



Quality Code

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

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

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FMI

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For permission contact FMI at 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 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 | 202-220-0635 | 1-877-277-2635

Database Assistance – info@sqfi.com

Compliance – 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 Quality Code

AI: Which SQF Code Is Right for You?

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.

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 Quality Code

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 Quality Certification (steps 1 – 10)

The SQF Quality Code builds on the system elements defined in the various SQF Food Safety Codes. Sites seeking to attain certification to the SQF Quality Code must be certified to the applicable SQF Food Safety Code for their industry sector. The SQF Quality Code does not apply to sites certified to SQF Food Safety Code: Retail or SQF Food Safety Code: Foodservice.

However, Edition 9 of the SQF Quality Code can also be applied as a food quality certification to any food or feed manufacturing or storage site certified to a GFSI-recognized certification program, any GFSI technically equivalent standard or other food safety management standard (FSMS) including HACCP certification or ISO 22000:2018.

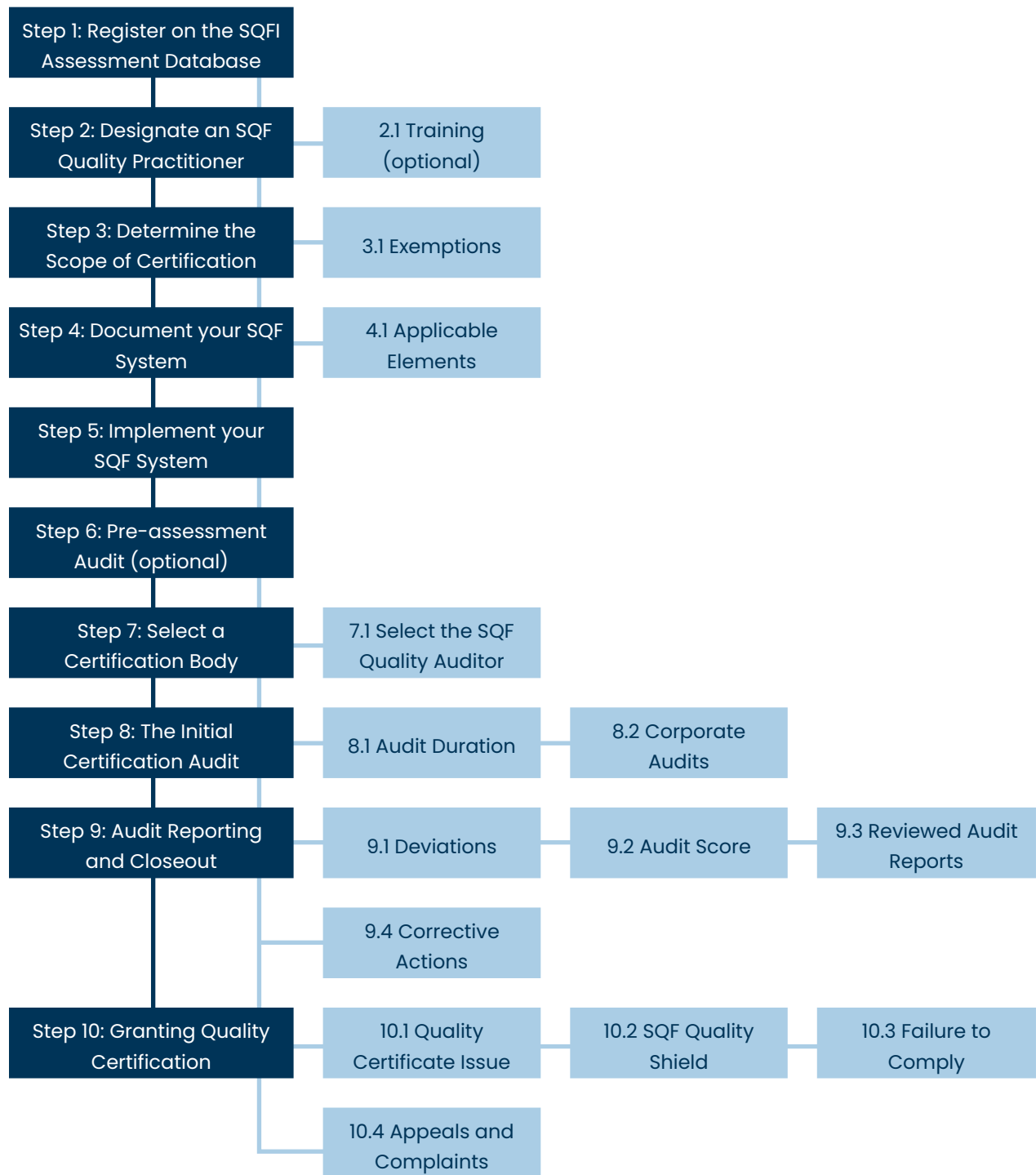
The SQF Quality Code sets out the implementation, maintenance, and technical requirements for sites seeking to apply quality management principles to their operations.

- Part A (this part) sets out the steps you need to take to implement and maintain certification to the SQF Quality Code, and
- Part B is the auditable standard. It details the SQF Quality elements that must be met to achieve certification.

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

- SQFI has an online “Implementing SQF Quality Systems” training course, which can be accessed from sqfi.com. It is a web-based education tool where you can enroll and complete SQF Quality Systems training in your own time and at your own pace.
- An “Implementing SQF Quality 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.
- Although training is recommended, you can train yourself by downloading the SQF Quality Code from 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. The SQF Consultant Code of Conduct outlines the practices expected of SQF consultants.
- A guidance document is available for the SQF Quality Code from sqfi.com. This document can help you interpret the requirements of the SQF Code and assist with documenting and implementing an SQF System. The guidance document is available to assist you but is not an auditable document. Where there is a divergence between the guidance document and the SQF Quality Code, 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 Quality certification, you are required to register your site on the SQFI assessment database. The database can be accessed at sqfi.com.

If you are already registered with SQF for food safety certification, no additional registration or fee applies. If you are seeking SQF quality certification as an adjunct to another food safety management certification, you must register and pay the fee prior to your initial quality certification audit.

There is a fee for each site, payable at registration and annual renewal. The fee scale is available at 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 Quality Practitioner

The SQF Quality Code requires that every certified site has a suitably qualified SQF Quality practitioner to oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of the SQF Quality System. The requirements for an SQF quality practitioner are described in the system elements, Part B: 2.1.1.6 and 2.1.1.7.

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

2.1 Training (optional)

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

Details of the training courses are available at sqfi.com

Training in other food industry disciplines may also be beneficial, and licensed SQF training centers can provide details about the other training courses they provide.

Step 3: Determine the Scope of Certification

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

The scope of certification determines which elements of the SQF Quality Code 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.

For sites certified to one of the SQF Food Safety Codes, the scope of certification is the same as the site's certification to the SQF Food Safety Code. Any agreed exemptions (refer to 3.1) from the food safety certification are also exempted from the quality certification and the scope of quality certification cannot be extended or changed from the food safety certification.

For sites certified to another FSMS, the scope of certification must be clearly identified and agreed by the certification body prior to the initial quality certification audit, and must include:

- **The site.** SQF quality 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 Quality System, the site can be expanded to include those premises.
- **The products.** SQF quality certification is product specific. Within each applicable food sector category, you need to identify the products that are included in your SQF System. The manufacture and quality of all listed products will be audited for compliance to the SQF Quality Code and will be listed on the quality certificate 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. Exemptions that apply to SQF food safety certification also apply to SQF quality certification (refer to step 3).

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, including the use of the SQF Quality Shield (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 Quality System

To achieve SQF quality certification, you need to document and implement the system elements (module 2) that are described in the SQF Quality Code. This is a two-stage process:

First, you need to prepare the policies, procedures, work instructions, and specifications that meet the system elements of the SQF Quality Code. In other words, “Say what you do.”

4.1 Applicable Elements

The auditable requirements of the SQF Quality Code are described in the following hierarchy:

- Module, Module 2 (system elements)
- 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 Quality Code that must be documented and implemented to assure the quality 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 are assessed during the quality 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 quality auditor in the audit report.

There are no mandatory elements in the SQF Quality Code. The mandatory elements that apply in the SQF Food Safety Codes are implemented and audited only if applicable in the SQF Quality Code.

Step 5: Implement Your SQF Quality 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 Quality Code.

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 Quality 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 Quality 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 quality 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.

SQFI recommends that the same certification body that provided certification to the SQF Food Safety Code (or other food safety management certification if applicable) is also contracted to certify the SQF Quality Code.

Your site needs to have an agreement with a certification body in place at all times that 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 close-out of non-conformances;
- The conditions under which the SQF quality certificate is issued, withdrawn, or suspended;
- The certification body's appeals and complaints process, and
- The availability of SQF quality registered auditor(s).

A list of licensed certification bodies that operate in your region or country is available at 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).

7.1 Select the SQF Quality Auditor

The SQF quality 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 as a quality auditor.

The certification body is required to ensure that no SQF quality 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 quality auditor at the time that the SQF audit is scheduled. You can check the registration of the SQF quality auditor at sqfi.com.

An SQF quality 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 quality 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 Quality Certification Audit

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

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

The certification audit can be:

- Either an extension of an existing certification or re-certification audit of the SQF Food Safety Code or other food safety management standard. In this instance, certification to the SQF Quality Code is only granted on successful certification or re-certification to the SQF Food Safety Code or other food safety management standard as well as the SQF Quality Code; or
- A stand-alone audit conducted at any time during the currency of the site's certification to the SQF Food Safety Code, or other food safety management standard.

When the quality audit is conducted independent of the food safety audit and the auditor identifies a significant food safety issue, the auditor is required to report the food safety finding in the audit report under "auditor recommendation" and notify the certification body for potential follow-up action.

The initial certification audit is conducted by the SQF quality 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 quality practitioner(s) and the quality (HACCP) team;
- Review of policies, procedures, quality plans, work instructions, and registers/listings;
- Interviews with key personnel;
- Review of internal audits, corrective actions, complaints, recalls;
- Traceability and mock recall exercise.

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;
- Review of process controls;
- The implementation of the quality plan(s); and

- Verification that the quality management system addresses all products, processes, and facilities included within the certification scope.

8.1 Audit Duration

The audit duration varies depending on the certification audit option selected, (i.e. an extension of the food safety audit, or a separate, stand-alone audit (refer to Part A, step 8)).

The certification body determines the audit duration and advises the site in writing with an estimate of the time it will take to complete the certification audit.

As a guide, SQFI expects a certification audit to the SQF Quality Code, combined with a certification audit to the SQF Food Safety Code to add a minimum of half a day, while a stand-alone quality certification audit will be a minimum of one day.

8.2 Corporate Audits

If your site is part of a larger corporation and some quality 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 Quality 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 quality 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 applicable elements of the SQF Quality Code are audited at each site regardless of the findings of the corporate audit.

Step 9: Audit Reporting and Close-out

The SQF quality auditor(s) reviews your documentation and the effective implementation of your documented policies, procedures, and specifications. The auditor(s) collects evidence of compliance or non-compliance against all applicable elements of the SQF Quality Code by reviewing documentation and records, interviews with key staff, and observation of operational activities.

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

9.1 Deviations

Where the SQF quality auditor finds deviations from the requirements of the SQF Quality Code, the SQF quality auditor advises the site of the number, description, and extent of the deviations.

Deviations against the SQF Quality Code 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 an SQF Quality Code audit.

9.2 Audit Score

There is no score or rating issued for SQF Quality System audits. The score and ratings that apply to SQF Food Safety certification audits do not extend to the SQF Quality Code certification audit, even if the quality system audit is conducted as an extension of the food safety audit.

9.3 Reviewed Audit Report

SQFI provides the certification body with the electronic audit checklist to be used by SQF quality auditors when conducting your SQF quality audit. It is available on the SQFI assessment database and is specific to your site.

The SQF checklist is designed to ensure the uniform application of SQF quality audit requirements. It is used by SQF quality 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:

- Deviations (refer to Part A, 9.1) identified during the site audit need to be accurately described in the SQF quality audit report and include the element of the SQF Quality Code and the reason for the deviation;
- The SQF quality auditor is required to report all deviations to you before the close of the site audit.
- The draft audit report is completed by the SQF auditor and provided to the certification body for technical review.
- 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 deviation identified by the SQF quality auditor. Corrective action is the action you take to eliminate the cause of a detected deviation 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 quality 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 quality 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 Part A, 10.2).

- **Minor deviations** (refer to Part A, 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 close-out where there is no immediate threat to product quality, and alternative temporary methods of control are initiated. Your site is advised of the extended timeframe.

Where additional time is granted, the non-conformance is still closed out in the SQFI assessment database and the SQF quality 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 deviation.

- **Major deviations** (refer to Part A, 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 deviation.

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 quality.

In such cases, the deviation is closed out and the SQF quality auditor documents all details of justification of the extension, how the risk is being controlled, and the agreed completion date.

Step 10: Granting Quality Certification

Sites are deemed to have successfully implemented the SQF Quality Code if:

- The site achieves and maintains food safety certification to the SQF Food Safety Code or other food safety management standard; and
- The site closes out all quality deviations within thirty (30) days.

The certification decision is made within forty-five (45) calendar days of the last day of the quality system audit. For existing SQF food safety certified sites, the site's unique certification number applies to their quality certification. Sites that are certified to another food safety management standard and meet the requirements of the SQF Quality Code are granted a new certification number by their certification body.

10.1 Quality 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 heading "certificate";
- The phrase "(site name) is registered as meeting the requirements of the SQF Quality Code, Edition 9";
- The products included in the scope of certification;
- Dates of audit (last day), date of next re-certification audit, date of certification decision, and date of certificate expiry;
- The SQF quality shield (refer to Part A, 10.2);
- Signatures of the authorized officer and issuing officer of the certification body; and
- The SQF logo

Certified site information is posted on 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; and
- The certification body has a protocol in place for translation and can verify the translation.

10.2 SQF Quality Shield

The SQF quality shield appears on the certified site's quality certificate.

Certified sites may also choose to apply the SQF quality shield to packaging of certified products or to marketing materials.

The certification body provides an electronic copy of the SQF quality shield containing the certification body name and site certification number to the certified site on request.

The SQF quality shield can only be used in accordance with the SQF Quality Shield Rules of Use (refer to Appendix 4). The use and application of the quality shield is auditable.

10.3 Failure to Comply

Where a site fails to close out quality deviations within the required time frame, the site is considered to have failed their initial SQF quality certification audit. The site must then re-apply for another quality certification audit.

10.4 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 quality 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; 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 Quality System or any other condition not in compliance with the SQF Quality Code 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.

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

Step 11: Quality Re-certification

To maintain SQF quality certification, the site is required to maintain certification to the SQF Food Safety Code or other applicable food safety management standard, ensure that quality surveillance and/or quality re-certification audits occur within the required time frame, and ensure that all quality deviations 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 Quality 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 Part A, 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 Quality System continues to be implemented as documented;
- Verify that your internal audits, annual reviews, and management reviews have been effectively completed;
- Verify that corrective and preventative actions have been taken on all deviations;
- Ensure you have taken appropriate action where changes to your site's operations have been made that impact the site's SQF Quality System;
- Verify all critical steps and the effective interactions among all elements of your SQF Quality System remain under control;
- Verify the overall effectiveness of the SQF Quality 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 Quality System and to meeting regulatory and customer requirements; and
- Ensure contribution to the continued improvement of your site's SQF Quality 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 fails to closeout deviations within thirty (30) days, the certification body is required to immediately suspend your site's certificate.

Refer to 16.1 for temporary or permanent changes of re-certification audit dates and certificate extensions.

11.3 Unannounced Audits

There is no specific requirement for an unannounced audit of the SQF Quality Code. However, where a site selects to incorporate their quality audit with their SQF food safety audit, or an unannounced audit of another food safety management standard, the quality audit is unannounced when aligned with an unannounced food safety audit.

Step 12: Surveillance Audits

A quality surveillance audit is only required as an extension of a food safety surveillance audit or when, in the opinion of the certification body, a quality surveillance audit is necessary to maintain the integrity of the site's quality system.

If a quality surveillance audit is conducted, all deviations must be closed out within 30 days to maintain certification.

Step 13: Suspending Quality 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 time frame specified in 9.4;

The certification body may also suspend certification if in the opinion of the quality auditor and supported by the technical reviewer the site fails to maintain the requirements of the SQF Quality Code.

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 timetable 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, 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>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 Quality Code.</p>
<p>ii. Your site does not take corrective action within the timeframe 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 deviations.</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 maintain the requirements of the SQF Quality Code:</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 Quality 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 quality certificate is suspended, your site cannot represent itself as holding an SQF certificate or use the Quality Shield in any way outlined in Appendix 4: Quality Shield Rules for Use 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 Part A, 10.3).

Step 14: Withdrawing Quality 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 Part A, 13.1);
- Has intentionally and systemically falsified its records;
- Fails to maintain the integrity of the SQF quality 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 quality 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.

Withdrawn sites cannot use the SQF Quality Shield on packaging or other printed materials (refer to Appendix 4, 5.1).

Step 15: Changes to Site SQF Requirements

The SQF Quality Code 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.

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). 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

When a site changes the scope of its food safety certification, the scope of its quality certification also changes (refer to Part A. step 3).

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 deviations, and as long as the certification is not suspended or under threat of suspension or withdrawal.

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 Quality System as certified;
- 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 deviations);
- Ensure that use of the SQF Quality Shield (if applicable) complies with the requirements of Appendix 4: Quality Shield Rules for Use; and
- 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 Quality 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 quality certificate and a new certification number. The audit frequency applicable to a new certification applies.

15.6 Language Used During the Audit

The certification body is required to ensure that the SQF quality auditor conducting the audit can competently communicate in the oral and written language(s) 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 Quality Code prevails.

15.7 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 deviations, and it will not increase the cost charged by the certification body for the audit.

Part

B

The SQF Quality Code

2.1 Management Commitment

2.1.1 Management Responsibility

- 2.1.1.1 Senior site management shall prepare and implement a policy statement that outlines the site's commitment to quality and includes at a minimum:
- i. Establishment and maintenance of a quality management system;
 - ii. Compliance with customer, regulatory, and company quality requirements;
 - iii. Identification of quality objectives and the methods used to measure them; and
 - iv. Continuous improvement of its quality performance.
- 2.1.1.2 The policy statement shall be displayed in a prominent position and communicated to all staff. It may be included in or separate from the organization's food safety policy.
- 2.1.1.3 Senior site management shall implement, maintain, and continuously improve the quality culture within the site that ensures at a minimum:
- i. Quality objectives and key performance indicators are communicated to all staff;
 - ii. Provision of adequate resources to meet the objectives and key performance indicators;
 - iii. Awareness by all staff of their quality responsibilities and their accountability in meeting the requirements of the SQF Quality Code;
 - iv. Responsibility to notify management of actual or pending quality issues and empowerment to resolve quality issues within their scope of work; and
 - v. Education of all staff to understand the importance of quality controls and deviation consequences.
- 2.1.1.4 Senior site management shall ensure the personnel performing key process steps and responsible for achieving quality objectives and meeting customer, regulatory, and company quality requirements are identified in the reporting structure and have the required competencies to carry out these functions.
- 2.1.1.5 Job descriptions for personnel performing key process steps and responsible for achieving quality requirements shall be documented and include provisions for coverage in the absence of key personnel.
- 2.1.1.6 Senior site management shall designate an SQF quality practitioner for each site with responsibility and authority to:
- i. Oversee the development, implementation, review, and maintenance of the SQF Quality System, including quality fundamentals outlined in 2.4.2 and the quality plan outlined in 2.4.3;
 - ii. Take appropriate action to ensure the integrity of the quality system; and
 - iii. Communicate to relevant personnel all information essential to ensure the effective implementation and maintenance of the quality system.

2.1.1.7 The SQF quality practitioner shall:

- i. Be competent to implement and maintain food quality plans using a risk-based methodology such as HACCP;
- ii. Understand the Quality Code and the requirements to implement and maintain a quality management system; and
- iii. Be competent, through training or experience, in process control and/or other quality tools to reduce process variation impacting quality and achieve customer requirements.

2.1.1.8 Senior site management shall develop and implement a quality communication program to ensure all staff:

- i. Know the site's quality statement, quality objectives, and the process by which quality performance is measured; and
- ii. Understand the methods by which customer, regulatory, and company quality requirements, where applicable, are met.

2.1.1.9 Senior site management shall establish a process to trend progress in quality performance against agreed measures. Benchmarking shall be part of this process, and the performance data shall be reported at least annually, and communicated to all staff, to demonstrate effectiveness of the quality management system.

2.1.1.10 Sites that are certified to the SQF Quality Code may use the SQF Quality Shield. The use of the quality shield shall follow the requirements outlined in Appendix 4: SQF Quality Shield Rules of Use.

2.1.2 Management Review

2.1.2.1 Senior site management shall be responsible for reviewing the performance of the SQF Quality System. Reviews shall include actions required to:

- i. Monitor compliance to specifications;
- ii. Measure and reduce process and product variation;
- iii. Meet customer requirements;
- iv. Take appropriate corrective action where applicable; and
- v. Ensure sufficient resources are allocated to maintain and improve the performance of the quality system.

2.1.2.2 The SQF quality practitioner(s) shall update senior site management monthly at a minimum on matters impacting the implementation and maintenance of the SQF Quality System. The updates and management responses shall be documented. The SQF Quality System in its entirety shall be reviewed at least annually.

2.1.2.3 The quality system, including food quality plans, shall be reviewed when any changes are implemented that have an impact on the site's ability to meet customer requirements and/or corporate quality requirements where applicable.

- 2.1.2.4 Senior site management shall ensure the integrity and continued operation of the quality system in the event of organizational or personnel changes within the company or associated facilities.
- 2.1.2.5 Senior site management shall document and implement a change management process that details how changes in specifications, materials, equipment, or resources are evaluated for their impact on quality, communicated to customers, and effectively implemented.
- 2.1.2.6 Records of all quality system reviews, reasons for amending documents, and changes to the SQF Quality System shall be maintained. Records shall include decisions for actions related to the improvement of the quality system and process effectiveness.

2.1.3 Complaint Management

- 2.1.3.1 The methods and responsibilities for the complaint management process shall be documented and implemented. They shall include:
- i. A mechanism to collect and record all quality complaints resulting from activities at the site; and
 - ii. Communication processes for reporting and follow-up with senior management and customers.
- 2.1.3.2 Trends from quality complaints shall be included in the performance measures established for the quality system.
- 2.1.3.3 Corrective and preventative action shall be implemented based on the seriousness of the incident and identified trends and shall be completed as outlined in 2.5.3.
- 2.1.3.4 Records of quality complaints, their investigation and resolution, if applicable, shall be maintained.

2.2 Document Control and Records

2.2.1 Quality Management System

- 2.2.1.1 Electronic and/or hard copy documentation that outlines the methods and procedures the site shall use to meet the requirements of the SQF Quality Code shall be current and maintained. It shall be made available to staff and include:
- i. A summary of the organization's quality policies and the methods it will apply to meet the requirements of the SQF Quality Code;
 - ii. The policy statement and site organization chart;
 - iii. A list of the products covered under the scope of certification;
 - iv. Finished product specifications that agree with customers' requirements and/or meet the site's corporate quality requirements, where applicable; and
 - v. A description of the applications of process control methods and other quality tools that are used to control and reduce process variation and meet customer specifications.

The quality system manual may be incorporated into or be independent of the food safety system manual.

2.2.2 Document Control

2.2.2.1 The methods and responsibility for maintenance, storage, and distribution of quality documents shall be documented and implemented.

2.2.2.2 A register of current SQF Quality System documents and amendments to documents shall be maintained. Documents shall be safely stored and readily accessible.

2.2.3 Records

2.2.3.1 The methods, frequency, and responsibility for verifying, maintaining, and retaining records shall be documented and implemented.

2.2.3.2 All records shall be legible and confirmed by those undertaking monitoring activities that demonstrate inspections, analyses, and other essential activities have been completed.

2.2.3.3 Records shall be readily accessible, retrievable, and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access, loss, damage, and deterioration. Records shall be retained in accordance with periods specified by customers or regulations or, at a minimum, no less than the product shelf- life.

2.3 Specifications, Formulations, Realization, and Supplier Approval

2.3.1 Product Formulation and Realization

2.3.1.1 The methods for designing, developing, and converting product concepts to commercial realization shall include a comparison of process controls with specification limits (i.e., process capability analysis) to ensure that processes can consistently supply products that meet customer specifications.

2.3.1.2 Product formulation, manufacturing processes, and the fulfillment of product quality requirements shall be validated by facility trials and product testing.

2.3.1.3 Shelf life trials shall be conducted for new products, or when there are changes in materials, ingredients, or equipment, to establish and validate a product's packaging, handling, storage, and customer-use requirements through the end of its commercial life and consumer use.

2.3.2 Specifications (Raw Material, Packaging, Finished Product, and Services)

2.3.2.1 Specifications for all raw materials and packaging, including but not limited to ingredients, additives, agricultural inputs (where applicable), hazardous chemicals, and processing aids that impact finished product quality shall be documented and kept current.

- 2.3.2.2 Raw and packaging quality parameters shall be verified upon receipt to ensure they meet specifications.
- 2.3.2.3 Product labels that are designed or specified by customers shall be approved by those customers. Records shall be maintained of customer approvals.
- 2.3.2.4 The register of current raw material and packaging specifications shall include those raw material and packaging materials that impact product quality and customer labels.
- 2.3.2.5 Finished product specifications shall be documented, current, approved by the site and its customers when required, and accessible to relevant staff. The specifications shall include product quality attributes, service delivery requirements, and labeling and packaging requirements.
- 2.3.2.6 Customer product specifications and delivery requirements shall be communicated to appropriate departments and staff within the site.
- 2.3.2.7 Specifications for contract services that have an impact on in-process or finished product quality shall be documented, current, include a full description of the service to be provided, and detail relevant training requirements of contract personnel.
- The register of contract service specifications shall list those services impacting product quality.

2.3.3 Contract Manufacturers

- 2.3.3.1 The methods and responsibility for ensuring all agreements with contract manufacturers relating to quality, site/customer product requirements, their realization, and delivery shall be specified, documented, agreed upon, and implemented.
- 2.3.3.2 The site shall:
- i. Ensure that the processes in place at the contract manufacturer are capable of consistently meeting customer and/or corporate quality requirements, where applicable;
 - ii. Verify compliance with the SQF Quality Code and that all customer requirements are being met;
 - iii. Audit the contract manufacturer annually, at a minimum, to verify compliance to the SQF Quality Code and with agreed arrangements, or accept the manufacturer's certification to the SQF Quality Code or equivalent; and
 - iv. Ensure changes to contractual agreements are approved by both parties, agreed with customers when necessary, and communicated to relevant personnel.
- 2.3.3.3 Records of audits, contracts, and changes to contractual agreements and their approvals shall be maintained.

2.3.4 Approved Supplier Program (Mandatory)

- 2.3.4.1 Raw materials, ingredients, packaging materials, processing aids, and services, including co-manufactured products, that impact finished product quality shall be supplied by an approved supplier.

2.3.4.2 Material suppliers shall be selected and approved based on their ability to supply materials that meet quality specifications. The evaluation program shall require suppliers to:

- i. Maintain controlled and current copies of specifications;
- ii. Have processes that are capable of consistently supplying materials that meet specification and other defined quality metrics (e.g., delivery, service, etc.);
- iii. Provide evidence that the supplied product meets agreed specifications and metrics; and
- iv. Have a complaint management system in place that includes corrective actions processes.

2.3.4.3 Materials supplied shall only be accepted by the site based on either a certificate of analysis for each lot received, or inspection of the lot at receipt, to ensure materials comply with specifications.

All receipts shall be visually inspected for damage and product integrity.

2.3.4.4 The approved supplier program shall include an agreement with suppliers for the return or disposal of materials that fail to meet specifications or are damaged or contaminated.

2.3.4.5 Any supplier audits performed shall be conducted by individuals knowledgeable of applicable regulatory and food quality requirements and trained in auditing techniques.

2.4 Food Quality System

2.4.1 Customer Requirements

2.4.1.1 The methods and responsibilities for managing customer requirements and/or consumer expectations shall be documented and implemented. They shall include at a minimum:

- i. A review and approval process for all new or updated customer requirements, as they occur;
- ii. A process for collection and analysis of data for product quality attributes to ensure specifications continue to meet consumer expectations; and
- iii. A communication process to notify identified customers when the ability to supply compliant products is temporarily halted.

2.4.1.2 Where customer products, materials, or equipment are used within the facility, the site shall have measures in place to safeguard customer property and ensure its correct and proper use.

2.4.2 Quality Fundamentals

2.4.2.1 The buildings and equipment shall be constructed, designed, and maintained to facilitate the manufacture, handling, storage, and/or delivery of food that meets customer specifications, regulatory requirements, and/or company quality requirements.

2.4.2.2 The methods and responsibility for the calibration of measuring, test, and inspection equipment used for quality testing of raw materials, work-in-progress, and finished product, for food quality plans and other process controls, or to demonstrate compliance with customer specifications, shall be documented and implemented. Software used for such activities shall be validated as appropriate.

2.4.2.3 Storage and transport of raw materials, work-in-progress, and finished product shall be suitable to maintain the integrity of the product without loss, waste, or damage and to meet customer requirements for inventory management and transportation, where applicable.

2.4.3 Food Quality Plan

2.4.3.1 A food quality plan shall be developed, effectively implemented, and maintained in accordance with a risk-based method such as HACCP. The food quality plan may be combined with or independent from the food safety plan, but either way it must identify quality threats and critical quality points and their controls.

2.4.3.2 The food quality plan shall outline how the site controls and assures the quality attributes of the products or product groups and their associated processes.

2.4.3.3 The food quality plan shall be developed and maintained by a multidisciplinary team that includes the SQF quality practitioner and those site personnel with technical, production, and marketing knowledge of the relevant products and associated processes. Where the relevant expertise is not available on-site, advice may be obtained from other sources to assist the food quality team. The composition of the food quality team may be different from the food safety team.

2.4.3.4 The scope of the food quality 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 quality plan. This shall include information in the finished product specifications (refer to 2.3.2.1) plus any additional quality or service attributes established by agreement with the customers.

2.4.3.6 The intended use of each product shall be determined and documented. This shall include, as appropriate, target consumer groups, ease of use by consumers, consumer instructions, evidence of tampering, and other applicable information affecting product quality.

2.4.3.7 The food quality team shall review the flow diagrams developed as part of the food safety plan and confirm and ensure process steps, process delays, and inputs and outputs that impact product quality are included.

2.4.3.8 The food quality team shall identify and document all quality threats that can reasonably be expected to occur at each step in the processes, including raw materials and other inputs.

- 2.4.3.9 The food quality team shall conduct a quality threat analysis for every identified quality threat to identify which threats are significant, i.e., their elimination or reduction to an acceptable level is necessary to ensure or maintain product quality. The methodology for determining threat significance shall be documented and used consistently to assess all potential quality threats.
- 2.4.3.10 The food quality team shall determine and document the control measures that must be applied to all significant quality threats. More than one control measure may be required to control an identified threat, and more than one significant threat may be controlled by a specific control measure.
- 2.4.3.11 Based on the results of the threat analysis (refer to 2.4.3.9), the food quality team shall identify the steps in the processes where control must be applied to eliminate a significant threat or reduce it to an acceptable level. These steps shall be identified as Critical Quality Points or CQPs.
- 2.4.3.12 For each identified CQP, the food quality team shall identify and document the quality limits that separate acceptable from unacceptable product. The food quality team shall validate the critical quality limits to ensure the designated level of control of the identified quality threat (s), and that all critical quality limits and control measures individually or in combination effectively provide the level of control required.
- 2.4.3.13 The food quality team shall develop and document procedures to monitor CQPs to ensure they remain within the established limits (refer to 2.4.3.12). Monitoring procedures shall identify the personnel assigned to conduct testing, the sampling and test methods, and the test frequency.
- 2.4.3.14 The food quality team shall develop and document deviation procedures that identify the disposition of affected product when monitoring indicates a loss of control at a CQP. The procedures shall also prescribe actions to correct the process step to prevent recurrence of the quality failure.
- 2.4.3.15 The documented and approved food quality plan shall be fully implemented. The effective implementation shall be monitored by the food quality team, and a full review of the documented and implemented plans shall be conducted at least annually, or when changes to the process, equipment, specifications or inputs occur which may affect product quality.
- 2.4.3.16 Implemented food quality plans shall be verified as part of SQF Quality System verification (refer to 2.5).

2.4.4 Product Sampling, Inspection, and Analysis

- 2.4.4.1 Processing parameters or in-process measurements shall be established, validated, and verified at a determined frequency to meet all customer, regulatory, and/or company requirements.

- 2.4.4.2 On-site laboratories and inspection stations shall be equipped and resourced to enable testing of in-process and finished products to meet customer, regulatory, and/or company requirements and meet quality objectives. External laboratories shall be accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 or an equivalent international standard and included on the site's contract service specifications list (refer to 2.3.2.7).
- 2.4.4.3 Process control methods shall be used to effectively control and optimize production processes to improve process efficiency, product quality, and reduce waste. Control charts and/or other quality tools shall be used for control of key processes.
- 2.4.4.4 A sensory evaluation program shall be in place to ensure alignment with agreed customer and/or company requirements. Sensory evaluation results shall be communicated with relevant staff and with customers where appropriate.
- 2.4.4.5 Records of all quality inspections and analyses and statistical analyses shall be maintained.

2.4.5 Non-conforming Product or Equipment

- 2.4.5.1 Non-conforming product shall include products that fail to meet in-process or product requirements for quality. Non-conforming product shall be suitably identified, segregated, and appropriately dispositioned with records maintained.
- 2.4.5.2 Non-conforming equipment shall include equipment that is not suitable for use and/or is not capable of producing products that meet in-process or product requirements for quality. Non-conforming equipment shall be identified and segregated from production areas, if possible, with appropriate documentation maintained.
- 2.4.5.3 The site shall document and implement a procedure to accept returned product that does not meet finished product specifications. The procedure shall include identification, handling, and disposition of returned goods to prevent redistribution or contamination of other products.

2.4.6 Product Rework

- 2.4.6.1 Procedures shall be documented and implemented to ensure product quality or formulation is not compromised by the rework process. Material to be reworked shall be identified and traceable. Rework operations shall be overseen by qualified personnel.

2.4.7 Product Release

- 2.4.7.1 The site shall document and implement a positive product release procedure to ensure that, at the time of delivery to its customer, the food supplied complies with all agreed customer, regulatory, and/or company requirements, including but not limited to product specifications, sensory attributes, packaging and package integrity, labeling, delivery, and service requirements.
- 2.4.7.2 Records of all product release or disposition shall be maintained.

2.5 Quality System Verification

2.5.1 Validation and Effectiveness

- 2.5.1.1 Validation activities shall include those necessary to authenticate critical quality limits, process controls, and other quality tests established to meet customer requirements.
- 2.5.1.2 Records of validation of quality criteria shall be maintained.

2.5.2 Verification Activities

- 2.5.2.1 The verification schedule shall include activities designed to ensure the effectiveness of process controls and quality tests.
- 2.5.2.2 The methods, responsibility, and criteria for verifying the effectiveness of monitoring critical quality points and other process and quality controls shall be documented and implemented. The methods applied shall ensure that personnel with responsibility for verifying monitoring activities authorize each record.
- 2.5.2.3 Verification activities shall include a comparison between process control limits and specification limits to ensure alignment and appropriate process control corrections.
- 2.5.2.4 Records of the verification of quality activities shall be maintained.

2.5.3 Corrective and Preventative Action

- 2.5.3.1 Corrective and preventative action methods shall include the identification of the root cause(s) and the resolution of non-compliance of critical quality limits and deviations from quality requirements.

2.5.4 Internal Audits

- 2.5.4.1 Internal audit plans and methods shall include assessments of food quality plans, process controls, quality tests, and other activities implemented to meet finished product specifications as well as customer and company requirements.
- 2.5.4.2 Staff conducting the quality internal audits shall be trained and competent in internal audit procedures and have knowledge and experience in quality processes and process control methods as they relate to the scope of certification. Where practical, staff conducting internal audits shall be independent of the function being audited.

2.6 Product Identification, Traceability, Withdrawal, Recall, and Crisis Management

2.6.1 Product Identification and Traceability

- 2.6.1.1 Finished product shall be labeled to the agreed customer, regulatory, and/or company requirements.
- 2.6.1.2 Product changeover procedures shall include verification of quality attributes required to meet finished product specifications and customer requirements.

2.6.1.3 Finished product shall be traceable forward to the customer, such as the retailer, distributor, or manufacturer (one forward).

2.6.1.4 All raw materials, ingredients, and packaging materials used in manufacturing a finished product and processing aids associated with the product shall be identified with the finished product lot number and traceable back to the supplier (one back).

2.6.2 Product Withdrawal and Recall

2.6.2.1 The site's recall and withdrawal procedures shall apply to product recalled or withdrawn due to failure to meet customer specifications or corporate quality requirements. Records shall be maintained and meet customer, regulatory, and company requirements, as applicable.

2.6.3 Crisis Management

2.6.3.1 The crisis management plan prepared by senior site management shall include the methods by which the site shall, in the event of a crisis, maintain continuity of supply that meets customer, regulatory, and/or company product and service quality requirements.

2.6.3.2 The site shall contact its customers in the event of a crisis that impacts its ability to supply quality product.

2.7 Food Fraud

2.7.1 Food Fraud

2.7.1.1 The food fraud vulnerability assessment shall include the site's susceptibility to ingredient or product substitution, mislabeling, dilution, and counterfeiting that could adversely impact food quality. This assessment may address both food safety and quality.

2.7.1.2 A food fraud mitigation plan shall be developed and implemented that specifies the methods to be used for controlling identified food fraud vulnerability that could adversely impact food quality.

2.8 Identity Preserved Foods

2.8.1 General Requirements for Identity Preserved Foods

2.8.1.1 The methods and responsibility for the identification, label approval, and processing of food and other products requiring the preservation of their identity preserved status (e.g., Kosher, Halal, organic, GMO free, regional provenance, free from, free trade, etc.) shall be documented and implemented.

2.8.1.2 Identification shall include a statement of the product's identity preserved status of all ingredients, including additives, preservatives, processing aids, and flavorings.

2.8.1.3 Raw material and ingredient specifications for identity preserved foods shall include requirements for their handling, transport, storage, and delivery prior to use.

- 2.8.1.4 Assurances concerning the raw material or ingredient's identity preserved status shall be by agreement with the supplier of the material.
- 2.8.1.5 The process description shall allow for a product's identity preserved status to be maintained during manufacturing.
- 2.8.1.6 The processing of identity preserved foods shall be conducted under controlled conditions such that:
- i. Ingredients are physically separated from ingredients identified as incompatible with the identity preserved food;
 - ii. Processing is completed in separate rooms, scheduled as the first production run, or carried out after completion of thorough sanitation of the processing area and equipment; and
 - iii. Finished product is stored and transported in separate units or isolated by a physical barrier from the non-specialty product.
- 2.8.1.7 The identity preserved status shall be declared in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- 2.8.1.8 Additional customer-specific requirements for identity preserved foods shall be included in the finished product specification, as described in 2.3.2.5, or the label register and implemented by the site.

2.9 Training

2.9.1 Training Requirements

- 2.9.1.1 Appropriate training shall be provided for personnel carrying out the tasks critical to the effective implementation of the SQF Quality System and the maintenance and improvement of quality requirements.
- 2.9.1.2 Instructions shall be available explaining how all tasks critical to meeting customer and company specifications and quality and process efficiency are to be performed.

2.9.2 Training Program

- 2.9.2.1 The employee training program shall include the necessary competencies for specific duties and the training methods to be applied for those staff carrying out tasks associated with:
- i. Process control and monitoring of critical quality points (CQPs);
 - ii. Steps identified as critical to effective implementation of the food quality plan and the maintenance of food quality; and
 - iii. Product inspection and testing.
- 2.9.2.2 The employee training program shall include:
- i. Applicable process control and quality tools training for those responsible for operating, inspecting, and overseeing key manufacturing processes;
 - ii. Training, calibration, and proficiency testing of internal laboratory personnel;

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- iii. Training of personnel responsible for sensory evaluations;
- iv. Training in the application of risk-based principles, such as HACCP, used for the identification and control of quality threats for staff involved in developing and maintaining the food quality plan; and
- v. Provision for identifying and implementing the refresher training needs of site 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.

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	The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Animal Production: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 5: GPP for Farming of Animal Products 	Applies to the capture, transport, holding, intensive animal husbandry, and free-range farming of animals, but does not include seafood. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free-range and intensive animal production Dairy farming Game animals Egg production Apiculture 	Includes but is not limited to cattle, lamb, pigs, poultry, eggs, milk, and honey.
2	Indoor Growing and Harvesting of Fresh Produce and Sprouted Seed Crops	B1: Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Primary Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 18: GAP for Indoor Farming of Plant Products 	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.	Includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All varieties of microgreens All varieties of sprouted seed Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and lettuce Mushrooms
3	Growing and Production of Fresh Produce and Nuts	B1: Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 7: GAP for Outdoor Farming of Plant Products 	Applies to the production, harvesting, preparation, field packing, and on-site storage of fresh whole fruit, vegetables, and nuts. Includes all produce grown under broad acre and intensive horticulture production system, including orchards, viticulture, aquaponics, and external nursery operations.	All fresh fruit and vegetable and nut varieties that are ready-to-eat (RTE) or for further processing including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tropical and temperate tree fruits, carrots, beets, potatoes, wine grapes 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.

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	BII: Pre-process Handling of Plant Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 10: GOP for Pre-processing of Plant Products 	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	BII: Farming of Grains and Pulses	The SQF Food Safety Code: Plant Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 8: GAP for Farming of Grains and Pulses 	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"> • System Elements • Module 6: GAP for Farming of Seafood 	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"> • Tuna, salmon, trout, and other farmed fish spp. • Oysters, mussels, shrimp, lobster, crab, and other farmed shellfish spp.
7	Slaughtering, Boning, and Butchery	CO: Animal Primary Conversion	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products 	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	Manufactured Meats and Poultry	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products 	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	Seafood Processing	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Product Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 9: GMP for Processing of Animal Products 	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	Dairy Food Processing	CI: Processing of Perishable Animal Products	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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	Canning, UHT, and Aseptic Operations	CIV: Processing of Ambient Stable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> Milk or milk products; or Egg or egg products; or Fruit or vegetable juices. Canned pet food (refer to FSC 32) 	
16	Ice, Drink, and Beverage 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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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	Confectionary 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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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.	

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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"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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
21	Oils, Fats, and the manufacturing of Oil or Fat-based Spreads	C11: Processing of Perishable Animal and Plant Products (mixed products)	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Manufacturing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Foodservice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 16: GRP for Foodservice 	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	<p>The SQF Food Safety Code: Food Retail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System Elements • Module 15: GRP for Retail 	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"> • System Elements • Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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"> • System Elements • Module 12: GDP for Transport and Distribution of Food Products 	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"> • System Elements • Module 13: GMP for Manufacture of Food Packaging 	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

FSC		Category (Site Scope of Certification)	GFSI Industry Scopes	Applicable SQF Codes and Modules	Description	Example of Products
31	Dietary Supplements Manufacturing	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	Pet Food Manufacturing	CI, CII, CIII, or CIV as applicable	The SQF Food Safety Code: Pet Food Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 4: GMP for Processing of Pet Food Products 	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	Food Processing Aides 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"> System Elements Module 11: GMP for Processing of Food Products 	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	Animal Feed Manufacturing	D: Production of Feed	The SQF Food Safety Code: Animal Feed Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> System Elements Module 3: GMP for Animal Feed Production 	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)

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.apeec.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"> brochures, flyers, advertisements, press releases, company website, email signature lines internal documents and training materials

- 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: Quality Shield Rules of Use

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The SQF quality shield is owned by SQFI. Sites obtain no property rights in the SQF quality shield.
- 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 quality shield by sites only. These rules of use do not regulate the use of the SQF quality shield 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 Quality Code are granted permission by their certification body to use the SQF quality shield. Electronic SQF shield files are to be obtained from the certification body.
- 2.2 A site shall, for the duration of its quality certification, have the right to use the SQF quality shield. There will be no fee payable by sites for the right to use the SQF quality shield, other than fees payable to obtain and maintain certification.
- 2.3 Subsidiary companies and site addresses not included on the certificate are not certified to use the SQF quality shield.
- 2.4 A site must only use the SQF quality shield in accordance with its certificate and these rules of use, which are designed to protect the integrity and enhance the value of the SQF quality shield.
- 2.5 A site can only use the SQF quality logo to indicate finished product that meets the SQF Quality Code requirements. Sites manufacturing food packaging cannot use the SQF quality shield on the manufactured packaging.

3 Reproduction

3.1 Reproduction of the SQF quality shield 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brochures, advertisements, press releases, company website, and/or stationary including business cards and letterheads, signage, flags, and vehicles associated with SQF-certified services such as transport and delivery. • goods or products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i.) as a sticker or other label affixed to the goods or product; ii.) a product wrap; or iii.) non-recyclable packaging or containers e.g. boxes, crates, or the like.
Single Color Reproduction: Greyscale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goods or products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i.) as a sticker or other label affixed to the goods or product; ii.) a product wrap; or iii.) non-recyclable packaging or containers e.g. boxes, crates, or the like.

3.2 The following guidelines govern full color reproduction:



PMS 7463 C
CMYK: C=40 M=13.6 Y=0 K=0.8



40% Tint of PMS 3005C
CMYK: C=100 M=43 Y=0 K=65

3.3 The **certification body name** and **certificate number** must be identified in conjunction with the logo in the following form. The certificate number does not need to be included on the shield when used on the SQF certificate. Font type of the SQF Quality Shield must be Chaparral Pro Semi-bold.

3.4 The dimensions of the SQF quality shield are 47mm high by 35mm wide, as shown. Variation to these dimensions is permitted provided that any such variation is proportional to the above dimensions and the letters and numerals on the logo remain clear and legible.



APPENDIX 4: Quality Shield Rules of Use

- 3.4 A site may use the following wording in lieu of the SQF quality shield: “(insert site name from the SQF certificate)”– a site certified to the SQF Quality Code No. (insert number issued by the certification body) and certified by (insert name of certification body).” The words must appear in the dominant font color of the packaging.
- 3.5 Where it is demonstrated that alternative reproduction of the SQF quality shield or wording in lieu of the SQF quality shield enhances the status of the SQF quality shield and/or SQFI, then the alternative is permitted provided it is approved by the certification body. All requests must be provided in writing per certified site to the certification body and SQFI.

4 Obligations of a Site for Use

- 4.1 A site must:
- a. Ensure that the SQF quality shield is only used in respect to certified goods and is clearly distinguished from goods that are exempt from quality certification;
 - b. Direct any queries regarding their intended use of the SQF quality shield to the certification body that issued the certificate;
 - c. Discontinue any use of the SQF quality shield to which SQFI or the certification body reasonably objects;
 - d. Operate entirely within the scope of its certificate, including the certification schedule;
 - e. Give SQFI, the certification body, and/or their agents access to examine all items bearing or indicating the SQF quality shield for the purpose of confirming compliance with these rules of use and the certificate.

5 Grounds for Ceasing Use of the SQF Quality Shield

- 5.1 Permission for a site to use the SQF quality shield shall be suspended and/or withdrawn:
- a. If the site’s certification is suspended, withdrawn, relinquished, or not renewed; all use of the SQF quality shield in the manufacturing process must cease upon certificate suspension.
 - b. If the site breaches or fails to comply with these rules of use;
 - c. If the site uses the SQF quality shield in a way that, in the opinion of SQFI or the certification body, is detrimental to the SQF quality shield or the SQF program as a whole, is misleading to the public, or contrary to law; or
 - d. 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.

6 Withdrawn Certification

- 6.1 A site whose certificate has been withdrawn must:
- a. Submit and receive permission from SQFI to use up product in commerce that has the SQF quality shield; and

- b. Conceal the SQF quality shield logo on remaining SQF quality shield packaging supplies, products, and all other printed materials. In lieu of concealing the SQF quality shield, a withdrawn site may destroy all remaining SQF quality shield supplies.

7 Corporate Quality Shield

- 7.1 Large corporations with multiple individually SQF certified sites may opt to use a single corporate quality shield instead of individual site shields. A corporate quality shield may be issued by the certification body as long as the following protocols are in place to ensure that the integrity of the shield and the SQFI brand is not diminished in any way.
- 7.2 All sites within the corporation that are eligible for SQF certification must be certified to the SQF Quality Code and maintain that certification.
- 7.3 All SQF certified sites within the corporation must be certified by the same certification body.
- 7.4 The corporate shield shall contain the name of the certification body, a unique identifier comprising a three-letter corporate identity issued by SQFI (e.g. "FMI"), and the year of issue of the corporate shield (e.g. "2017").
- 7.5 Where the corporation wishes to print the corporate shield on product packaging, each site must maintain a supply of packaging that does not include the printed shield, to be placed immediately into production in the event the site, or any of the sites, is placed under suspension. The plain packaging must remain in use until the certification body lifts the suspension and SQF quality certification is reinstated.
- 7.6 A letter from the president or senior representative of the company must be sent to all senior site management outlining these procedures, and a management system must be in place prior to the use of any packaging displaying the quality shield at each site. This system shall be reviewable by the SQF auditor during the annual re-certification audit at each site.
- 7.7 If any site within the corporation has their certificate suspended or withdrawn, all certified sites within the corporation must comply with clause 5 and 6 of this quality shield appendix.

8 Quality Shield Issued for a Multi-site Organization

- 8.1 The SQF quality shield can only apply to the central site within a multi-site program that has achieved certification to the SQF Quality Code. Sub-sites within a multi-site program are not eligible for certification to the SQF Quality Code and cannot use the quality shield.

9 Disclaimer

- 9.1 SQFI may from time to time alter these rules of use or make new rules, but no such alteration or new rule shall affect the use of the SQF quality shield by a site until twelve (12) months have expired from the date the alteration or new rules of use are first published on the SQFI website www.sqfi.com unless specified by SQFI.