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The International Featured Standard (IFS) – module 12

The International Featured Standard (IFS) is a common food safety standard with a uniform evaluation system used to qualify and select suppliers. It helps retailers ensure the food safety of their products and monitors the quality level of producers of retailer branded food products.

What to Expect

Teams participating in the IFS course will achieve greater results than the combined efforts of their best individual team members. Your teams will achieve outcomes from this course that are far beyond those of conventional process of implementation and certification. The course assists forward thinking teams to develop more of the unfulfilled potential of both the individual members and the group:

- IFS Food is a Standard for auditing food product suppliers/manufacturers and only concerns food processing companies or companies that pack loose food products. IFS Food shall be used when a product is 'processed' or when there is a hazard for product contamination during the primary packing.
- IFS Food includes requirements about the following six topics: Senior management responsibility, Quality and food safety management systems, Resource management, Production process, Measurements, analysis, improvements and Food defence.
- IFS approach is risk-based. The requirements give every company the chance to develop their own solution, which fits the processes and needs of the company. During the audit, the IFS auditors check if the developed solution works in practice with the main goal to guarantee that food safety will be reached.
- IFS Food Standard Version 6 has been re-benchmarked by GFSI and has achieved recognition against the GFSI Guidance Document Sixth Edition.
- IFS Food version 6 gives more weight to quality criteria in addition to food safety criteria. It also covers the 'packaging' issue and the risk of contamination of food by packaging.

The logical framework is divided into four main parts:

Part 1: audit protocol (scoring of the audit, audit duration, different steps from the audit until the issue of the certificate, etc.)

Part 2: technical requirements. The checklist contains 250 requirements, which deal with five main subjects:
- ✓ Senior management responsibility
- ✓ Quality management system
- ✓ Resource management
- ✓ Production process
- ✓ Measurements, analyses, improvements

Part 3: requirements for accreditation bodies, certification bodies and auditors
Part 4: reporting (layout of audit report, certificate, etc.)

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What is the IFS standard?

IFS is the international standard for auditing retailer and wholesaler branded food products. The IFS standard applies to suppliers at all steps of food processing subsequent to the agricultural stage. The requirements are related to the quality management system and the HACCP system (Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points), supported by detailed prerequisite programmes, that is a set of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice), GLP (Good Laboratory Practice) and GHP (Good Hygiene Practice) requirements. IFS meets the criteria of the Global Food Safety Initiative by CIES.

The most important European retailers require IFS certification from the suppliers that are included in their supply chain. However, IFS is an international standard and can be applied to suppliers outside Europe as well.

The standard enables your organisation to:

- ✓ Provide evidence of commitment, and, in case of a food safety incident, legal defence in the frame of the due diligence concept*
- ✓ Build and operate a management system capable of helping you to better meet food quality/safety requirements and legal compliance, with specific reference to the legislation applicable in the countries where the finished product is consumed
- ✓ Provide a tool for food safety performance improvement, and the means to monitor and measure food safety performance effectively
- ✓ Facilitate reductions in product waste, product reworking, and product recall

How can I prepare for certification?

Companies that plan well will often have an advantage and be better prepared for certification. It is important that you and your company are positive, committed, and set clear target dates for implementation and assessment.

This includes:

- ✓ Establishing a quality management system
- ✓ Identifying legal requirements
- ✓ Identifying and documenting the specific food safety hazards and the relevant control measures (HACCP system)
- ✓ Identifying the applicable Good Manufacturing Practice/Good Hygiene Practice, including a pest control programme, equipment and building maintenance programme, housekeeping and cleaning programme, and all the specific standard requirements
- ✓ Implement any needed structural improvements