shall be conducted following cleaning and sanitation operations to ensure food handling areas, product contact surfaces, equipment, personnel amenities, sanitary facilities, and other essential areas are clean before the start of operations.

Pre-operational inspections shall be conducted by qualified personnel and records maintained.

10.3.2.6 Staff amenities, sanitary facilities, and other essential areas shall be inspected by qualified personnel at a defined frequency to ensure the areas are clean.

10.3.2.7 The responsibility and methods used to verify the effectiveness of the cleaning procedures shall be documented and implemented. A verification schedule shall be prepared. A record of pre-operational hygiene inspections, cleaning and sanitation activities, and verification activities shall be maintained.

## **10.4 Personnel Practices, Hygiene, and Welfare**

### **10.4.1 Personnel Practices**

10.4.1.1 A documented and implemented procedure for personal hygiene and personnel practices shall ensure that personnel engaged in the handling of product use appropriate personal hygiene practices. The procedure shall include instructions that:

- i. Jewelry and other loose objects that pose a threat to the safety of the product are not worn or taken into any product handling or storage operations.
- ii. Fingernail polish, artificial nails, and long nails are not permitted where product is handled with bare hands;
- iii. False eyelashes and eyelash extensions are not permitted;



- iv. Hair restraints are used where product is exposed; and
- v. Smoking, chewing, eating, drinking (except for water which shall be available to all personnel), or spitting are not permitted in any packing or storage areas.

Note: The wearing of plain bands with no stones or jewelry accepted for religious or cultural reasons and prescribed medical alert bracelets can be permitted; however, the site will need to consider its customer requirements and the applicable food legislation.

Personnel and visitor practices, including all those listed in 10.4.1, shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

- 10.4.1.2 Personnel who are known to be carriers of infectious diseases that present a health risk to others through the packing or storage processes shall not engage in packhouse operations.
- 10.4.1.3 Procedures and responsibilities shall be in place that specify the handling of product and/or product contact surfaces that have been in contact with or exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.
- 10.4.1.4 Personnel with exposed cuts, sores, or lesions shall not be engaged in handling product or product contact surfaces. Minor cuts or abrasions on exposed parts of the body shall be covered with a suitable waterproof and colored dressing.

#### **10.4.2 Sanitary Facilities and Handwashing**

- 10.4.2.1 Toilet and handwashing facilities shall be provided and designed, constructed, and located in a manner that minimizes the potential risk for product contamination. The following shall be considered:
  - i. There shall be sufficient toilet facilities for the maximum number of personnel, and they shall be constructed so they can be easily cleaned and maintained;
  - ii. Handwash basins with clean and potable water, hand soap, disposable towels or effective hand drying devices, waste bins, and a tank that captures used handwash water for disposal (if not connected to drains) shall be provided inside or adjacent to toilet facilities and in accessible locations throughout food handling areas as required;
  - iii. Signage in appropriate languages shall be provided adjacent to handwash basins instructing personnel to wash their hands after each toilet visit;
  - iv. Racks for protective clothing used by personnel and visitors shall be provided; and
  - v. Toilet and wash stations shall be maintained in clean and sanitary conditions.

Tools/equipment used for cleaning toilet rooms shall not be used to clean operational areas.

- 10.4.2.2 Personnel shall have clean hands, and hands shall be washed by all personnel, contractors, and visitors:
  - i. On entering food handling areas, and before putting on gloves;

- ii. After each visit to a toilet;
- iii. After using a handkerchief;
- iv. After smoking, eating, or drinking; and
- v. After handling wash down hoses, cleaning materials, dropped products, or contaminated material.

10.4.2.3 Sanitary drainage shall not be connected to any other drains within the premises and shall be directed to a septic tank or a sewerage system as per regulations.

### **10.4.3 Protective Clothing**

10.4.3.1 Protective clothing (e.g., uniforms and smocks) shall not pose a food safety threat or be a risk to product contamination. Protective clothing shall be:

- i. Manufactured from material that can be effectively maintained, stored, and laundered after use or at a frequency that does not create risks of cross-contact with products. Excessively soiled uniforms shall be changed or replaced where they become a product contamination risk; and
- ii. Temporarily stored on racks, when personnel leave operating areas or use toilet facilities and the clothing can be easily removed (e.g., smocks and aprons).

10.4.3.2 Where applicable, clothing (i.e., any outer garment), including footwear, shall be in good condition, cleaned, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.

10.4.3.3 Disposable gloves and aprons shall be changed after each break, upon re-entry into the processing area, and when damaged.

Non-disposable aprons and gloves shall be cleaned and sanitized as required and, when not in use, stored on racks provided in the processing area or designated sealed containers in personnel lockers and not on packaging, ingredients, product, or equipment.

### **10.4.4 Visitors**

10.4.4.1 All visitors, including management, shall be required to adhere to site personnel practices and specifically:

- i. Remove jewelry and other loose objects as per 10.4.1.1;
- ii. Wash hands as per 10.4.2.2;
- iii. Wear suitable clothing and footwear when entering any operational or food handling area; and
- iv. Enter and exit food handling areas through the proper entrance points.

10.4.4.2 Visitors who are exhibiting visible signs of illness or have been in recent direct contact with other sites, animals, or produce shall be prohibited from entering any growing or product handling or harvesting operation.

### **10.4.5 Personnel Amenities (change rooms, toilets, lunchrooms/breakrooms)**

10.4.5.1 Staff facilities shall be supplied with appropriate lighting and ventilation and provided to enable staff and visitors to:

- i. Change into and out of protective clothing, if applicable;
- ii. Store street clothing, footwear, and personal items separate from food handling, packing, and storage areas.

10.4.5.2 Separate lunchroom and/or breakroom facilities shall be provided away from product contact/handling zones. Lunchrooms/breakrooms shall be:

- i. Ventilated and well lit;
- ii. Provided with adequate tables and seating to accommodate the maximum number of personnel at one sitting;
- iii. Equipped with a sink serviced with hot and cold potable water for washing utensils;
- iv. Equipped with refrigeration and heating facilities, enabling personnel to store or heat food and prepare non-alcoholic beverages if required; and
- v. Kept clean and free from waste materials and pests.

10.4.5.3 Where outside eating areas are provided, they should be kept clean and free from waste materials and maintained in a manner that minimizes the potential for the introduction of contamination, including pests, to the site.

## 10.5 Personnel Product Handling Practices

### 10.5.1 Product Handling and Packaging Operations

10.5.1.1 All personnel engaged in any food handling operations shall ensure that products and materials are handled and stored to prevent damage or product contamination. They shall comply with the following operational practices:

- i. No eating or tasting any product in the food handling/contact zone, except as noted in element 10.5.1.2;
- ii. Entry into operational areas is only through the personnel access doors;
- iii. All doors are kept closed. Doors are not open for extended periods when access is required for waste removal, or receiving and/or shipping of products, ingredient, or packaging.
- iv. Packaging, product, and ingredients are kept in appropriate containers as required and off the floor;
- v. Waste is contained in the bins identified for this purpose, removed from operational areas regularly, and not left to accumulate; and
- vi. All wash down and compressed air hoses are stored on hose racks after use and not left on the floor.

10.5.1.2 In circumstances where it is necessary to undertake sensory evaluations in a food handling/contact zone, the site shall implement proper controls and procedures to ensure:

- i. Food safety is not compromised;
- ii. Sensory evaluations are conducted by authorized personnel only;
- iii. A high standard of personal hygiene is practiced by personnel conducting sensory evaluations;

- iv. Sensory evaluations are conducted in areas equipped for the purpose; and
- v. Equipment used for sensory evaluations is sanitized, maintained, and stored separately from operational equipment.

10.5.1.3 The flow of personnel in food handling areas shall be managed so that the potential for contamination is minimized.

10.5.1.4 Personnel practices and activities, including those listed in 10.5, shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

### **10.5.2 Control of Foreign Matter Contamination**

10.5.2.1 The methods and responsibility for the prevention of foreign matter and glass contamination shall be documented and implemented. Procedures and resulting records shall ensure:

- i. Containers, equipment, and other utensils made of glass, porcelain, ceramics, brittle plastic, or similar materials are not permitted where exposed product is handled, unless clearly identified, required for effective operational controls, and regularly inspected;
- ii. Regular inspections are conducted to ensure food handling/contact zones areas are free of glass and brittle plastic and any items made from the previously identified materials are in good repair;
- iii. Wooden pallets and other wooden utensils or tools used in food handling/contact zones are dedicated for that purpose. Their condition is subject to regular inspection, and they are cleaned and maintained in good order;
- iv. Product handling areas are routinely inspected to remove risks from foreign material, such as debris, wood, stones, metal, detached/deteriorated equipment, and other physical hazards; and
- v. Personnel are to be made aware of their responsibility to adhere to the site's foreign matter and glass controls.

10.5.2.2 Knives and cutting instruments used in product handling and packaging operations shall be controlled, kept clean, and well maintained. Snap-off blades shall not be used in manufacturing or storage areas.

10.5.2.3 Gaskets and other equipment made of materials that can wear or deteriorate over time shall be inspected on a regular frequency (refer to 2.5.4.3).

### **10.5.3 Detection of Foreign Objects**

10.5.3.1 The responsibility, methods, and frequency for monitoring, maintaining, calibrating, and using screens, sieves, filters, or other technologies to remove or detect foreign matter shall be documented and implemented.

10.5.3.2 Metal detectors or other physical contaminant detection technologies shall be routinely monitored, validated, and verified for operational effectiveness. The equipment shall be designed to isolate defective product and indicate when it is rejected.

10.5.3.3 Records shall be maintained of the inspection of foreign object detection devices and any products rejected or removed by them. Records shall include any corrective and preventative actions resulting from the inspections.

10.5.3.4 In all cases of foreign matter contamination, the affected batch or item shall be isolated, inspected, reworked, or disposed of. Records shall be maintained of the disposition.

10.5.3.5 In circumstances where glass or similar material breakage occurs, the affected area shall be isolated, cleaned, and thoroughly inspected (including cleaning equipment and footwear), and the completed actions approved by a suitably responsible person before restarting operations.

#### **10.5.4 Receiving and Shipping**

10.5.4.1 Personnel conducting receiving activities shall ensure agricultural inputs, packaging materials, and product are not contaminated during the unloading process. Work instructions and training shall include the following practices:

- i. Vehicles are clean, in good repair, suitable for the purpose, and free from odors or other conditions that may impact negatively on the agricultural input, packaging, or product;
- ii. Vehicles (e.g., trucks/vans/containers) are secured from tampering using a seal or other agreed-upon and acceptable device or system;
- iii. Unloading docks are designed to protect the product and in good operating condition (refer to 10.1.2.7); and
- iv. Where temperature control is required, the refrigeration unit's storage temperature settings and operating temperature are checked and recorded before opening the doors. Unloading is completed efficiently, and product temperatures are recorded at the start of unloading and at regular intervals during unloading.

Recording documents for vehicle inspection, identification of approved suppliers, and temperature checks shall be maintained.

10.5.4.2 Personnel conducting loading and transporting of harvested and/or packaged product shall ensure that product integrity is maintained. Work instructions and training shall include the following practices:

- v. Inspections for ensuring vehicles are clean, in good repair, suitable for the purpose, and free from odors or other conditions that may impact negatively on products;
- vi. Securing vehicles (e.g., trucks/vans/containers) from tampering using a seal or other agreed-upon and acceptable device or system;
- vii. Loading docks are designed to protect the product and in good operating condition (refer to 10.1.2.7);
- viii. Verification that appropriate storage conditions are maintained during transportation to final destinations;
- ix. Prevention of cross-contamination with other hazards and potential spoilage;
- x. Use of appropriate stock rotation practices; and

- xi. Recording and maintaining documents for vehicle inspection, transport conditions, and stock rotation.

## 10.6 Water, Ice, and Air Supply

### 10.6.1 Water Supply

10.6.1.1 A water supply plan shall be prepared that describes the water sources and the operational areas they serve and shall include the location of water sources, permanent fixtures, and the flow of the water system. The plan shall be kept current and revised when changes occur.

Contingency plans shall be in place for instances when the potable water supply is deemed to be contaminated or otherwise inappropriate for use.

10.6.1.2 Adequate supplies of potable water drawn from a known clean source shall be provided for use during operations, cleaning the premises and equipment, and handwashing.

10.6.1.3 Supplies of hot and cold water shall be provided, as required, to enable the effective cleaning of the premises and equipment.

10.6.1.4 The use of non-potable water shall be controlled so that:

- i. There is no cross-contamination between potable and non-potable water lines;
- ii. Non-potable water piping and outlets are clearly identified;
- iii. Hoses, taps, and other similar sources of possible contamination are designed to prevent backflow or back siphonage; and
- iv. Testing of the backflow system, where possible, is conducted at least annually and records are maintained.

10.6.1.5 Where water is stored on-site, storage facilities shall be adequately designed, constructed, and routinely cleaned to prevent contamination.

### 10.6.2 Water Treatment

10.6.2.1 Water treatment methods, equipment, and materials if required, shall be designed, installed, and operated to ensure water receives effective treatment.

Water treatment equipment shall be monitored regularly to ensure it remains serviceable.

10.6.2.2 Water used as an aid to operations (e.g., fluming, final product spray) or for cleaning and sanitizing equipment, shall be tested and, if required, treated to maintain potability (refer to 10.6.2.1).

10.6.2.3 Treated water shall be regularly monitored to ensure it meets the specified indicators. Water treatment chemical usage shall be monitored to ensure chemical residues are within acceptable limits. Records of testing results shall be kept.

### **10.6.3 Water Quality**

10.6.3.1 Water shall comply with local, national, or internationally recognized potable water microbiological and quality standards, as required, when used for:

- i. Washing, thawing, and treating food;
- ii. Handwashing;
- iii. Conveying food;
- iv. An ingredient or operational aid;
- v. Cleaning food contact surfaces and equipment;
- vi. The manufacture of ice; or
- vii. The manufacture of steam that will come into contact with food or be used to heat water that will come into contact with food.

10.6.3.2 Microbiological analysis of the water and ice supply shall be conducted to verify the cleanliness of the supply, the monitoring activities, and the effectiveness of the treatment measures implemented. Samples for analysis shall be taken at sources supplying water for the process, cleaning, or from within the site. The frequency of analysis shall be risk-based, and at a minimum annually.

10.6.3.3 Water and ice shall be analyzed using reference standards and methods.

### **10.6.4 Ice Supply**

10.6.4.1 Ice provided for use during operations, as a processing aid, or an ingredient shall comply with 10.5.3.1.

10.6.4.2 Ice that is purchased shall be from an approved supplier and included in the site's food safety risk assessment. Ice shall be supplied in containers that are appropriate for use, cleanable if reused, and be tested as appropriate (refer to 2.3.3).

10.6.4.3 Ice rooms and receptacles shall be constructed of materials as outlined in 10.1 and designed to minimize contamination of the ice during storage, retrieval, and distribution.

### **10.6.5 Air and Other Gasses**

10.6.5.1 Compressed air or other gases (e.g., nitrogen or carbon dioxide) that contact food or food contact surfaces shall be clean and present no risk to food safety.

10.6.5.2 Compressed air systems and systems used to store or dispense other gases used in the operational process that come into contact with food or food contact surfaces shall be maintained and regularly monitored for quality and applicable food safety hazards. The frequency of analysis shall be risk-based and at a minimum annually.

10.6.5.3 Ambient air shall be tested at least annually to confirm that it does not pose a risk to food safety.

## 10.7 Storage

### 10.7.1 Ambient/Dry Storage

- 10.7.1.1 The responsibility and methods for ensuring proper storage of inputs, packaging, and finished product shall be documented and implemented. The methods shall ensure:
- i. Effective stock rotation;
  - ii. Utilization of inputs, work-in-progress, and finished product within their shelf life;
  - iii. Risks to temporarily stored materials and/or products are analyzed, and controls are applied if necessary;
  - iv. Rooms used for the storage of product ingredients, packaging, and other dry goods are located away from wet areas (refer to 10.1.2); and
  - v. Records are maintained to control storage and stock rotation.
- 10.7.1.2 Dry ingredients and packaging shall be received and stored separately from field product or chilled materials to ensure there is no cross-contamination. Unprocessed field products shall be received and segregated to ensure there is no cross-contamination.
- 10.7.1.3 Racks provided for the storage of packaging shall be constructed of impervious materials and designed to enable cleaning and inspection of the floors and areas behind the racks. Storage areas shall be cleaned at a predetermined frequency (refer to 10.2.5.1) and designed and constructed to prevent packaging from becoming a harborage for pests or vermin.

### 10.7.2 Cold Storage, Controlled Atmosphere Storage, and Chilling of Foods

- 10.7.2.1 The site shall provide confirmation of the effective operational performance of coolers, controlled atmosphere facilities, and cool rooms. They shall be designed and constructed to allow for the hygienic and efficient refrigeration and storage of food and be easily accessible for inspection and cleaning.
- 10.7.2.2 Sufficient refrigeration and controlled atmosphere capacity shall be available to chill or store the maximum anticipated throughput of products with allowance for periodic cleaning of storage rooms.
- 10.7.2.3 Discharge from defrost and condensate lines shall be controlled and discharged into the drainage system.
- 10.7.2.4 Cool and controlled atmosphere rooms shall be fitted with temperature and atmosphere monitoring equipment and located to monitor the warmest part of the room and fitted with measurement devices that are easily read and accessible.



## 10.8 Chemical Control

### 10.8.1 Storage of Hazardous Chemicals and Toxic Substances

10.8.1.1 Hazardous chemicals and toxic substances with the potential for food contamination shall be stored so as not to present a hazard to personnel, product, packaging, product handling equipment, or areas in which product is handled, stored, or transported. Specifically, they shall not be stored inside food handling areas and product and packaging storage rooms.

10.8.1.2 Daily supplies of chemicals used for continuous sanitizing of water, as a processing aid, or for emergency cleaning of food handling equipment and surfaces in food contact zones may be stored within or in close proximity to a food handling area, provided that access to the chemical storage facility is restricted to authorized personnel.

10.8.1.3 Hazardous chemical and toxic substance storage facilities shall:

- i. Be compliant with national and local legislation and designed so there is no cross-contamination between chemicals;
- ii. Be adequately ventilated;
- iii. Be provided with appropriate signage indicating the area is a hazardous storage area;
- iv. Be secure and lockable to restrict access only to personnel with formal training in handling and use of hazardous chemicals and toxic substances;
- v. Have instructions, including up-to-date Safety Data Sheets (SDS), on the safe handling of hazardous chemicals and toxic substances, readily accessible to personnel;
- vi. Be equipped with a detailed and up-to-date inventory of all chemicals contained in the storage facility;
- vii. Have suitable first aid equipment and protective clothing available close to the storage area;
- viii. In the event of a hazardous spill, be designed such that spillage and drainage from the area is contained; and
- ix. Be equipped with spillage kits and cleaning equipment.

10.8.1.4 Hazardous chemical and toxic substances shall be handled and applied by properly trained personnel. These materials shall be used by, or under the direct supervision of, trained personnel with a thorough understanding of the hazards involved, including the potential for the contamination of food and food contact surfaces.

10.8.1.5 The site shall dispose of unused chemicals and empty containers in accordance with regulatory requirements and ensure that:

- i. Empty chemical containers are not reused;
- ii. Empty containers are labeled, isolated, and securely stored while awaiting collection; and
- iii. Unused and obsolete chemicals are stored under secure conditions while awaiting authorized disposal by an approved vendor.

## 10.9 Waste Disposal

### 10.9.1 Waste Management

10.9.1.1 The methods and responsibilities that describe the effective and efficient disposal of dry, wet, liquid, and solid waste, including inedible material, unusable packaging, and trademarked materials, from the premises shall be documented and implemented.

Reviews of the effectiveness of waste management will be part of the site's daily inspections, and the results of these inspections shall be included in the relevant reports.

10.9.1.2 Waste shall be regularly removed from food handling or processing areas so it does not create food safety risks for finished product and packing operations.

Designated waste accumulation areas shall be maintained in a clean, tidy conditions until external waste collection occurs.

10.9.1.3 Waste and overflow water from tubs, tanks, and other equipment shall be discharged directly to the floor drainage system and meet local regulatory requirements.

10.9.1.4 Trolleys, vehicles waste disposal equipment, collection bins, and storage areas shall be maintained in a serviceable condition and cleaned and sanitized regularly so they do not attract pests and other vermin.

10.9.1.5 Inedible waste designated for animal feed shall be stored and handled so it does not cause a risk to the animals or to further processing.

# Module 18: Good Agricultural Practices for Indoor Farming of Plant Products

## 18.1 Premises – Exterior, Buildings, and Interior

### 18.1.1 Premises Exterior

18.1.1.1 The location and construction of the premises and building shall ensure that:

- i. Adjacent and adjoining buildings, operations, and land use do not interfere with safe and hygienic operations; and
- ii. Relevant regulatory authority approval has been obtained and is on file.

18.1.1.2 The methods and responsibilities to maintain a suitable exterior environment shall be documented and implemented. These include:

- i. Effective, periodic monitoring and/or inspection of the premises, the surrounding areas, storage facilities, machinery, and equipment;
- ii. Controls to ensure that the exterior is kept free of waste and/or accumulated debris to prevent the attraction of pests and vermin;
- iii. Paths, roadways, loading and unloading areas are adequately drained and maintained; and
- iv. Records of inspections and correction actions are maintained.

### 18.1.2 Growing Areas

18.1.2.1 Walkways and floors shall be constructed of smooth, dense, impact-resistant material that can be effectively graded, drained, easily cleaned, and is impervious to liquid. Floors shall be suitably sloped toward the drains at gradients to allow the effective removal of all overflow or wastewater under normal working conditions. Where floor drainage is not possible, plumbed options or other control measures shall be in place to handle overflow or wastewater.

18.1.2.2 Drains and waste/material trap systems shall be constructed and located so they can be easily cleaned and not present a hazard to harvested products.

18.1.2.3 Walls, partitions, ceilings, and doors shall be of durable construction and/or easily replaced. Internal surfaces shall have even, light-colored finishes, be impervious to liquids, and shall be kept clean (refer to 18.3.3).

Wall-to-wall and wall-to-floor junctions shall be designed to be easily cleaned and sealed to prevent the accumulation of harvested product waste.

Drop ceilings, where present, shall be constructed to enable monitoring for pest activity, facilitate cleaning, and provide access to utilities.

Greenhouse glass or plastic for roof or wall construction shall be kept in good repair, clean, and designed and installed for effective pest management.

- 18.1.2.4 Ducting, conduit, and pipes that convey products or services, such as air, steam, water, sanitary waste, or wastewater, shall be designed and constructed to prevent the contamination of food, ingredients, and food contact surfaces, and allow ease of cleaning (refer to 18.3.3).
- 18.1.2.5 Adequate ventilation shall be provided in enclosed product handling and storage areas and meet commodity-specific regulations where applicable. All ventilation equipment and devices shall be adequately cleaned per 18.3.3.
- 18.1.2.6 Pipes carrying sanitary waste or wastewater that are located directly over product lines or storage areas shall be designed and constructed to prevent the contamination of food, inputs, and food contact surfaces, and shall allow ease of cleaning.
- 18.1.2.7 Doors, hatches, and windows and their frames in food handling or storage areas shall be of a material and construction that meets the same functional requirements as for internal walls and partitions. Doors and hatches shall be of solid construction, and windows shall be made of shatterproof glass or similar material.
- 18.1.2.8 Stairs, catwalks, and platforms in food handling areas shall be designed, constructed, and cleaned so they do not present a product contamination risk, and have no open grates directly above exposed food product surfaces.
- 18.1.2.9 The inspection/quality control area shall be provided with facilities that are suitable for examination and testing of the type of product being handled/packed (refer to 2.4.4 for internal lab requirements). The inspection area shall:
- i. Have easy access to handwashing facilities;
  - ii. Have appropriate waste handling and removal; and
  - iii. Be kept clean to prevent product contamination.
- 18.1.2.10 Lighting and light fixtures in product handling areas, inspection stations, ingredient/ input and packaging storage areas, and all areas where the product is exposed shall be:
- i. Of appropriate intensity to enable personnel to carry out tasks efficiently and effectively; and
  - ii. Shatterproof, manufactured with a shatterproof covering, or fitted with protective covers. Where fixtures cannot be recessed, including in warehouses, structures must be protected from accidental breakage, manufactured from cleanable materials, and addressed in the cleaning and sanitation program.

### **18.1.3 Insect and Pest Proofing**

- 18.1.3.1 All external windows, ventilation openings, doors, and other openings shall be effectively sealed when closed and proofed against dust, vermin, and other pests.

External personnel access doors shall be provided. They shall be effectively insect-proofed and fitted with a self-closing device and proper seals to protect against ingress of dust, vermin, and other pests.

18.1.3.2 External doors, including overhead dock doors in food handling areas used for product, pedestrian, or truck access, shall be designed and maintained to prevent pest entry by at least one or a combination of the following methods:

- i. A self-closing device;
- ii. An effective air curtain;
- iii. A pest-proof screen;
- iv. A pest-proof annex; and
- v. Adequate sealing around trucks in docking areas.

18.1.3.3 Electric insect control devices, pheromone, or other traps and baits shall be located and operated so they do not present a contamination risk to the product, packaging, containers, or operating equipment. Poison rodenticide bait shall not be used inside growing rooms, product storage areas, or other food handling areas.

## 18.2 Equipment and Maintenance

### 18.2.1 Product Handling Equipment and Utensils

18.2.1.1 The methods and responsibility for purchasing and specifications development for equipment and utensils shall be documented and implemented. The methods shall ensure that equipment and utensils:

- i. Are designed, constructed, installed, and operated so as not to pose a threat to products; and
- ii. Meet any applicable regulatory requirements.

18.2.1.2 Product contact surfaces and those surfaces not in direct contact with product in product handling areas, raw material storage, packaging material storage, and cold storage areas shall be constructed of materials that will not contribute a food safety risk.

Paint used in a food handling or contact zone shall be suitable for use, in good condition, and shall not be used on any product contact surface.

18.2.1.3 Benches, tables, conveyors, packers, and other mechanical equipment shall be hygienically designed and located for appropriate cleaning. Equipment surfaces shall be smooth, impervious, and free from cracks or crevices.

18.2.1.4 Product containers, tubs, and bins used for edible and inedible material shall be constructed of materials that are non-toxic, smooth, impervious, and readily cleaned per the cleaning and sanitation program. Bins used for inedible material shall be clearly identified.

18.2.1.5 All equipment and utensils shall be cleaned after use (refer to the cleaning and sanitation program) and be stored in a clean and serviceable condition to prevent microbiological or cross-contact allergen contamination.

18.2.1.6 Vehicles and/or other devices used to transport and move products in food contact, handling, or processing zones, or cold storage rooms shall be designed and operated so as not to present a food safety hazard.

Site-owned and operated shipping vehicles shall be maintained and clean so they do not impact the safety of shipped products.

## **18.2.2 Equipment Maintenance and Repair**

18.2.2.1 The methods and responsibility for the maintenance and repair of equipment and buildings and facilities shall be documented, planned, and implemented in a manner that minimizes the risk of product, packaging, or equipment contamination. The methods shall ensure:

- i. Routine preventive maintenance of facilities and equipment in any food handling or storage area is performed according to a maintenance control schedule;
- ii. Preventive maintenance and repair of items identified as impacting food safety controls and practices are prioritized for completion according to defined schedules or immediately when they are not properly functioning; and
- iii. Records are maintained for all preventive maintenance and equipment failure/immediate repair activities and corrective actions.

The maintenance schedule shall cover buildings, equipment, and other areas of the premises critical to product safety and quality.

18.2.2.2 The maintenance supervisor and/or site supervisor shall be informed when repairs or maintenance are undertaken in product handling or storage areas and when the activities pose a potential threat to product safety (e.g., pieces of electrical wire, damaged light fittings, and loose overhead fittings). When possible, maintenance is to be conducted outside operating times.

18.2.2.3 Temporary repairs, where required, shall not pose a food safety risk and shall be included in the cleaning program and/or routine inspections. There shall be a plan in place to address the completion of temporary repairs to ensure they do not become permanent solutions.

18.2.2.4 Equipment located over product or product conveyors shall be lubricated with food-grade lubricants, and its use shall be controlled to minimize the contamination of the product.

18.2.2.5 Compressed air systems, and systems used to store or dispense other gases used in the operational process that come into contact with food or food contact surfaces, shall be maintained and regularly monitored for quality and applicable food safety hazards.

### **18.2.3 Maintenance Personnel and Contractors**

18.2.3.1 Maintenance personnel and contractors shall comply with the site’s personnel and operational hygiene requirements (refer to 18.5).

18.2.3.2 All maintenance and other engineering contractors required to work on-site shall be trained in the site’s food safety and hygiene procedures or shall be escorted at all times until their work is completed.

18.2.3.3 Maintenance personnel and contractors shall remove all tools and debris from any maintenance activity, once it has been completed, and inform the area supervisor and maintenance supervisor, so appropriate hygiene and sanitation can be conducted and a pre-operational inspection completed prior to restarting site operations. Maintenance, operations, and/or sanitation shall sign-off on communications.

### **18.2.4 Calibration**

18.2.4.1 The methods and responsibility for calibration and re-calibration of chemical application, measuring, testing, and inspection equipment used in growing and harvesting processes or to demonstrate compliance with customer specifications shall be documented and implemented. The methods shall ensure:

- i. Calibration is performed according to regulatory requirements and/or the equipment manufacturer’s recommended schedule;
- ii. Calibrated measuring, testing, and inspection equipment is protected from damage and unauthorized adjustment;
- iii. Affected product is handled per non-conforming product procedures when equipment is found to be out of calibration;
- iv. Software used for calibration activities is effective and appropriate; and
- v. Records of calibration activities are maintained.

18.2.4.2 Equipment shall be calibrated against manufacturer, national or international reference standards, methods, and schedules. In cases where such standards are not available, the site shall provide evidence to support the calibration reference method applied.

## **18.3 Cleaning and Pest Prevention**

### **18.3.1 Pest Prevention**

18.3.1.1 The methods and responsibility for pest prevention shall be documented and effectively implemented. The pest prevention program shall:

- i. Describe the methods and responsibility for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the pest prevention program;
- ii. Record pest sightings and trend the frequency of pest activity to target pesticide applications;
- iii. Outline the methods used to prevent pest problems;

- iv. Outline the pest elimination methods and the appropriate documentation for each inspection;
- v. Outline the frequency with which pest status is to be checked;
- vi. Include the identification, location, number, and type of bait stations set on a site map;
- vii. List the chemicals used. They are required to be approved by the relevant authority, and their Safety Data Sheets (SDS) made available;
- viii. Outline the methods used to make personnel aware of the bait control program and the measures to take when they come into contact with a bait station;
- ix. Outline the requirements for personnel awareness and training in the use of pest and vermin control chemicals and baits; and
- x. Measure the effectiveness of the program to verify the elimination of applicable pests and to identify trends.

18.3.1.2 Pest contractors and/or internal pest controllers shall:

- i. Be licensed and approved by the local relevant authority;
- ii. Use only trained and qualified operators who comply with regulatory requirements;
- iii. Use only approved chemicals;
- iv. Maintain a site map indicating the location of bait stations, traps, and other applicable pest control/monitoring devices; and
- v. Report to a responsible authorized person on entering the premises and after the completion of inspections or treatments.

18.3.1.3 Inspections for pest activity shall be conducted on a regular basis by trained personnel and the appropriate action taken if pests are present. Identified pest activity shall not present a risk of contamination to food products, raw materials, or packaging.

Records of pest activity inspections and pest control devices shall be maintained.

18.3.1.4 Food products, raw materials, or packaging that are found to be contaminated by pest activity shall be effectively disposed of, and the source of pest infestation shall be investigated and resolved. Records shall be kept of the disposal, investigation, and resolution.

18.3.1.5 No domestic animals shall be permitted on the site in food handling or storage areas.

### **18.3.2 Cleaning**

18.3.2.1 The methods and responsibility for cleaning of the product handling equipment and environment shall be documented and implemented. Cleaning procedures and schedules shall include:

- i. A list of equipment, utensils, and storage areas that require periodic cleaning;
- ii. Instructions on how cleaning is performed for the various areas and equipment;
- iii. The frequency of when cleaning is to be completed;



- iv. Personnel responsible and the methods used to verify the effectiveness of the cleaning and sanitation program (e.g., validation of procedures, concentration of detergents and sanitizers); and
- v. Records of cleaning activities and effectiveness reviews/inspections are maintained.

18.3.2.2 Detergents and sanitizers shall be suitable for use in a food handling environment, labeled according to regulatory requirements, and purchased in accordance with applicable legislation. The organization shall ensure:

- i. The site maintains a list of chemicals approved for use;
- ii. An inventory of all purchased and used chemicals is maintained;
- iii. Detergents and sanitizers are properly stored per the storage program;
- iv. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) are provided for all detergents and sanitizers purchased; and
- v. Only trained personnel handle sanitizers and detergents.

18.3.2.3 Detergents and sanitizers that are mixed for use shall be correctly mixed according to the manufacturer's instructions, stored in containers that are suitable for use, and clearly identified.

Mix concentrations shall be verified and records maintained.

18.3.2.4 Suitably equipped areas shall be designated for cleaning product containers, knives, cutting boards, and other utensils. Racks and containers for storing cleaned utensils and protective clothing shall be clearly identified and maintained in a manner that prevents contamination of products, equipment, or storage areas.

18.3.2.5 Pre-operational inspections shall be conducted following cleaning and sanitation operations to ensure food handling areas, product contact surfaces, equipment, personnel amenities, sanitary facilities, and other essential areas are clean before the start of operations.

Pre-operational inspections shall be conducted by qualified personnel and records maintained.

## **18.4 Personal Practices, Hygiene, and Welfare**

### **18.4.1 Personnel Practices**

18.4.1.1 A documented and implemented procedure for personal hygiene and personnel practices shall ensure that personnel engaged in the handling of product use appropriate personal hygiene practices. The procedure shall include instructions that:

- i. Jewelry and other loose objects that pose a threat to the safety of the product are not worn or taken onto any growing, product handling, or storage operations.
- ii. Fingernail polish, artificial nails, and long nails are not permitted where product is handled with bare hands;
- iii. False eyelashes and eyelash extensions are not permitted;
- iv. Hair restraints are used where product is exposed; and

- v. Smoking, chewing, eating, drinking (except for water which shall be available to all personnel), or spitting is not permitted in any growing areas, during harvesting, and in packing operations.

Personnel and visitor practices, including those listed in 18.4, shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

Note: The wearing of plain bands with no stones or jewelry accepted for religious or cultural reasons and prescribed medical alert bracelets can be permitted; however, the site will need to consider its customer requirements and the applicable food legislation.

- 18.4.1.2 Personnel who are known to be carriers of infectious diseases that present a health risk to others through the packing or storage processes shall not engage in growing, product handling, or harvesting and packaging operations.
- 18.4.1.3 Procedures and responsibilities shall be in place that specify the handling of product and/or product contact surfaces that have been in contact with or exposed to blood or other bodily fluids.
- 18.4.1.4 Personnel with exposed cuts, sores, or lesions shall not be engaged in handling product or product contact surfaces. Minor cuts or abrasions on exposed parts of the body shall be covered with a suitable waterproof and colored dressing.

#### **18.4.2 Sanitary Facilities and Handwashing**

- 18.4.2.1 Toilet and handwashing facilities shall be provided and designed, constructed, and located in a manner that minimizes the potential risk for product contamination. The following shall be considered:
  - i. There shall be sufficient toilet facilities for the maximum number of personnel, and they shall be constructed so that they can be easily cleaned and maintained;
  - ii. Handwash basins with clean and potable water, hand soap, disposable towels or effective hand drying devices, waste bins, and a tank that captures used handwash water for disposal (if not connected to drains) shall be provided inside or adjacent to toilet facilities and in accessible locations throughout food handling areas as required;
  - iii. Signage in appropriate languages shall be provided adjacent to handwash basins instructing personnel to wash their hands after each toilet visit;
  - iv. Racks for protective clothing used by personnel and visitors shall be provided; and
  - v. Toilet and wash stations shall be maintained in clean and sanitary conditions. Tools/equipment used for cleaning toilet rooms shall not be used to clean operational areas.
- 18.4.2.2 Personnel shall have clean hands, and hands shall be washed by all personnel, contractors, and visitors:
  - i. On entering food handling areas and before putting on gloves;
  - ii. After each visit to a toilet;
  - iii. After using a handkerchief;
  - iv. After smoking, eating, or drinking; and

- v. After handling wash down hoses, cleaning materials, dropped products, or contaminated material.

18.4.2.3 Sanitary drainage shall not be connected to any other drains within the premises and shall be directed to a septic tank or a sewerage system as per regulations.

### **18.4.3 Protective Clothing**

18.4.3.1 Protective clothing (e.g., uniforms and smocks) shall be effectively maintained, stored, laundered, and worn to protect products from the risk of contamination.

18.4.3.2 Where applicable, clothing (i.e., any outer garment), including footwear, shall be in good condition, cleaned, and worn to protect product from the risk of contamination.

18.4.3.3 Disposable gloves and aprons shall be changed after each break, upon re-entry into the processing area, and when damaged.

Non-disposable aprons and gloves shall be cleaned and sanitized as required and when not in use stored on racks provided in the processing area or designated sealed containers in personnel lockers and not on packaging, ingredients, product, or equipment.

### **18.4.4 Visitors**

18.4.4.1 All visitors, including management personnel, shall be required to adhere to site personnel practices and specifically:

- i. Remove jewelry and other loose objects as per 18.4.1.1;
- ii. Wash hands as per 18.4.2.2;
- iii. Wear suitable clothing and footwear when entering growing and packing areas; and
- iv. Enter and exit operational areas through the proper personnel entrance points.

18.4.4.2 Visitors who are exhibiting visible signs of illness or have been in recent direct contact with other sites, animals, or produce shall be prohibited from entering any growing, product handling, or harvesting operation.

### **18.4.5 Personnel Amenities (change rooms, toilets, lunchrooms/breakrooms)**

18.4.5.1 Personnel facilities shall be supplied with appropriate lighting and ventilation and provided to enable personnel and visitors to:

- i. Change into and out of protective clothing, if applicable;
- ii. Store street clothing, footwear, and personal items separate from food handling, packing, and storage areas.

18.4.5.2 Areas for meal breaks shall be designated and located away from food contact/handling zones and harvesting equipment. These areas shall be:

- i. Ventilated and well lit;
- ii. Provided with adequate tables and seating to accommodate the maximum number of personnel at one sitting;

- iii. Equipped with a sink serviced with hot and cold potable water for washing utensils;
- iv. Equipped with signage in appropriate languages instructing personnel to wash their hands before entering the growing or food handling areas;
- v. Equipped with refrigeration and heating facilities, enabling personnel to store or heat food and prepare non-alcoholic beverages if required; and
- vi. Kept clean and free from waste materials and pests.

18.4.5.3 Where outside eating areas are provided, they should be kept clean and free from waste materials and maintained in a manner that minimizes the potential for the introduction of contamination, including pests, to the site.

## 18.5 Harvesting and Packaging Practices

### 18.5.1 Growing and Harvesting Operations

18.5.1.1 All personnel engaged in any food handling operations shall ensure that products and materials are handled and stored to prevent damage or product contamination. They shall comply with the following operational practices:

- i. No eating or tasting any product in the food handling/contact zone, except as noted in element 18.5.1.2;
- ii. Entry to operational areas is only through the personnel access doors;
- iii. All doors are kept closed. Doors are not open for extended periods when access is required for waste removal, or receiving and/or shipping of products, ingredient, or packaging;
- iv. Packaging material, product, and ingredients are kept in appropriate containers as required and off the floor;
- v. Waste is contained in the bins identified for this purpose, removed from operational areas regularly, and not left to accumulate; and
- vi. All wash down and compressed air hoses are stored on hose racks after use and not left on the floor.

18.5.1.2 Personnel conducting harvesting and packaging activities shall ensure that utensils, personal effects, and inputs/materials used do not pose a food safety risk to products. These can include procedures that:

- i. Aprons and gloves are kept clean and not left on product, work surfaces, equipment, or packaging material but hung on apron and glove racks provided;
- ii. Harvest containers, if used, are inspected prior to use to ensure they are clean and free of physical debris or materials;
- iii. Knives and cutting instruments, where used, are approved for use, controlled, and kept clean and well maintained;
- iv. Cloths, towels, or other cleaning materials that pose a risk of cross-contamination are not used to wipe products or product containers;
- v. All packaging materials are appropriate for their intended use and kept off the floor; and

- vi. Non-food waste is contained in the bins identified for this purpose. Waste does not come into contact with produce, is removed regularly, and not left to accumulate (refer to 18.8).

18.5.1.3 Personnel conducting harvesting activities shall ensure product is not contaminated during the harvesting process. Work instructions and training shall include the following practices:

- i. Commodity-specific handling and harvesting instructions;
- ii. Employee access and controls on movement;
- iii. Damaged or decayed product is not harvested or culled; and
- iv. Product that contacts the ground or floor is not harvested.

18.5.1.4 Employee practices and activities, including those listed in 18.5, shall be routinely monitored for compliance, and any resulting corrective actions implemented and recorded for personnel who violate food safety practices.

### **18.5.2 Foreign Material, Glass, and Other Hazard Control**

18.5.2.1 The methods and responsibility for prevention of foreign matter and glass contamination shall be documented and implemented. Procedures and resulting records shall ensure:

- i. Containers, equipment, and other utensils made of glass, porcelain, ceramics, brittle plastic, or similar materials are not permitted where exposed product is handled unless clearly identified, required for effective operational control, and regularly inspected;
- ii. Regular inspections are conducted to ensure food handling/contact zones areas are free of glass and brittle plastic and any items made from the previously identified materials are in good repair;
- iii. Wooden pallets and other wooden utensils or tools used in food handling/contact zones are dedicated for that purpose. Their condition is subject to regular inspection, and they are kept clean and maintained in good order;
- iv. Product harvesting and handling areas are routinely inspected to remove risks from foreign materials, such as debris, wood, stones, metal, and other physical hazards; and
- v. Personnel are made aware of their responsibility to adhere to the site's foreign matter and glass controls.

18.5.2.2 The methods and responsibility for conducting inspections to assess biological, chemical, and physical hazards and their risks to products being harvested shall be documented and implemented. Inspections shall occur before and during harvesting and through to the transport of product to its next destination (refer to 2.5.4.3).

### **18.5.3 Receiving and Shipping**

18.5.3.1 Personnel conducting receiving activities shall ensure agricultural inputs, packaging materials, and product are not contaminated during the unloading process. Work instructions and training shall include the following:

- i. Vehicles are clean, in good repair, suitable for the purpose, and free from odors or other conditions that may impact negatively on the agricultural input, packaging, or product;
- ii. Vehicles (e.g., trucks/vans/containers) are secured from tampering using a seal or other agreed-upon and acceptable device or system; and
- iii. Where temperature control is required, the refrigeration unit's storage temperature settings and operating temperature are checked and recorded before opening the doors. Unloading is completed efficiently, and product temperatures are recorded at the start of unloading and at regular intervals during unloading.

Records for vehicle inspection, identification of approved suppliers, and temperature checks shall be maintained.

18.5.3.2 Personnel conducting loading and transporting of harvested product shall ensure that product integrity is maintained. Work instructions and training shall include the following:

- i. Inspections for ensuring vehicles are clean, in good repair, suitable for the purpose, and free from odors or other conditions that may impact negatively on products;
- ii. Securing vehicles (e.g., trucks/vans/containers) from tampering using a seal or other agreed-upon and acceptable device or system;
- iii. Verification that appropriate storage conditions are maintained during transportation to final destinations;
- iv. Prevention of cross-contamination with other hazards and potential spoilage;
- v. Use of appropriate stock rotation practices; and
- vi. Recording and maintaining documents for vehicle inspection, transport conditions, and stock rotation.

## 18.6 Water Management

### 18.6.1 Water Supply

18.6.1.1 A water supply plan shall be prepared that describes the water sources and the operational areas they serve, and shall include the location of water sources, permanent fixtures, and the flow of the water system. The plan shall be kept current and revised when changes occur.

Contingency plans shall be in place for instances when the potable water supply is deemed to be contaminated or otherwise inappropriate for use.

18.6.1.2 Adequate supplies of potable water drawn from a known clean source shall be provided for use during operations, cleaning the premises and equipment, and handwashing.

18.6.1.3 Supplies of hot and cold water shall be provided, as required, to enable the effective cleaning of the premises and equipment.

18.6.1.4 The use of non-potable water shall be controlled so that:

- i. There is no cross-contamination between potable and non-potable water lines;
- ii. Non-potable water piping and outlets are clearly identified;
- iii. Hoses, taps, and other similar sources of possible contamination are designed to prevent backflow or back siphonage; and
- iv. Testing of the backflow system, where possible, is conducted at least annually, and records are maintained.

18.6.1.5 Where water is stored on-site, storage facilities shall be adequately designed, constructed, and routinely cleaned to prevent contamination.

### **18.6.2 Water Management Plan**

18.6.2.1 The water system plan described in 18.6.1.1 shall have a documented hazard analysis conducted annually and whenever changes occur to its sources, storage, methods of transportation, storage conditions, or environmental conditions (refer to 2.4.3). Control methods applied to minimize risks associated with the hazards shall be included in the water management plan (refer to 18.6.2.2).

18.6.2.2 A water management plan describing the methods and responsibilities for managing the different types and uses of water at the site shall be documented and implemented. The plan shall include:

- i. Description of where and how water is used (e.g., washing and treating products, irrigation, re-circulation, pesticide application, etc.);
- ii. Maintenance and cleaning of the water system (refer to 18.3.1 and 18.3.2);
- iii. The hazard analysis and preventive controls that are to be applied for the use of water during growing and harvesting, including monitoring, corrective action, and verification for each control measure that ensures water is safe and of adequate sanitary quality; and
- iv. Documentation and records referenced.

Control measures may include:

- i. Water treatment and/or testing;
- ii. Water temperature;
- iii. Re-circulation, aeration;
- iv. Spent irrigation water;
- v. Source alteration or change scheduling; and
- vi. Timing of use or application.

18.6.2.3 Water used for washing and treating product, cleaning of product contact surfaces, and handwashing shall be monitored to ensure it complies with potable water microbiological and chemical standards or criteria established in the country of production and destination. The monitoring procedures shall include:

- i. A schedule indicating the location and frequency of monitoring (refer to 18.6.2.2), which shall be decided by the risk assessment, best practices within the country of production, or applicable legislation;
- ii. Reference to the potable water criteria or standards;
- iii. List of microbiological and/or chemical testing being conducted;
- iv. Reference to the approved laboratory that is accredited to ISO 17025 or equivalent;
- v. Corrective actions that will be taken if water and/or ice does not meet established criteria or standards, including further water treatment, other source possibilities, non-conforming products that might be affected, or other alternative actions; and
- vi. Records maintained for monitoring and/or corrective actions.

Water testing and monitoring for uses such as irrigating (before and spent), fluming, and flooding shall comply with the items above and the water quality criteria defined by regulations in the country of production and destination.

18.6.2.4 The producer shall verify that any ice used is made from water that meets the microbiological and quality standards as specified in element 18.6.2.3.

## 18.7 Storage

### 18.7.1 Ambient/Dry Storage

18.7.1.1 The responsibility and methods for ensuring proper storage of inputs, packaging, and finished product shall be documented and implemented. The methods shall ensure:

- i. Effective stock rotation;
- ii. Utilization of inputs, work-in-progress, and finished product within their shelf life;
- iii. Risks to temporarily stored materials and/or products are analyzed, and controls are applied if necessary; and
- iv. Rooms used for the storage of inputs, packaging, and other dry goods shall be located away from wet/growing areas (refer to 18.1.2 for construction requirements).

Records to control storage and stock rotation shall be maintained.

18.7.1.2 Inputs and packaging shall be received and stored separately from indoor farmed grown products or chilled materials to ensure there is no cross-contamination. When sourced externally, products shall be received and segregated to ensure there is no cross-contamination.

18.7.1.3 Racks provided for the storage of packaging shall be constructed of impervious materials and designed to enable cleaning and inspection of the floors and areas behind the racks. Storage areas shall be cleaned at a predetermined frequency (refer to 18.3.2) and designed and constructed to prevent packaging from becoming a harborage for pests or vermin.



## 18.7.2 Controlled Temperature and Atmosphere Storage

18.7.2.1 The producer/grower shall ensure any chilling, cold storage, and controlled atmosphere facility is of suitable size, design, and construction, and is capable of effective operational performance, which includes sufficient refrigeration and controlled atmosphere capacity for chilling or storing the maximum anticipated throughput of products with allowance for periodic cleaning of storage.

18.7.2.2 Chilling, cold storage, and controlled atmosphere storage facilities shall ensure the following design and construction standards are maintained:

- i. Storage facility meets the requirements of 18.2.1;
- ii. Discharge from defrosting and condensate lines is controlled and discharged to the drainage system; and
- iii. Loading dock areas in controlled temperature areas are appropriately sealed, drained, and graded.

18.7.2.3 Chilling, cold storage, and controlled atmosphere facilities shall be fitted with temperature monitoring equipment or a suitable temperature monitoring device that is properly located to monitor the warmest part of the room and is fitted with a temperature gauge that is easily read and accessible.

## 18.8 Fertilizers, Agriculture and Hazardous Chemicals, and Soil Amendments

### 18.8.1 Storage of Agricultural Chemicals, Soil Amendments, and Toxic Substances

18.8.1.1 Agriculture chemicals, fertilizers, soil amendments, and other toxic substances shall be stored so as not to present a hazard to personnel, product, product handling equipment, or areas in which product is handled, stored, or transported. Specifically, they shall not be stored inside food handling areas and product and packaging storage rooms.

18.8.1.2 Chemical storage locations shall:

- i. Be compliant with national and local legislation;
- ii. Be designed to ensure there is no cross-contamination between chemicals, proper ventilation to the exterior, and spill control or containment (including tank capacity);
- iii. Be equipped with details of purchase, appropriate and compliant labels, vendor approval, and an up-to-date inventory of all chemicals contained within and removed from the storage location; and
- iv. Be equipped with employee health and safety requirements, such as signage, safety data sheets, instruction, emergency wash facilities, and other labor law requirements.

18.8.1.3 Hazardous chemicals and toxic substances shall be handled and applied by properly trained personnel. These materials shall be used by or under the direct supervision of trained personnel who have a thorough understanding of the hazards involved, including the potential for the contamination of food and food contact surfaces.

18.8.1.4 The site shall dispose of unused chemicals and empty containers in accordance with regulatory requirements and ensure that:

- i. Empty chemical containers are not reused;
- ii. Empty containers are labeled, isolated, and securely stored while awaiting collection; and
- iii. Unused and obsolete chemicals are stored under secure conditions while awaiting authorized disposal by an approved vendor.

### **18.8.2 Purchasing Chemicals**

18.8.2.1 Purchased fertilizers, agricultural chemicals, and soil amendments shall be approved for use in the country of production (site location), the country of destination, and for the specific commodity. Purchased chemicals, where required by regulation, shall be labeled with the active ingredient(s), applicable dosage rates, and application instructions. Where no regulations or partial regulations govern the use of chemicals, the grower/producer shall have a documented risk assessment on the justification for use of non-regulated chemicals.

18.8.2.2 Chemicals that are specifically banned for use in the country of production or the country of destination shall not be purchased or stored.

18.8.2.3 Suppliers of chemicals shall be included in the approved supplier program (refer to 2.3.4), and a current inventory of all chemicals purchased and used shall be maintained.

### **18.8.3 Soil Amendments**

18.8.3.1 The methods and responsibilities for soil amendment preparation and/or treatment shall be documented, implemented, and designed to prevent contamination of product. The procedures or work instructions shall outline how to treat manure and other untreated organic fertilizers ensuring:

- i. Treatments and application methods are verified as being in compliance with the approved or recommended methods applied and do not pose a hazard to the soil amendments;
- ii. Treatment methods applied are validated as being appropriate and effective at inactivating pathogens in organic soil amendments;
- iii. No raw untreated manure is used; and
- iv. Records of the approvals, validation, and verification, of organic soil amendment treatments are maintained.

18.8.3.2 The methods and responsibility for soil amendment applications shall be documented and implemented to ensure organic soil amendment applications are timed to pose minimum risk to product safety including:

- i. All applications of soil amendments are in accordance with national or local guidelines, best practices, and codes of Good Agricultural Practice;
- ii. Equipment used for soil amendment application is maintained in good condition and calibrated to ensure accurate application (refer to 18.2.2);

- iii. Records of all equipment maintenance and calibration are maintained;
- iv. Signage complies with national and local codes of practice; and
- v. Sufficient data is recorded to provide a detailed record of soil amendment applications.

#### **18.8.4 Agricultural Chemicals**

18.8.4.1 The methods and responsibility for the spray or crop protection program, indicating the applications used for a target pest or disease and the threshold levels that initiate the application, shall be documented and implemented.

18.8.4.2 The person making decisions on chemical applications shall:

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of and access to information regarding chemical applications and the maximum residue limits allowable in destination markets;
- ii. Use only chemicals approved for cultivation of the specified products and approved for use in the intended market; and
- iii. Demonstrate competence and knowledge of chemical applications and crop withholding periods.

18.8.4.3 Records of all chemical applications shall be maintained and include:

- i. The chemicals used;
- ii. Crop information;
- iii. Date, method, concentration, and frequency of application; and
- iv. Evidence that the timing between chemical application and harvest complies with the approved harvest interval for the chemical application.

18.8.4.4 Biological controls that are approved for the cultivation of the specified products shall be used according to instructions or per expert recommendations.

## **18.9 Waste Disposal**

### **18.9.1 Waste Management**

18.9.1.1 The methods and responsibility for the effective and efficient disposal of all solid waste, such as inedible material, unusable packaging including trademarked material, and liquid and unsanitary waste from the farm, shall be documented and implemented.

Reviews of the effectiveness of waste management shall be part of the site's daily inspections, and the results of these inspections shall be included in the relevant reports.

18.9.1.2 Waste systems shall be designed and constructed and waste shall be regularly removed from the growing areas and packing facility so they do not become food safety risks to finished product, growing, harvesting, and packing operations.

18.9.1.3 Waste and overflow water from tubs, tanks, and other equipment shall be discharged directly to the floor drainage system and meet local regulatory requirements.

- 18.9.1.4 Trolleys, vehicles, waste disposal equipment, collection bins, and storage areas shall be maintained in a serviceable condition and cleaned and sanitized regularly so they do not attract pests and other vermin.
- 18.9.1.5 Inedible waste designated for animal feed shall be stored and handled so it does not cause a risk to the animal or further processing for human consumption.

# Appendix 1: SQF Food Sector Categories

FSC	Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
1	Production, Capture, and Harvesting of Livestock and Game Animals, and Apiculture	A1: Farming of Animals for Meat / Milk / Eggs / Honey	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 5: GPP for Farming of Animal Products</li> </ul>	<p>Applies to the capture, transport, holding, intensive animal husbandry, and free-range farming of animals, but does not include seafood.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free-range and intensive animal production</li> <li>Dairy farming</li> <li>Game animals</li> <li>Egg production</li> <li>Apiculture</li> </ul>	<p>Includes but is not limited to cattle, lamb, pigs, poultry, eggs, milk, and honey.</p>
2	Indoor Growing and Harvesting of Fresh Produce and Sprouted Seed Crops	B1: Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 18: GAP for Indoor Farming of Plant Products</li> </ul>	<p>Applies to the production, harvesting, preparation, packaging, and on-site storage of plant products under controlled environment agriculture (CEA). Includes all products grown in indoor growing operations, greenhouses, mushroom farms, and sprout operations.</p>	<p>Includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All varieties of microgreens</li> <li>All varieties of sprouted seed</li> <li>Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and lettuce</li> <li>Mushrooms</li> </ul>
3	Growing and Production of Fresh Produce and Nuts	B1: Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production</p> <p>System Elements</p> <p>Module 7: GAP for Outdoor Farming of Plant Products</p>	<p>Applies to the production, harvesting, preparation, field packing, and on-site storage of fresh whole fruit, vegetables, and nuts.</p> <p>Includes all produce grown under broad acre and intensive horticulture production system, including orchards, viticulture, aquaponics, and external nursery operations.</p>	<p>All fresh fruit and vegetable and nut varieties that are ready-to-eat (RTE) or for further processing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tropical and temperate tree fruits, carrots, beets, potatoes, wine grapes</li> <li>Table grapes, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, all forms of leafy greens, spring mix, tomatoes, peppers, herbs and spices and tomatoes, green onions, baby spinach, lettuce, melons, etc.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
4	Fresh Produce, Grain, and Nut Packhouse Operations	Bill: Pre-process Handling of Plant Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 10: GOP for Pre-processing of Plant Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the cleaning, shelling, packing, sorting, grading, and on-site storage (including controlled atmosphere storage) of fresh and pre-packaged whole unprocessed fruits, vegetables and nuts, and the cleaning and packing of grain and pulse products.	Includes all fruit, vegetable, grain, and nut varieties that are packed in pack houses and that may undergo controlled atmosphere storage.	
5	Extensive Broad Acre Agricultural Operations	Bill: Farming of Grains and Pulses	The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 8: GAP for Farming of Grains and Pulses</li> </ul>	Applies to the production, harvesting, preparation, transport, and storage of broad-acre crops including pulses, cereal, and other grains. Also includes growing and harvesting of animal feed crops.	All grain and cereal varieties for human consumption and animal feed including but not limited to wheat, oats, rice, pulse crops, hemp (where legally permitted), soy, legumes, maize, corn, cotton, pasture, silage, and hay.	
6	Intensive Farming of Seafood	All: Farming of Fish and Seafood	The SQF Food Safety Code: Aquaculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 6: GAP for Farming of Seafood</li> </ul>	Applies to the intensive farming of freshwater fishes and shellfish, including purification, transport, and storage and extends to gilling, gutting, shucking, and chilling operations.	All farmed fresh fish and shellfish species including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuna, salmon, trout, and other farmed fish spp.</li> <li>Oysters, mussels, shrimp, lobster, crab, and other farmed shellfish spp.</li> </ul>	
7	Slaughtering, Boning, and Butchery	CO: Animal Primary Conversion	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the slaughtering, dressing, processing, on-site storage, chilling, freezing, and wholesaling of all animal species and game animals for consumption and extends to all meat cuts.	Includes uncooked poultry, pork, and red meat animal species prepared in retail butcher shops, boning rooms, and meat wholesale markets, including ground (minced) meats. Bone-in and whole muscle fillet for pork and red meat species including ground (minced) red meat. Bone-in and whole muscle poultry fillet and ground (minced) poultry meat.	

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
8	<b>Manufactured Meats and Poultry</b>	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, manufacture, transport, and on-site storage operations where meat (all red meat species and poultry) is the major ingredient including all value-adding operations (i.e. cook-chill, crumbing, curing, smoking, cooking, drying, fermenting, and vacuum packing) and chilling and freezing operations, but not canning of meat or poultry product.	Includes poultry, pork, and red meats blends and raw heat-treated and fermented poultry, pork, and red meats, including salami, hot dogs, sausages, bacon, pepperoni, and meat pastes etc.	
9	<b>Seafood Processing</b>	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, manufacture, transport, and on-site storage of all fish and seafood species and extends to value-adding operations, including dismembering, fermenting, crumbing, smoking, cooking, freezing, chilling, drying, and vacuum packing, but not canning of seafood product.	Includes: Whole fish, fish fillets, reformed fish cakes, coated fish portions uncooked fish product, sashimi, sushi surimi smoked cooked fish products chilled or frozen that require no further cooking prior to consumption.	
10	<b>Dairy Food Processing</b>	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, transport, and storage of food products from all species used for milk collection and extends to all value-adding operations, including freezing, pasteurizing, ultra-filtration, evaporation/concentration, fermentation, clarification, culturing, and spray drying of milk but not UHT operations. (refer to FSC 15).  Includes milk substitutes where the technology is essentially the same.	Includes milk and cream, butter, cottage cheese, sour cream, all forms of cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and dried milk.  Also includes milk substitutes such as soymilk and tofu, and infant formula.	

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
11	Honey Processing	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, packaging, and on-site storage of food products from all species used for honey collection including clarifying and treatment operations.	Includes honey, honeycomb, pollen, and royal jelly.	
12	Egg Processing	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the, grading, cleaning, processing, transport, and on-site storage of food products from all species used for egg collection and processing.	Graded, cleaned eggs and value-added products where egg is the major ingredient.	
13	Bakery and Snack Food Processing	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, packaging, and on-site storage of extruded snack foods and cake mix formulations and extends to all bakery operations.	Includes baked items such as meat pies, custard pies, bread, cookies, cakes, and mixes and all varieties of snack food.	
14	Fruit, Vegetable, and Nut Processing, and Fruit Juices	CI: Processing or Perishable Plant Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, packaging, and on-site storage of all processed fruit, vegetable, and nut varieties, including freezing, fermenting drying, slicing, dicing, cutting, and modified atmosphere processing of all fruits and vegetables, and the roasting, drying, and cutting of nuts.  Does not include canning of fruits and vegetables.	Includes frozen, fermented, dried, sliced, diced, cut, and modified atmosphere packaged (MAP) fruit, vegetable, and nut products, including prepared and deli salads.  Includes fresh and pasteurized fruit and vegetable juices.	



**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
15	<b>Canning, UHT, and Aseptic Operations</b>	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing of low-acid canned foods and sterilization (retorting) UHT, or other high-temperature or high-pressure processes (HPP) not covered elsewhere and the manufacture of the associated hermetically sealed containers.	Includes: The commercial sterilization of fish, meats, fruits and vegetables, and other low-acid soups and sauces in metal or glass containers or retort pouches.  Does not include pasteurization of dairy, fruit, or vegetable juices, but does include UHT treatment of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milk or milk products; or</li> <li>Egg or egg products; or</li> <li>Fruit or vegetable juices.</li> <li>Canned pet food (refer to FSC 32)</li> </ul>	
16	<b>Ice, Drink, and Beverage Processing</b>	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to fermentation, concentration aseptic filling, or drying operations processes.  Does not include powdered milk and pasteurization and UHT treatment of milk or milk products or fruit and vegetable juicing operations.  Does not apply to dry beverage ingredients (e.g. tea, coffee).	Includes carbonated soft drinks, carbonated and non-carbonated waters, mineral water, ice, liquid tea and coffee, energy drinks, wine, beer, and other alcoholic beverages.	
17	<b>Confectionary Manufacturing</b>	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, packaging, and on-site storage of all types of confectionary and extends to all chocolate and imitation chocolate-based processing.	Includes all confectionary products that undergo refining, conching, starch molding, compression, extrusion, and vacuum cooking.	

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
18	Preserved Foods Manufacturing	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module II: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, packaging, and on-site storage of all foods preserved under high temperature processes not covered elsewhere, compositionally preserved foods that are not high-temperature processed or other alternative acceptable methods not covered elsewhere.	Includes dressings, mayonnaise, sauces, marinades, pickled foods, peanut butter, mustards, jams, and fillings.	
19	Food Ingredient Manufacturing	K: Production of Bio-chemicals or Bio-cultures used as Food Ingredients or Processing Aids in Food Production	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module II: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, blending, re-packaging, and on-site storage of dry food ingredients, cultures, and yeast, but does not include dairy products, fermented meats, or other fermented products mentioned elsewhere.	Includes starter cultures used in cheese, yogurt, and wine manufacture and cultures used in the baking industry and other products used for the preservation of foods. Other additional products include additives, preservatives, flavorings, colorings, soup mixes, sauces, dehydrated culinary products, salt, sugar, spices, and other condiments. Applies to dried tea and coffee products.	
20	Recipe Meals Manufacturing	CIII: Processing of Perishable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module II: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing, receipt, controlled temperature on-site storage of foods prepared from a range of ingredients (mixed foods) that require cooking, heating, freezing, or refrigerated storage prior to serving.	Includes ready-to-eat (RTE) chilled meals and desserts, frozen meals, pizza, frozen pasta, soups, and meal solutions, sous vide products, and freeze-dried and dehydrated meals. Includes sandwiches, wraps, plated or boxed meals, and high-risk desserts for distribution to food service.	

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

Category (Site Scope of Certification)		GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
FSC 21	Oils, Fats, and the manufacturing of Oil or Fat-based Spreads	C11: Processing of Perishable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the manufacture of all animal and vegetable oils and fats and to the manufacture of margarine. Includes clarifying and refining processes.	Includes shortening (animal and vegetable), oils - olive, peanut, corn, vegetable, sunflower, safflower, canola, nut, seed, hemp (where legally permitted), and oil-based spreads such as margarine and oil-based spreads.
22	Processing of Cereal Grains	C11: Processing of Perishable Plant Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the processing of cereals of all varieties, including sorting, grading, picking, handling of bulk grains, milling, and extruding.	Includes wheat, maize, rice, barley, oats, millet, pasta, hemp (where legally permitted), and breakfast cereals.
23	Food Catering and Foodservice	E: Catering	The SQF Food Safety Code: Foodservice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 16: GRP for Foodservice</li> </ul>	Applies to all on-site food preparation and service activities, including, storage, and distribution undertaken with mixed foods that are ready-to-eat and do not require further treatment or processing by the consumer. Only applies to products prepared on-site that are ready to eat, ready to serve.	Includes food service caterers, retail delicatessen/self-serve facilities, restaurants, fast food outlets, delicatessens, school cafeterias (canteens), hospital/institution meal services, childcare centers, and mobile and home delivery food services. Includes sandwiches, wraps, and high-risk desserts that are prepared on-site.
24	Food Retailing	F1: Retail/ Wholesale	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Retail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 15: GRP for Retail</li> </ul>	Applies to the receipt, handling, storage, and display at retail level of stable or pre-processed and packaged foods and/or food intended for further preparation by the consumer. Retailers that prepare ready-to-eat (RTE) foods must include FSC23 also.	Includes all foods distributed and sold through retail outlets. Does not include foods that are prepared on-site.

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
25	Repackaging of Products not Manufactured On-site	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Assembling of whole produce and packaged products (e.g. nuts, hard candy, dried fruit, and beef jerky) that are manufactured elsewhere. Applies to products not covered elsewhere.	Includes gift baskets, festive hampers, and presentation packs.	
26	Storage and Distribution	G: Provision of Storage and Distribution Services for missing word?	The SQF Food Safety Code: Storage and Distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 12: GDP for Transport and Distribution of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to dedicated distribution centers, warehouses, and transport operators involved in the receipt, storage, consolidation, and distribution of perishable fresh produce and general food lines, including chilled, frozen, dry goods, stable or pre-processed and packaged foods, and/or food intended for further preparation by the consumer at wholesale level.	Includes all transportation, storage, and delivery of perishable and shelf-stable foods sold through markets, retail, and foodservice facilities. Includes transportation, storage, and delivery of all varieties of fresh unprocessed fruit, vegetable, and nut products.	
27	Manufacture of Food Packaging	I: Production of Food Packaging	The SQF Food Safety Code: Manufacture of Food Packaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System Elements</li> <li>Module 13: GMP for Manufacture of Food Packaging</li> </ul>	Applies to the manufacture and on-site storage of food sector packaging materials. Includes items that may be used in food manufacturing or food service facilities, including paper towels, napkins, disposable food containers, straws, stirrers.	All food-grade packaging materials, including flexible films, paperboard-based containers, metal containers, flexible pouches, glass containers, plastic and foam containers (PET, polystyrene, etc.), and single-use foodservice products (e.g., paper towels, napkins, disposable food containers, straws, stirrers).	

**APPENDIX 1: SQF Food Sector Categories**

<b>FSC</b>	<b>Category (Site Scope of Certification)</b>	<b>GFSI Industry Scopes</b>	<b>Applicable SQF Codes and Modules</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example of Products</b>
31	<b>Dietary Supplements Manufacturing</b>	K: Production of Bio-chemicals or Bio-cultures used as Food Ingredients or Processing Aids in Food Production	The SQF Food Safety Code: Dietary Supplements Manufacturing System Elements Module 17: GMP for Processing of Dietary Supplements	Applies to the manufacture, blending, packaging, and on-site storage of dietary supplements.	Includes vitamins, probiotics, natural health products, protein blends, and label supplements.
32	<b>Pet Food Manufacturing</b>	CI, CII, CIII, or CIV as applicable	The SQF Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 4: GMP for Processing of Pet Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the Pet Food Manufacturing intended for consumption by domestic animals and speciality pets.	Includes dry and moist pet foods and treats, semi-raw, chilled, or frozen product. Does not include canned pet food (refer to FSC 15).
33	<b>Food Processing Aides Manufacturing</b>	K: Production of Bio-chemicals or Bio-cultures used as Food Ingredients or Processing Aids in Food Production	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products</li> </ul>	Applies to the manufacture, storage, and transport of chemicals and aides used in the food processing sectors.	Includes food-grade lubricants, processing aides, and chemicals for clean-in-place systems.
34	<b>Animal Feed Manufacturing</b>	D: Production of Feed	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System Elements</li> <li>• Module 3: GMP for Animal Feed Production</li> </ul>	Applies to the manufacture, blending, transport, and storage of animal feeds.	Includes compounded and medicated feeds.

# Appendix 2: Glossary

## A

**Accreditation:** Approval by an Accreditation Body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and a signatory to the Multilateral Recognition Agreement (MLA) confirming that the management system of a certification body complies with the ISO/IEC 17065:2012 (or subsequent version) and the Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies requirements and that the certification body is suitable to be granted a license by SQFI to provide the service in the licensed territory (ies).

**Airlock:** A space which permits the passage of people between one environment and another with two doors in series which do not open simultaneously, and thus minimizes the transfer of pests, dust, odors, or air from one area to the other.

**Allergens:** Typically, naturally occurring proteins in foods or derivatives of them that cause abnormal immune responses.

**Ambient Air:** Atmospheric air within an enclosed food facility.

**Annual/Annually:** Occurring once per year.

**Approved Supplier (s):** A supplier (s) that has been assessed and approved by a site based on risk assessment as capable of meeting the sites food safety and quality requirements for goods and services supplied.

**Audit:** Refer to SQF Audit

**Audit Checklist:** The form listing SQF food safety and/or quality Code elements specific to a registered site's audit scope and date which is downloaded from the SQFI assessment database and is used by the SQF food safety and/or quality auditor when conducting an SQF food safety and/or quality audit.

**Auditor:** Refer to SQF Auditor

## B

**Blackout Period:** Dates nominated by the site and agreed by the certification body when an unannounced audit cannot occur due to legitimate business reasons (e.g., maintenance, raw material shortage).

## C

**Central Site:** An SQF certified site at which activities are planned to control and manage a network of SQF certified sub-sites within an SQF multi-site program (refer to SQFI's multi-site program requirements).

**Certificate:** An official document in a format approved by the SQFI issued to a site by a licensed certification body attesting to the successful completion of an SQF food safety and/or quality certification audit and/or a re-certification audit.

## C

**Certification:** A process by which a licensed SQF certification body confirms compliance of a site's SQF Food Safety and/or Quality System to the SQF Food Safety and/or Quality Code, as appropriate, following a certification audit or re-certification audit. The terms, "certify," "certifies", and "certified" shall have a corresponding meaning under the SQF Program. completion of an SQF food safety and/or quality certification audit and/or a re-certification audit.

**Certification Audit:** An audit of a site's complete SQF System, where the site's SQF System has not been previously certified or has been previously certified but requires certification as the earlier certification has been revoked or voluntarily discontinued by the site.

**Certification Body (also Licensed Certification Body):** An entity which has entered into a license agreement with the SQFI authorizing it to certify a site's SQF System in accordance with the ISO / IEC 17065:2012 (or subsequent version) and the Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies.

**Certification Cycle:** The annual period between a site's certification/re-certification audits.

**Certification Number:** A unique number provided by the certification body and included on the certificate, issued to a site that has successfully completed an SQF food safety or quality certification audit.

**Certification Program:** As defined by the Global Food Safety Initiative, a systematic plan which has been developed, implemented, and maintained for the scope of food safety. It consists of a standard and food safety system in relation to specified processes or a food safety service to which the same plan applies. The food safety program should contain at least a standard, a clearly defined scope, and a food safety system.

**Certification Program Owner, or CPO (GFSI):** As defined by the Global Food Safety Initiative, an organization which is responsible for the development, management, and maintenance of a Certification Program.

**Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex):** The internationally recognized entity whose purpose is to guide and promote the elaboration and establishment of definitions, standards and requirements for foods, and to assist in their harmonization and, in doing so, to facilitate international trade. The Commission Secretariat comprises staff from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization. The Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the principles of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system in 1997.

**Competence:** Ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results (ISO 19011).

**Compressed Air Monitoring:** A program that includes particles, water, oil, microbiological, and relevant gaseous testing in compressed air or other gases. A verification of the effectiveness of compressor maintenance and filtration that a management facility has in place.

**Contract Manufacturer (or co-man, co-manufacturer):** Facilities that are contracted by the SQF certified site to produce, process, pack and /or store part of or all of one or more products included in the site's SQF scope of certification. In some cases, a product may be manufactured interchangeably at the certified site and by the contract manufacturer. In other cases, a contract manufacturer may only be used intermittently to fulfill or supplement the certified site's production. Contract manufacturers must follow the requirements outlined in the SQF Food Safety Code.

## C

**Corporation (or corporate):** A head office. An entity that does not manufacture or handle product but oversees and contributes to the Food Safety and/or Quality Management System at an SQF certified site owned by the corporation.

**Correction:** Action to eliminate a detected non-conformity. Has the same meaning as “corrected”.

**Corrective Action:** Action to eliminate the cause of a detected non-conformity identified at a food safety audit, a deviation identified at a quality audit, or other undesirable situation and to prevent recurrence. Also referred to as ‘corrective and preventative action’ (refer to “root cause analysis”).

**Crisis Management:** The process by which a site manages an event (e.g., a flood, a drought, a fire, pandemic, etc.) that adversely affects the site’s ability to provide continuity of supply of safe, quality food, and requires the implementation of a crisis management plan.

**Customer:** A buyer or person that purchases goods or services from the SQF certified site.

## D

**Dietary Supplement:** A product containing one or more vitamins, herbs, enzymes, amino acids, or other ingredients, that is taken orally to supplement or augment the consumer’s diet.

It includes products not generally covered under food safety regulations in the country of manufacture or sale, and may include alternative or traditional medicines not regulated the country of manufacture or sale.

Dietary supplements may also be referred to as a natural health products or alternative names that align with specific regulations in the country of manufacture or sale.

**Deviation:** A non-conformity raised against the SQF Quality Code. Deviations are graded as follows:

- **A minor quality deviation** is an omission or deficiency in the quality system that produces unsatisfactory conditions that if not addressed may lead to a quality threat but not likely to cause a system element breakdown.
- **A major quality deviation** is an omission or deficiency in the quality system producing unsatisfactory conditions that carry a significant quality threat and are likely to result in a system element breakdown.

No critical deviations are raised at a quality systems audit.



## E

**Environmental Monitoring Program (EMP):**

A program which includes pathogen or indicator swabbing as appropriate to detect risk in the sanitary conditions in the processing or food handling environment. A verification of the effectiveness of the pathogen controls that a management facility has in place.

**Exempt (or exemption):** A term applied to elements of the SQF Food Safety and Quality Code that the site does not wish to be included in the SQF System audit, and has submitted a written request to the certification body to exclude, prior to commencement of any scheduled audit activity.

In the SQF Food Safety Code, mandatory elements of the system elements cannot be exempted. The certification body must confirm the reasons for exemption as part of the site audit.

The term also applies to products, processes or areas of the site that the site wishes to exclude from the audit. A request is to be submitted to the certification body in writing prior to the audit activity and is listed in the site description in the SQFI assessment database.

## F

**Facility:** The site's premises at its street address. The production, manufacturing, or storage area where product is produced, processed, packaged, and/or stored, and includes the processes, equipment, environment, materials and personnel involved. The facility must be managed and supervised under the same operational management. The facility is the site audited during an on-site audit (refer to "site").

**Feed:** Any single or multiple materials, whether processed, semi-processed, or raw, which is intended to be fed directly to food-producing animals.

**Feed Safety:** The principles and practices applied to feed production and manufacturing to ensure that feed does not cause harm to animals or humans.

**Food:** Any substance, usually of animal or plant origin, intentionally consumed by humans, whether processed, partially processed, or unprocessed.

May include water, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, materials included in a processed food product and any other substance identified by regulation (legislation) as a food.

**Food Contact Packaging:** Food packaging is the material around a food that contains and protects the food through the supply chain. Food contact packaging is the containing material in direct contact with the food.

**Food Defense:** As defined by the US Food and Drug Administration, the efforts to prevent intentional food contamination by biological, physical, chemical, or radiological hazards that are not reasonably likely to occur in the food supply.

**Food Defense Plan:** A set of written documents that is based upon food defense principles and incorporates a vulnerability assessment, includes mitigation strategies, and delineates food defense monitoring, corrective action, and verification procedures to be followed. ([www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov))

**Food Fraud:** As defined by Michigan State University, a collective term used to encompass the deliberate and intentional substitution, addition, tampering, or misrepresentation of food, food ingredients, feed, or food packaging and/or labelling, product information; or false or misleading statements made about a product for economic gain. It may also include gray market or stolen goods.

## F

**Food Fraud Mitigation Plan:** A plan designed to address the risk factors identified in the food fraud vulnerability assessment.

**Food Fraud Vulnerability Assessment:** A risk-assessment-style evaluation of a food's vulnerability to food fraud.

**FMI:** A not-for-profit corporation, working with and on behalf of the entire food industry to advance a safer, healthier and more efficient consumer food supply chain, having its principal offices at 2345 Crystal Drive, Suite 800, Arlington, VA 22202, United States of America.

**Food Quality Plan:** As described in the SQF Quality Code, it is based on the CODEX HACCP method and includes process controls at quality points in production to monitor product quality, identify deviations from control parameters and define corrections necessary to keep the process under control.

**Food Safety Culture (GFSI):** Shared values, beliefs and norms that affect mindset and behavior toward food safety in, across and throughout an organization.

Elements of food safety culture are those elements of the food safety management system which the senior management of a company may use to drive the food safety culture within the company. These include, but are not limited to:

- Communication about food safety policies and responsibilities
- Training
- Employee feedback on food safety related issues
- Performance measurement.

**Food Safety Event:** An incident within the food supply chain where there is a risk, potential risk or perceived risk of illness or confirmed illness associated with the consumption of a food, and which requires intervention. ([fscf-ptin.apec.org](http://fscf-ptin.apec.org))

**Food Safety Fundamentals:** An entry level Code for new and developing businesses that covers basic Good Agricultural or Aquaculture Practices (GAPs), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs), or Good Distribution Practices (GDPs) and defines the essential elements that must be implemented to meet relevant legislative and customer food safety requirements. Sites that comply with the SQF Code certification requirements for the Food Safety Fundamentals Code receive a certificate from an SQFI licensed certification body.

**Food Safety Plan:** As described in the SQF Food Safety Codes, a prepared plan based on the CODEX HACCP method that includes process controls at control points in production to monitor product safety, identify deviations from control parameters and define corrections necessary to keep the process under control.

**Food Sector Category (FSC):** A classification scheme established to assist in a uniform approach to management of the SQF Program and defines the manufacturing, production, processing, storage, wholesaling, distribution, retailing and food service activities and other food sector services. Food sector categories are applied to site, auditor, trainer, and consultant registration as defined by SQFI.

## G

**General Requirements:** The current edition of the document entitled “Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies: SQF Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC 17065:2012, General Requirements for Certification Bodies,” published SQFI.

**Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI):** The Global Food Safety Initiative is a private organization, established and managed by the international trade association, the Consumer Goods Forum. The GFSI maintains a scheme to benchmark food safety standards used to certify producers, manufacturers warehouses, food retailers, and other businesses within the food supply chain.

**Good Practice Elements:** Management and operational practices which define the best practice handling and hygiene elements for food or feed production, manufacturing, storage, transport, and retail.

- Good Agricultural/Operating Practices (GAPs/GOPs) apply to fruit, vegetable, and grain farms
- Good Aquaculture Practices (GAPs) apply to intensive seafood farming
- Good Distribution Practices (GDPs) apply to independent food warehouse and transport facilities
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) apply to food and feed manufacturing
- Good Production Practices (GPPs) apply to livestock farms
- Good Retail Practices (GRPs) apply to retail food outlets

## H

**HACCP (GFSI):** Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point.

A system which identifies, evaluates, controls and monitors hazards relating to food safety and specified by Codex Alimentarius (CAC / RCP 1-1969).

**HACCP Method:** The implementation of pre-requisite programs and the application of HACCP principles in the logical sequence of the twelve steps as described in the current edition of the CODEX Alimentarius Commission Guidelines. The SQF Food Safety and Quality Codes utilize the HACCP method to control food safety hazards and quality threats in the segment of the food chain under consideration.

**HACCP Plan:** A document prepared in accordance with the CODEX HACCP method to ensure control of hazards which are significant for food safety or the identification of quality threats for the product under consideration.

**HACCP Training:** Training in the principles and application of a HACCP system based on the Annex of the Codex Alimentarius Commission General Principles of Food Hygiene.

The training shall be:

1. Recognized as a HACCP training course used extensively in a country.
2. Administered and delivered by a recognized institution.
3. The acquired knowledge of the candidate shall be assessed as part of the training program.

## H

**Hazardous Chemicals and Toxic**

**Substances:** Solids, liquids or gasses that are radioactive, flammable, explosive, corrosive, oxidizing, asphyxiating, pathogenic, or allergenic, including but not restricted to detergents, sanitizers, pest control chemicals, lubricants, paints, processing aids, bio-chemical additives, which if used or handled incorrectly or in increased dosage may cause harm to the handler and/or consumer.

Hazardous or toxic chemicals may be prescribed by regulation as “dangerous goods” and may carry a “poison,” “Hazmat” or “Hazchem” label depending on the jurisdiction.

**High Risk Area:** A segregated room or area where high risk food processes are performed, and which require a higher level of hygienic practice to prevent contamination of high-risk food by pathogenic organisms.

**High Risk Food:** Food or food product with known attributes for microbiological growth, physical or chemical contamination, or which may allow for the survival of pathogenic microbial flora or other contaminants which, if not controlled, may contribute to illness of the consumer. It may also apply to a food that is deemed high risk by a customer, declared high risk by the relevant food regulation or has caused a major foodborne illness outbreak.

**High Risk Food Process(es):** A process that requires specific controls and/or a higher level of hygienic practice to prevent food contamination from pathogens.

## I

**Industry Code of Practice:** Industry norms, rules or protocols established by industry groups which provide practical, industry specific guidelines on meeting regulations while meeting industry needs.

**Information Communication Technology (ICT):** The use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing, and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. (Reference: IAF MD:4, Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes; The International Accreditation Forum)

**Ingredients:** Minor materials (e.g., spices) used to supplement the conversion of raw materials in the food manufacturing process (refer to “raw materials”).

**Inspection Area:** A designated station close to the process (es) for the purpose of monitoring food safety and/or quality attributes and parameters.

## L

**Legality:** Legality refers to national federal, state and/or local regulations applicable to the certified product in the country of manufacture and intended markets.

**Licensed Certification Body:** Refer to “Certification Body”

## M

**Mandatory Elements:** System elements that must be implemented and audited for a site to achieve SQF food safety certification. Mandatory elements cannot be exempted during a certification/re-certification audit.

**Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs):** Are set by local regulation or CODEX Alimentarius Commission, and apply to maximum allowable trace levels of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in agricultural produce, particularly produce entering the food chain.

**Multi-site Certification:** Multi-site certification involves the designation and certification of a central site (i.e. manufacturer, packer, warehouse) into which a network of certified sub-sites all performing the same function feed into. The central site and all sub-sites are all located in the one country and operate under the same food safety legislation (refer to Appendix 4: Requirements for Multi-site Certification)

**Multi-site Program:** An SQF multi-site program is comprised of a central SQF certified site under which activities are planned to manage and control the food safety management systems of a network of sub-sites under a legal or contractual link (refer to Appendix 4: Requirements for Multi-site Certification)

## N

**Non-conformance (or non-conformity):** Is non-fulfillment of a requirement (ISO/IEC 19011). The levels and definitions of non-conformance within the SQF Food Safety Codes are:

- **A minor non-conformance** is evidence of a random or infrequent failure to maintain compliance to a requirement, but which does not indicate a breakdown in the food safety management system or that food safety is compromised. It is evidence of an incomplete or inappropriate implementation of SQF requirements which, if not corrected, could lead to system element breakdown
- **A major non-conformance** is a failure of a system element, a systemic breakdown in the food safety management system, a serious deviation from the requirements, and/or absence of evidence demonstrating compliance to an applicable system element or Good Operating Practices. It is evidence of a food safety risk to products included in the scope of certification.
- **A critical non-conformance** is a breakdown of control (s) at a critical control point, a pre-requisite program, or other process step and judged likely to cause a significant public health risk and/or where product is contaminated.

## N

A critical non-conformance is also raised if the certification body deems that there is systemic falsification of records relating to food safety controls and the SQF System.

**Non-conforming Equipment:** Processing, packing, storage, transport, or handling equipment that is not suitable for the intended purpose and may potentially compromise food or feed safety and/or quality.

**Non-conforming Product:** In-process or finished food or feed product that does not meet specifications for food safety and/or quality as applicable and which may be unsafe.

**N/A:** Stands for “not applicable” and may be reported during the SQF food safety and/or quality audit by the food safety and/or quality auditor when, in the consideration of the auditor, an element does not apply.

N/A may also be reported to avoid double debiting, for example where a non-conformity has been raised against a similar, but more appropriate element. In this case, the element will be reported as N/A.

## O

**On-site Laboratories:** A designated and enclosed area in the site in which chemical, microbiological and other product testing is conducted and if not controlled could lead to contamination and requires the use of good laboratory practices.

**On-site Visit:** An unannounced visit to a site by an authorized certification body auditor to verify the effective implementation of corrective actions that resulted from suspension at the previous re-certification audit. Depending on the cause of the suspension, the site visit occurs either within thirty (30) days or sixty (60) days of the certification body receiving the site’s corrective action plan.

## P

**Pests:** Vermin, including birds, rodents, insects, or other unwanted species that can carry disease and pose a risk to packaging, feed, or food.

**Pet Food:** Any substance intended for consumption by domestic animals and specialty pets. It includes dry and moist pet foods and treats, semi-raw, canned, chilled, or frozen product.

**Plan:** As defined by ISO 9001, a document(s) used to establish the objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with customer requirements and the organization’s policies (refer to Food Safety (Quality) Plan).

**Potable:** Water that is safe to drink.

## P

**Pre-requisite Program:** A procedural measure that when implemented reduces the likelihood of a food safety hazard or a food quality threat occurring, but one that may not be directly related to activities taking place during production.

**Primary Producer or Producer:** A sole entity involved in the pre-farm gate production, field packing, storage and supply of agricultural product produced and/or harvested under their exclusive control.

**Processing:** A series of operational steps in which the nature of the food is changed. Processing includes but is not limited to repacking, over bagging and re-labeling of food, slaughtering, dismembering, sorting, grading, cleaning, treating, drying, salting, smoking, cooking, canning, purifying, and the pasteurization of food.

**Processing Aid:** Any substances intentionally used in the processing of raw materials, foods or their ingredients to fulfil a certain technological purpose during treatment or processing, but which does not form part of the finished product.

**Product:** A food or feed substance that applies to a specific food sector category as defined by SQFI.

**Proficiency Testing:** Proficiency testing calibrates the performance of laboratory personnel and in-process testers who conduct microbiological, chemical, or physical analysis of ingredients, materials, work-in-progress, finished products and the processing environment by means of interlaboratory comparisons.

**Program:** A plan(s) used to establish the objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with customer requirements and the organization's policies. Examples include allergen management program or an environmental monitoring program.

**Purity:** The absence of contaminants that could cause a food safety hazard.

## Q

**Quality:** A measure of exceeding customer or corporate expectations and a state of being free from defects, deficiencies, and significant variation.

**Quality Threat:** An identified risk that has the potential, if not controlled, to affect the quality of a product.

## R

**Raw Materials:** The primary material from which a food or feed product is made. Raw materials may be unprocessed, ie primary agricultural materials, or processed, i.e., the form has been substantially changed prior to receipt by the site (refer to "ingredients").

**Re-certification:** A re-certification by a certification body of a site's SQF Food Safety or Quality System as a result of a re-certification audit. Re-certified shall have a corresponding meaning.

## R

**Re-certification Audit:** An audit of the site's SQF Food Safety or Quality System within thirty (30) calendar days either side of the anniversary of last day of the initial certification audit.

**Relevant Authority:** National, state or local government, commission or statutory board that establishes and controls legislative requirements concerning the safety of agricultural and food products throughout the supply chain.

**Recoup:** Product that is intact and requires no further processing or handling but is repackaged for distribution. For example, mixing of partial cases to build one complete case. May also be referred to as "repack."

**Regulatory Warning:** A formal notification or advisory from a relevant authority to a certified site regarding a breach in legislative requirements.

**Remote Activities:** The actions that occur to collect objective evidence from a location other than the physical location of the audited organization as part of a full systems audit.

**Rework:** Food, materials, and ingredients, including work-in-progress that has left the normal product flow and requires action to be taken on it before it is acceptable for release and is suitable for reuse within the process.

**Risk Assessment:** It is the process of determining the level of action needed to prevent or eliminate an adverse food safety (or quality) event, or determining the likelihood and consequence of an adverse food safety (or quality) outcome if planned activities do not occur as expected. Risk assessment is part of a risk management strategy.

**Root Cause Analysis (or RCA):** A method of problem solving to identify and resolve the core issue(s) that cause a non-conformity, deviation, or other adverse food safety or quality event.

**Rules of Use:** The rules and procedures contained in SQF Logo and/or Quality Shield Rules of Use and includes the certificate schedule and any modification, variation or replacement of the SQF trademark rules of use.

## S

**Scope of Certification:** The specific site, food sector categories and products to be covered by the certificate.

**Season or Seasonal:** A period in which the major activity is conducted over not more than five consecutive months in a calendar year; for example, harvesting and packing during the apple season.

**Service:** One or more activities performed between the supplier and the customer and is generally tangible (ISO/IEC 17065).

**SQFI Select Site:** Recognition on the SQFI certificate for a site that has voluntarily committed to annual unannounced re-certification audits (refer to "unannounced audit").

**Senior Site Management:** Individuals at the highest level on-site responsible for the business operation and implementation and improvement of the food safety and quality management system.



## S

**Site:** The specific location where an SQF Food Safety or Quality System is implemented by a food business involved in the production, manufacture, processing, transport, storage, distribution, or sale of food, beverages, packaging, animal feed, or pet food.

**Site Audit:** The on-site component of a certification or re-certification audit that reviews the site's products and processes to determine the effective documentation and implementation of the site's SQF Food Safety or Quality System (refer to "on-site visit").

**SQF Audit:** A systematic and independent examination of a site's SQF Food Safety and/or Quality System by an SQF food safety and/or quality auditor to determine whether food safety, quality systems, hygiene and management activities are undertaken in accordance with that system documentation and comply with the requirements of the SQF Food Safety and/or Quality Code, as appropriate, and to verify whether these arrangements are implemented effectively.

The audit can be conducted in part using remote activities using information communication technology (ICT) from a location other than the physical location of the audit site.

**SQF Auditor:** A person registered by the SQFI to audit a site's SQF Food Safety and/or Quality System. An auditor must work on behalf of a licensed certification body. The terms "SQF auditor" and "SQF contract auditor" shall have the same meaning.

**SQF Consultant:** A person who is registered by SQFI to assist in the development, validation, verification, implementation, and maintenance of SQF System on behalf of client site in the food industry categories appropriate to their scope of registration.

**SQF Logo:** Means the SQF logo depicted in SQF Logo Rules of Use.

**SQF Practitioner (also SQF Quality Practitioner):** An individual designated by a site to oversee the development, implementation, review and maintenance of the site's SQF System. The SQF practitioner qualification details are verified by the SQF food safety or quality auditor during the certification/re-certification audit as meeting the requirements of the SQF Food Safety and/or Quality Code.

The SQF Food Safety practitioner and SQF Quality practitioner may or may not be the same person.

**SQF Program:** The SQF Food Safety and/or Quality Code and all associated rules, quality shield, intellectual property and documents.

**SQF Quality Shield:** Means the SQF shield depicted in SQF Quality Shield Rules of Use.

**SQF System:** A risk management and preventative system that includes a food safety plan or food quality plan implemented and operated by a site to assure food safety or quality. It is implemented and maintained by an SQF practitioner, audited by an SQF food safety or quality auditor and certified by a licensed certification body as meeting the requirements relevant to the SQF Food Safety or Quality Code.

**SQF Trainer:** An individual contracted to a licensed SQF training center that has applied and met the requirements listed in the "Criteria for SQF Trainers" published by SQFI and, upon approval, is registered under SQFI to provide consistent training on the SQF Program.

**SQFI:** The SQF Institute, a division of FMI.

**SQFI Assessment Database:** The online database used by SQFI to manage site registration, site audits, close out of corrective actions, and site certification.

## S

**System Elements:** The SQF food safety or quality management requirements for each SQF Code that are applied by all sites throughout the supply chain for SQF certification (i.e., clauses 2.1 – 2.9).

**Standard:** A normative document and other defined normative documents, established by consensus and approved by a body that provide, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.

**Sub-site:** An SQF certified site which operates under a contractual link to an SQF certified central site within an SQF multi-site program (refer to Appendix 4: Requirements for SQF Multi-site Certification).

**Supplier:** The entity that provides a product or service to the SQF certified site.

**Surveillance Audit:** A six (6) month audit of a site's SQF System where the site received a 'C – comply' rating at the last certification or re-certification audit, or if the site is suspended as a result of a 'F– fails to comply' rating at a surveillance or re-certification audit.

## T

**Technical Expert:** An individual engaged by a licensed SQF certification body to provide a high level of technical support to the certification audit team. The technical expert shall be approved by SQFI prior to the certification/re-certification audit, and demonstrate a high degree of expertise and technical competence in the food sector category under study, and a sound knowledge and understanding of the HACCP method.

**Trademarks:** A recognizable label, logo, or mark which identifies a raw material or finished product with a particular producer, manufacturer, or retailer.

**Training Center:** An entity which has entered into a license agreement with SQFI to deliver SQFI-licensed training courses, including the Implementing SQF Systems Training Courses, the Advanced SQF Practitioner Course, and the Implementing SQF Fundamentals Course, training courses.

## U

**Unannounced Audit:** A re-certification audit that is conducted once every three (3) years and thirty (30) days on either side the initial certification anniversary date without prior notice to the SQF certified site.

The first three-year cycle commences with the initial certification audit date. Within the first three years of certification, the site is required to have one unannounced audit. Thereafter, there is an unannounced audit every three years.

A site may forgo the three-year certification cycle requirement and voluntarily elect to have annual unannounced re-certification audits. Sites with annual unannounced re-certification audits shall be recognized on the SQFI certificate as an "SQFI select site" (refer to "SQF select site").

## V

**Validation** : That element of verification focused on collecting and evaluating scientific and technical information to determine if the HACCP food safety (or quality) plan, when properly implemented, will effectively control the hazards (Codex).

**Verification**: Those activities, other than monitoring, that determine the validity of the HACCP food safety (or quality) plan and ensure that the system is operating according to the plan (Codex).

**Verification Schedule**: A schedule outlining the frequency and responsibility for carrying out the methods, procedures or tests additional to those used in monitoring, to determine that the HACCP study was completed correctly, that the relevant SQF System is compliant with the relevant food safety and/or food quality plan and that it continues to be effective.

## W

**Water Treatment**: The microbiological, chemical, and/or physical treatment of water for use in processing or cleaning, to ensure its potability and suitability for use.

# Appendix 3: SQF Logo Rules of Use

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The SQF logo is owned by SQFI. Sites obtain no property in the SQF logo.
- 1.2 SQFI delegates any or all of its functions described herein to a licensed certification body (CB) as stipulated in their Safe Quality Food Institute Certification Body License Agreement.
- 1.3 These rules of use regulate the use of the SQF logo by certified sites only. These rules of use do not regulate the use of the SQF logo by SQFI, certification bodies (CBs) or other entities licensed by SQFI to use them, unless otherwise provided for in this or another instrument.

## 2 Conditions for Use

- 2.1 Sites who achieve and maintain certification to the SQF Food Safety Fundamentals, the SQF Food Safety Code and/or the SQF Quality Code are granted permission by their CB to use the SQF logo. Electronic SQF logo files are to be obtained from the CB.
- 2.2 A site shall, for the duration of its certification, have the right to use the SQF logo. There will be no fee payable by sites for the right to use the SQF logo, other than fees payable to obtain and maintain certification.
- 2.3 Subsidiary companies and site addresses not included on the certificate of registration are not certified to use the SQF logo.
- 2.4 Sites may only use the SQF logo in accordance with these rules of use, which are designed to protect the integrity and enhance the value of the SQF logo.

## 3 Reproduction

- 3.1 Reproduction of the SQF logo is to be clear, precise, of the highest standard and follow the usage guidelines in the table below.

Color Format	For Use On
Full Color Reproduction: outlined in 3.2 below. Or Single Color Reproduction: black and white.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>brochures, flyers, advertisements, press releases, company website, email signature lines</li> <li>internal documents and training materials</li> </ul>

- 3.2 The following guidelines govern full color reproduction.



PMS 3005C

CMYK: C=100, M=34, Y=0, K=2

### APPENDIX 3: SQF Logo Rules of Use

- 3.3 To ensure readability, do not reproduce the SQF logo smaller than indicated below. Larger variation to these dimensions is permitted provided it is proportional to the dimensions given below.



- 3.4 Where it is demonstrated that alternative reproduction of the SQF logo enhances the status of the SQF logo and/or SQFI, then the alternative is permitted provided it is approved by the CB. All requests must be provided in writing per certified site to the CB and SQFI.

## 4 Obligations of a Site

- 4.1 A site must:
- Direct any queries regarding their intended use of the SQF logo to the CB who issued their certificate;
  - Discontinue any use of the SQF logo to which SQFI or the CB reasonably objects;
  - Operate entirely within the scope of its certificate, including the certification schedule;
  - Give SQFI, their CB and/or their agents access to examine all items bearing or indicating the SQF logo for the purpose of confirming compliance with these rules of use and the certificate.

## 5 Grounds for Ceasing Use of the SQF Logo

- 5.1 Permission for a site to use the SQF logo will be suspended and/or withdrawn:
- If the site's certification is suspended, withdrawn, relinquished or not renewed;
  - If the site breaches or fails to comply with these rules of use;
  - If the site uses the SQF logo in a way that, in the opinion of SQFI or the CB, is detrimental to the SQF logo or the SQF program as a whole, is misleading to the public or otherwise contrary to law; or
  - If the site 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 winding up of the site (except for the purpose 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.
- 5.2 The site shall be notified by their CB in writing if their use of the SQF Logo has been suspended or withdrawn.

## 6 Disclaimer

- 6.1 SQFI may alter these rules of use or make new rules. No such alteration or new rule shall affect the use of the SQF logo by a site until six (6) months have expired from the date the alteration or new rules of use are first published by SQFI on its website (sqfi.com) unless specified by SQFI.

# Appendix 4: Requirements for SQF Multi-site Certification

(Packing, Handling or Manufacturing of Primary Products)

## 1 Scope

- 1.1 This appendix outlines the requirements for establishing and maintaining certification of a multi-site program that is managed by an SQF certified central site (packhouse, grain handling/elevator or manufacturer of primary products) that, through a risk-based approach, has determined it is engaged in low risk activities.

## 2 Definitions

- 2.1 A SQF multi-site program is comprised of a central site under which activities are planned to manage and control the food safety and quality management systems of a network of sub-sites under a legal or contractual link.
- 2.2 For the purpose of this Code the definitions outlined in Appendix 2: Glossary and the following definitions apply.
- 2.3 The central site is an entity certified to a SQF Food Safety Code (i.e. manufacturing, packhouse or grain handling facility) or eligible for such certification, has a network of primary supplier sub-sites that are eligible for certification to an appropriate SQF Food Safety Code and are all involved in similar activities as per 3.7 below. The central site and all sub-sites are all located in the one country and operate under the same food safety legislation.

## 3 Eligibility Criteria for the Multi-site Organization

- 3.1 The central site is the entity responsible for the SQF multi-site program.
- 3.2 Sub-sites shall be linked to the central site by a legal or contractual arrangement.
- 3.3 The central site and all sub-sites in the multi-site program shall be audited by one certification body. The central site shall be contracted with the certification body. The sub-sites are not required to be contracted to the certification body.
- 3.4 Central sites shall implement an SQF System that includes management of the sub-sites and internal audit of the sub-sites. The central site and the sub-sites shall be certified to an SQF Food Safety Code.
- 3.5 Central sites can be certified to the SQF Quality Code however, sub-sites are not eligible for certification to the SQF Quality Code.
- 3.6 Sub-sites shall implement an SQF System which is subject to continuous surveillance, maintenance and management by the central site.

## APPENDIX 4: Requirements for SQF Multi-site Certification

- 3.7 The central site shall have authoritative control of the food safety management system of all subsites, including traceability, customer complaints and implementation of corrective actions when needed in any sub-site. The central site shall also issue, maintain and retain all relevant documentation associated with the sub-sites. These shall be included in the agreement between the central site and the sub-sites.
- 3.8 The product(s) or service(s) provided by each of the sub-sites shall be substantially of the same kind and produced according to the same fundamental methods and procedures. The size and/or complexity of each of the sub-sites shall be similar.
- 3.9 The central site shall establish and maintain SQF certification for the duration of the SQF multi-site program.
- 3.10 The central site's SQF management system shall be administered under a centrally controlled plan and be subject to central management review and internal auditing of the SQF system
- 3.11 The central site shall demonstrate that sufficient management and technical capacity is available to:
- i. To collect and analyze data from all sites, including the central site;
  - ii. Implement and maintain an internal audit program for the central site and the sub-site; and
  - iii. Authorize and initiate organizational change if required.
- 3.12 The central administration function and the sub-sites shall be subject to the central site's internal audit program and shall be audited in accordance with that program. Internal audits shall be conducted at sub-sites, prior to the central site certification audit, in a quantity sufficient to allow the certification body to access whether the site is in compliance and apply to sub-site sample selection (refer to 8.0 below). All sub-sites are required, within a calendar year or season, to have an internal audit as per 4.2 below.

### 4 Internal Audits

- 4.1 The central site shall document its internal audit procedure and ensure that it can be effectively implemented. It shall include:
- i. An internal audit schedule based on sub-site and central site risk profiling;
  - ii. Methods and responsibility for conducting audits of sub-sites and the central site; and
  - iii. A frequency that ensures all sub-site and the entire central site SQF system are completed annually.
- 4.2 An internal audit, which includes all relevant elements of a SQF Food Safety Code, and the Good Agriculture/Aquaculture Practices (GAP) or Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) module(s) applicable to the food sector category, shall be conducted at least once per year, and during periods of peak activity at all sub-sites included in the multi-site certification.

## 5 Internal Audit Personnel

The evaluation of internal audit personnel against 5.1 – 5.3 below shall be documented by the certification body in the internal audit section of the SQF audit report for the central site.

- 5.1 Personnel conducting internal audits shall:
- i. Have successfully completed the Implementing SQF Systems training course;
  - ii. Have successfully completed internal auditor training;
  - iii. Demonstrate competence in the same food sector category as the internal audit through work experience (minimum 2 years);
  - iv. Hold a university degree or equivalent education and training
- 5.2 Personnel managing the internal audits of the multi-site organization shall:
- i. Be separate from personnel conducting the internal audits;
  - ii. Complete internal auditing training;
  - iii. Meet the criteria of an SQF practitioner;
  - iv. Technically review and evaluate the results of internal audits, including addressing non-conformities; and
  - v. Ensure internal auditors are evaluated, calibrated, monitored and assigned to remain impartial.
- 5.3 Where the internal audits are contracted out:
- i. The contractor shall be a registered or meet the requirements of an SQF auditor or consultant;
  - ii. The central site shall be accountable for the actions and effectiveness of the work completed by the contractor; and
  - iii. Contract arrangements shall comply with 2.3.2 of the applicable SQF Food Safety Code.

## 6 Auditing and Certifying the Multi-site Organization

- 6.1 The audits and certification of an SQF multi-site organization shall be completed by a SQF licensed and accredited certification body. The audit includes:
- i. The certification audit of the central site (including initial desk audit and site audit);
  - ii. Certification of selected sub-site, site audit only;
  - iii. Surveillance audits; and
  - iv. Re-certification audits.
- 6.2 The initial certification audit and subsequent surveillance and re-certification audits of the multi-site organization shall be centered on the central site, the internal audit function and a sample of the sub-sites. Record reviews for the sub-sites activities will be completed at the sub-site site audit.



## 7 Audit Frequency

- 7.1 The certification audit of the central site and a sample (refer to 8.0) of sub-sites are conducted every twelve months.
- 7.2 Re-certification audits of the central site are conducted on the anniversary of the last day of the initial certification audit, plus or minus 30 calendar days. For seasonal operations timing for sub-sites should be guided by the harvesting dates, that may be weather dependent, as well as time required for the central site to adequately complete the internal audit program.
- 7.3 Within each certification and re-certification audit cycle, the central site shall be audited before the majority of the sample of sub-sites. It is recognized that for seasonal operations harvesting dates and having product available to the central site may require some sub-sites audits being conducted prior to the central site audit.
- 7.4 Surveillance audits are conducted for any site in the multi-site program that receives a 'C-Complies' rating. Surveillance audits are conducted six (6) months from the last day of the last certification audit, plus or minus thirty (30) calendar days or as per Part A 4.3 for seasonal operations. Where a sub-site is subject to a surveillance audit due to a "C - Complies" rating, the internal audit of that sub-site by the central site shall also be reviewed. If the sub-site is not operational within the six (6) month time frame for the surveillance audit then it shall be audited within the first two (2) weeks of the subsequent harvest and automatically be included in the sub-site sampling calculation (refer to 9.0).
- 7.5 If the central site or any one of the sampled sub-sites is identified as having a critical non-conformity at an audit, or otherwise achieves only an "F - Fails to comply" rating, the certificates for the central site and ALL sub-sites shall be suspended until such time as a "C - Complies" rating or better is achieved at a further round of audits at the central site and a sample of sub-sites. The sub-site(s) that receives the "F - Fails to comply" rating shall be included in the sub-site selection process (refer to 8.0) for the next audit cycle.

## 8 Selecting the Sub-sites

- 8.1 The selection of the sample is the responsibility of the certification body.
- 8.2 The sample is partly selective based on the factors set out below and partly non-selective, and shall result in a range of different sub-sites being selected, without excluding the random element of sampling. At least twenty-five (25) percent of the sub-sites selected shall be based on random selection.
- 8.3 The sample of sub-sites shall be selected so that the differences among the selected sub-sites, over the period of validity of the certificate, are as large as possible.

- 8.4 The sub-site selection criteria shall include among others the following aspects:
- i. Results of internal audits or previous certification assessments;
  - ii. Records of complaints and other relevant aspects of correction and corrective action;
  - iii. Significant variations in the size of the sub-sites;
  - iv. Variations in the work procedures;
  - v. Modifications since the last certification assessment;
  - vi. Geographical dispersion; and
  - vii. New suppliers added into the program (refer to 10.0).
- 8.5 The certification body shall inform the central site of the sub-sites that will comprise the sample and in a timely manner that will allow the central site adequate time to prepare for the audits.
- 8.6 The central site shall ensure that all sub-sites listed as being included in the sub-site audit selection process are registered with SQF (Part A, 1.3). The central site shall also ensure that the SQF database is updated to reflect any sub-sites being removed from the previous year multi-site program.

## 9 Determining the Size of the Sub-sites Sample

- 9.1 The certification body shall record the justification for applying a sample size outside that described in this clause.
- 9.2 The minimum number of sub-sites to be audited at a certification audit or re-certification audit is:
- i. Where the sub-site number is less than 75 then the square root of the number of sub-sites with 1.5 as a co-efficient ( $y=1.5\sqrt{x}$ ), rounded to the higher whole number, with a minimum number 5 for subgroups numbers less than 20; or
  - ii. Where the sub-site number is 75-100 then the square root of the number of sub-site with 2.0 as a co-efficient ( $y=2.0\sqrt{x}$ ); or
  - iii. Where the sub-site number is greater than 100 then 20% of the number of sub-sites.

The sub-site selection process shall ensure that all sub-sites are audited withing a 5-year period and that at least 20% of the annual sub-site sample is subjected to an unannounced audit.

- 9.3 Where a primary sub-site has 4 or more secondary sites (e.g. growing areas), the primary location shall be audited and 50% of the secondary sites. More than fifty (50) percent can be audited if there is evidence that there are grounds to justify the further audit time.
- 9.4 The size of sample shall be increased where the certification body's risk analysis of the activity covered by the management system subject to certification indicates special circumstances in respect of factors like:
- i. Major variations in processes undertaken at each sub-site;
  - ii. Records of complaints and other relevant aspects of correction and corrective action;

- i. Indication of an overall breakdown of food safety controls; or
- ii. Inadequate internal audits or action arising from internal audit findings.

## **10 Additional Sub-sites**

- 10.1 On the application of a new sub-site or group of sub-sites to join an already certified SQF multi-site program, each new sub-site or group of sub-sites shall be included in the audit sample for the next re-certification audit. The new sub-sites shall be added to the existing sites for determining the sample size for future re-certification audits. Sub-sites transferring from another multi-site group or from a stand-alone certification are not classified as “new” and are not included in the sub-site audit sample unless part of the random selection process or due to auditor/certification body discretion.
- 10.2 New sub-sites shall not be added to the sub-site list once the list has been verified and agreed to by the central site and the certification body during the annual sample site selection process. These sites can have their SQF systems components (SQF food safety system elements) managed by the central site but will be certified as a stand-alone operation and subject to initial certification requirements.

## **11 Non-Conformities**

- 11.1 When non-conformities are found at any individual sub-site through the central site’s internal auditing, investigation by the central site shall take place to determine whether the other sub-sites may be affected. The certification body shall require evidence that the central site has taken action to rectify all non-conformities found during internal audits and that all non-conformities are reviewed to determine whether they indicate an overall system deficiency applicable to all sub-sites or not. If they are found to do so, appropriate corrective action shall be taken both at the central site and at the individual sub-sites. The central site shall demonstrate to the certification body the justification for all follow-up action.
- 11.2 When non-conformities are found at the central site or at any individual sub-site through auditing by the certification body, action shall be taken by the certification body as outlined in Part A, 3.2.
- 11.3 When non-conformities for system elements are found at the central site, the certification body shall increase its sampling frequency until it is satisfied that control has been re-established by the central site.
- 11.4 At the time of the initial certification and subsequent re-certification a certificate shall not be issued to the central site and sub-sites until satisfactory corrective action is taken to close out all non-conformities.
- 11.5 It shall not be permissible that, in order to overcome the obstacle raised by the existence of non-conformity at a single sub-site, the central site seeks to exempt from the scope of certification the “problematic” sub-site during the certification, surveillance or re-certification audit.

## 12 Certificate Issued for a Multi-site Organization

- 12.1 A certificate shall be issued to the central site and sub-sites audited within the sample program of the SQF multi-site program. The central site's certificate shall include an appendix listing all sub-sites participating in the multi-site program. The sub-site certification shall state within its scope of certification that it is part of a multi-site certification and shall list all primary and secondary sub-sites. Products listed on sub-site certificates may vary from the central site certificate, provided the scope of operations meets requirements of 3.7 and the certificate body has conducted an on-site audit during harvesting activities of those products not included in the multi-site program. Certification bodies may provide letters of conformance to sub-sites not included in the sample program and shall ensure that any member of the multi-site organization is maintaining accurate and transparent communication with the supply chain on the scope and products under certification.
- 12.2 The certification date for the central site and sub-sites shall be the date of the last audit conducted in that certification cycle. The certificate expiry date shall be based on the certificate decision of the last date of the sub-site audit.
- 12.3 The certificate for all sites in the multi-site program will be withdrawn, if the central site or any of the sub-sites do not fulfill the necessary criteria for maintaining their certificate.
- 12.4 The list of sub-sites shall be kept updated by the central site. The central site shall inform the certification body about the closure of any of the sub-sites or the addition of new sub-sites. Failure to provide such information will be considered by the certification body as a misuse of the certificate, and the multi-site organization's certificate shall be suspended until the matter is corrected to the satisfaction of the certification body.