



**Global Food Safety Initiative**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**March 2010**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to assist with any questions that may be raised in order to provide consistent answers and help to eliminate any possible ambiguity.

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## 1. General Information

### **i. What is the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)?**

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is a non-profit making foundation, created under Belgian law. The daily management of GFSI is undertaken by the Consumer Goods Forum (formerly CIES – The Food Business Forum).

### **ii. What is the relationship between The Consumer Goods Forum and GFSI?**

The Global Food Safety Initiative (**GFSI**) is co-ordinated by the Consumer Goods Forum (formerly CIES – The Food Business Forum), and was launched in May 2000. The GFSI has a separate governance structure and is a registered independent non-profit Foundation, governed by Belgian law. The GFSI Foundation Board of Directors provides the strategic direction and oversees the daily management of the Global Food Safety Initiative.

The Consumer Goods Forum is an independent global parity-based Consumer Goods network. It brings together the CEOs and senior management of around 400 retailer and manufacturer members of all sizes, across 150 countries. Its members have combined sales of EUR 2.1 trillion (USD 2.9 trillion).

The Forum was created in June 2009 by the merger of CIES - The Food Business Forum, the Global Commerce Initiative (GCI) and the Global CEO Forum. The Consumer Goods Forum is governed by its Board of Directors, which includes an equal number of manufacturer and retailer CEOs and chairmen.

It provides a real global platform for thought leadership, debate and networking between retailers, manufacturers and their partners. Its strength lies in the privileged access it offers to the key players in the sector and the development and sharing of best practice at the highest level. It has a mandate from its members to develop common positions on key strategic and practical issues affecting the consumer goods business and to focus on non-competitive collaborative process improvement.

With its headquarters in Paris and its regional offices in Washington, D.C., Singapore, Tokyo and Shanghai, The Consumer Goods Forum serves its members throughout the world.

### **iii. What is the GFSI Vision?**

Under the umbrella of The Consumer Goods Forum, the vision for the organization is to be the global benchmarking organization delivering equivalence and driving continuous improvement in food safety schemes from farm to fork. By drawing on the expertise of its international stakeholders working in various sectors, GFSI is able to have a truly global approach when tackling food safety issues.

### **iv. What is the GFSI Mission?**

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Since it was launched in May 2000 following a number of major food safety scares, the GFSI has aimed to:

“provide continuous improvement in food safety management systems to ensure confidence in the delivery of safe food to consumers”

**v. What are the GFSI Objectives?**

The GFSI objectives are to:

1. Promote **convergence** between food safety standards through maintaining a **benchmarking process** for food safety management schemes (see section 3).
2. **Improve cost efficiency** throughout the food supply chain through the **common acceptance of GFSI recognised standards by retailers** around the world.
3. Provide a unique international stakeholder platform for **networking, knowledge exchange and sharing of best food safety practices and information.**

**vi. What does GFSI do?**

➤ **Primarily Benchmarking (see also section 4 – Scheme Benchmarking)**

Within GFSI, benchmarking is a “procedure by which a food safety-related scheme is compared to the GFSI Guidance Document,” a copy of which can be found on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under ‘Information Resources). The process is intended to be executed in an independent, unbiased, technically proficient and transparent manner. The GFSI Board benchmarking a scheme successfully means that all recognized schemes have a common foundation of requirements which should provide consistent results, in regard to the common requirements applied during the audit, but the benchmarked schemes cannot be considered as equal.

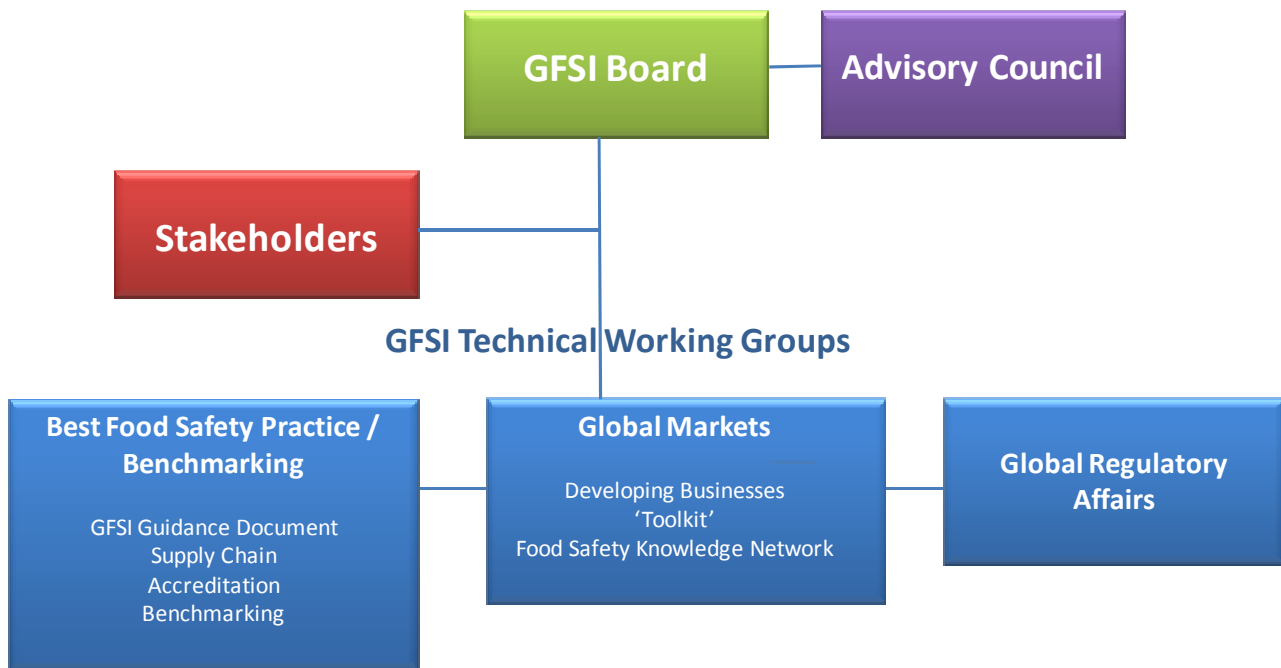
➤ **Reductions in audits through common acceptance**

Under the umbrella of GFSI, 8 major retailers came to a common acceptance of four GFSI benchmarked food safety schemes in June 2007.

Each scheme has now aligned itself with common criteria defined by food safety experts from the food business, with the objective of making food production and manufacture as safe as possible. As a result, this will also drive cost efficiency in the supply chain and reduce the duplication of audits. The GFSI vision of ‘once certified, accepted everywhere’ has now become a reality. In addition to the original retailers Carrefour, Tesco, ICA, Metro, Migros, Ahold, Wal-Mart and Delhaize who agreed to reduce duplication in the supply chain through the common acceptance of any of the four GFSI benchmarked schemes, many other food service, retail and manufacturing companies have joined this approach.

While GFSI encourages businesses within the retail, food service and manufacturing sectors to choose GFSI recognized schemes, these businesses can make individual choices whether or not to implement the program. Whilst choosing a GFSI recognized scheme may be a large investment for a business initially, the number of audits is expected to be reduced significantly after implementation. Additionally, an outside customer may require specific audits, but under the GFSI framework only one scheme would be required.

## 2. Governance Structure



### i. Who are the members of the GFSI Board?

The GFSI Board members are drawn from major retailers, manufacturers and food service operators. The Board provides the strategic direction and oversight of daily management of GFSI. Current Members of the GFSI Board are:

- Hugo BYRNES, Product Safety and Consumer Affairs Director, ROYAL AHOLD, Netherlands
- Marcos CAMPOS, Quality Assurance Director, BERTIN SA, Brazil
- Kevin CHEN, Vice President, CHINA RESOURCES VANGUARD CO. Ltd., P.R. China
- Carol Ciszek, VP Quality, Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs, KRAFT FOODS INC, USA
- D.V DARSHANE, Director Policy & Standards, Global Quality, THE COCA-COLA COMPANY, USA
- Bryan FARNSWORTH, VP Quality Management , HORMEL FOODS CORPORATION, USA
- Hervé GOMICHOIN, Quality Director, CARREFOUR GROUP, France
- Cenk GUROL, General Manager SCM Re-engineering, AEON GLOBAL SCM CO., LTD., Japan
- Cory HEDMAN, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Director, HANNAFORD BROS. CO. (DELHAIZE GROUP), USA
- Cindy JIANG, Director of Worldwide Quality, Food Safety and Nutrition, MCDONALD'S CORPORATION, USA (Vice Chair)
- Hans-Jürgen MATERN, Division Manager Quality Assurance, METRO GROUP, Germany (Chairman)
- Payton PRUETT, Vice President, Corporate Food Technology & Regulatory Compliance, THE KROGER CO., USA
- Yves REY, Corporate Quality General Manager, DANONE (Vice Chair)
- Michael ROBACH, Vice President, Corporate Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs, CARGILL, INC., USA
- Rick ROOP, Senior Vice President, Food Quality Assurance, TYSON FOODS INC, USA
- Johann ZÜBLIN, Head of Standards & Social Compliance, FEDERATION OF MIGROS COOPERATIVES, Switzerland

### ii. Will the number of GFSI Board members increase?

A new governance structure has recently been implemented whereby the GFSI Chairman, a representative from the retail industry, is supported by two vice-chairmen from the manufacturing

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and food service sectors. This ensures that the key partners in the supply chain are equally represented in the decision-making process of the Board. Membership is by invitation only and the statutes of the GFSI Foundation allow for a maximum of 19 Board Members, with a term of office of 3 years, renewable once. An application procedure is available upon request, should you wish to join this group.

**iii. What is the GFSI Board Mandate?**

The GFSI Board steers the Initiative with the support of the Advisory Council and the Stakeholder Group input. The GFSI secretariat ensures that GFSI delivers the objectives set by the Board, integrating the expectations of all stakeholders.

To this end, the Board:

- oversees and steers the Initiative's strategy and implementation;
- ensures progress is being made against agreed timelines and deliverables;
- coordinates all communication activities for the Programme;
- seeks advice from the Advisory Board (from February 2010) and keeps it informed by communicating minutes of its meetings;
- defines the objectives of the tasks allocated to each Technical Working Group;
- appoints the Chairman of these Working Groups;
- assigns one or two Board Member Liaisons to each Technical Working Group to support and monitor their work and progress;
- ensures the Programme is adequately resourced and oversees the allocation of these resources.

**iv. Who are the members of the GFSI Advisory Council?**

The GFSI Advisory Council is a body of experts composed of academics, non-government organization members and government members who will provide further expertise to the GFSI Board in their decision making process on matters related to the mission, objectives and goals of GFSI. The Advisory Council will be in place in 2010.

**v. What is the GFSI Technical Committee/Technical Working Groups?**

The GFSI Technical Committee was formed in September 2006 and is composed of retailers, manufacturers, food service operators, standard owners, certification bodies, accreditation bodies, industry associations and other technical experts. In February 2009 the GFSI Board decided to restructure the Technical Committee into Technical Working Groups that work together independently throughout the year, feeding back to the entire group at the main committee meeting. Four new working groups have been created, some of which have organised themselves into sub-groups: Best Food Safety Practice (Supply Chain and Benchmarking), Global Markets and Global Regulatory Affairs. Please see the GFSI website for more information on how to join a GFSI Technical Working group, or email [gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com).

**vi. What are the different Technical Working Groups that I can get involved in?**

**1) GFSI Guidance Document Revision**

**Aims**

- Review the current benchmarking system and the process behind it to establish a more robust, improved and transparent procedure.
- Review and revise the requirements of food safety management systems.
- Assist in the revision of the GFSI Guidance Document version 5.

**2) Supply Chain**

**Aims**

- Clearly define what the supply chain is.
- As an initial phase, provide further sector specific requirements in the GFSI Guidance Document about the following sectors:

Fruit and Vegetables	Allergens
RTE Fruit and Vegetables	Transportation - cold chain management
Aquaculture	Production of food contact packaging
Animal Feed	Distribution and storage
Supply Chain Security and Bioterrorism	Production of raw ingredients

**3) Global Markets**

**Aims**

- Define internationally recognised corporate food safety competencies for small and/or less developed businesses.
- Develop a toolkit for company self-assessment and to track progression through the competency levels.
- Communicate effectively on the aims of the programme.

**4) Global Regulatory Affairs**

**Aims**

- Develop a global strategy to build awareness and educate the supply chain for managing food safety through the Global Food Safety Initiative.
- Identify a consistent message in the form of a toolkit to share with stakeholders to drive the GFSI vision and to demonstrate how the supply chain is connected and to further the mission, goals and objectives of GFSI.
- Promote global trade.
- Draft common position papers and policies specifically linked to regulatory affairs.

**vii. How can I become a member of a Technical Working Group?**

Should any interested party wish to join one of the GFSI Technical Working Groups, the applicant shall send to the attention of Catherine François ([gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com)), Director of Food

Safety Programmes, a personal and company profile, with a letter explaining which of the working groups (Benchmarking, Supply Chain, Global Markets or Global Regulatory Affairs) is of interest.

These documents will be reviewed by the Chairman of the working group, as they must take into account the expertise and appropriateness of the individual and the composition and geographical representation of the working group.

The decision will be communicated to the individual accordingly.

**viii. What is the GFSI Stakeholder Group? Who is eligible to participate in GFSI?**

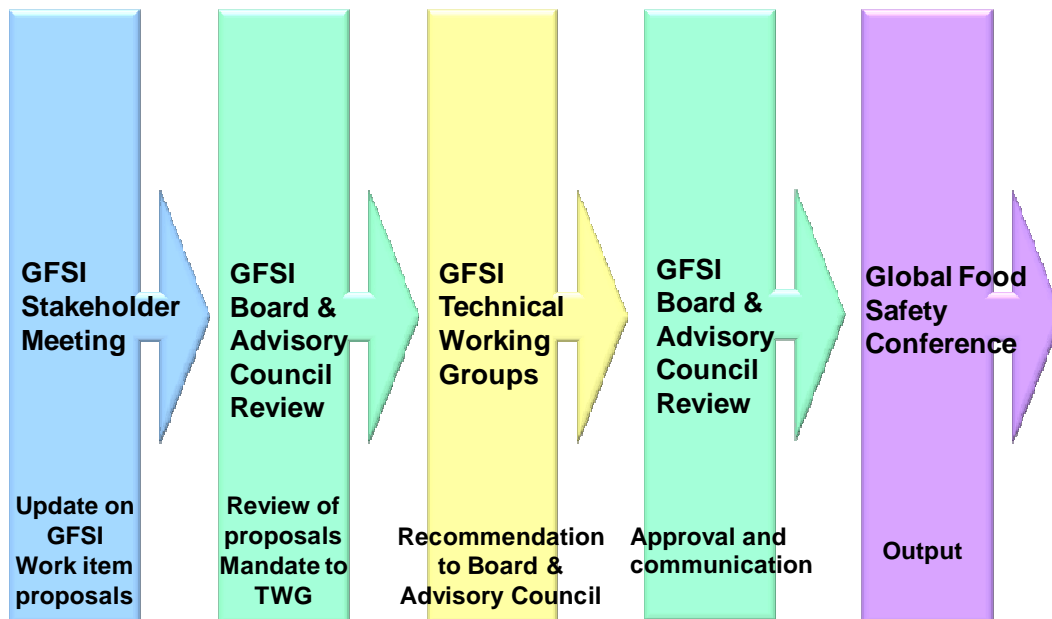
The Stakeholder Group is open to any person who would like to provide input at the general meetings. The GFSI Stakeholder Group is an international forum which currently attracts retailers, manufacturers, certification bodies, accreditation bodies, standard owners, food safety experts and consultants. This forum is held annually, usually prior to the Global Food Safety Conference. It aims to:

- Provide an update on GFSI activities
- Give stakeholders the opportunity to define future GFSI objectives
- Create an open dialogue on current and emerging food safety issues
- Identify areas for collaboration on common top priority food safety issues

Through these discussions the group identifies future work items for recommendation to the GFSI Board. The intention is to ensure that GFSI is run and managed by its members and is as inclusive and transparent as possible. The next meeting will be held from 9 – 12am on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011 in London, United Kingdom. For more information please email Jessica Wigram at [gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com).

**ix. What is the relationship between the GFSI Board, the Advisory Council, the GFSI Technical Working Groups and the GFSI Stakeholder Group?**

Any issues raised at the GFSI Stakeholder Meeting are considered by the GFSI Board and Advisory Council. They in turn provide the mandate of work items to the GFSI Technical Working Groups. The GFSI Technical Working Groups are charged with delivering the objectives set by the GFSI Board and Advisory Council and providing the recommendations on technical issues. It is felt by utilising such a governance process, there is an exchange of information and identification of best practice issues at an international and multi-stakeholder level thus ensuring the GFSI mission is achieved.



**x. How are GFSI priorities set and what are they?**

Priorities are set on an annual basis and are developed using feedback from the stakeholder forum and to meet market needs. The GFSI Board sets these priorities.

The priorities for 2010 were:

- Communication, education, transparency and awareness building
- Auditor competency/capacity/consistency/accreditation
- Government acceptance and relations
- Apply once certified accepted everywhere concept
- Reduce proliferation of schemes

Following the GFSI Stakeholder meeting in February 2011, the new priorities for the year will be established.

**xii. Are there other areas which GFSI is considering becoming involved with?**

Since GFSI was formed in 2000, food safety has been the main priority, as this has been the major concern of The Consumer Goods Forum member's Chief Executives. Their concern stemmed from the lack of consumer confidence in food safety following issues such as BSE, dioxin and other contaminants. Considerable effort has been expended to achieve harmonisation and agreement on food safety matters in the last eight years.

With the success of the GFSI in relation to food safety, the GFSI Board will continue to mandate work items relating to food safety only. The Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) at The Consumer Goods Forum, a business-led scheme to improve working and environmental conditions in global supply chains, was created to address such issues.

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### 3. The GFSI Guidance Document

GFSI drives convergence between food safety standards from farm to fork through a benchmarking process. The tool used to do the benchmarking is called the GFSI Guidance Document, currently in its 5th version (due to be updated during the course of 2010). The document is freely available in five languages on the website [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) and has been developed by a group of multi-stakeholders.

#### **i. What is the GFSI Guidance Document?**

The Guidance Document sets out the key elements for production of food as requirements for food safety management schemes and gives guidance to schemes seeking compliance with it. The Document provides a framework in which food safety management schemes can be benchmarked. It also sets out the requirements for the delivery of conforming schemes and contains guidance on the operation of certification processes.

#### **ii. How often is the GFSI Guidance Document updated?**

The first GFSI Guidance Document was issued in 2002 and is now in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition. The current edition was published in September 2007. The Guidance Document is reviewed every three to five years, depending on market needs and to ensure it remains the driver of continuous improvement in the recognized GFSI schemes. A 6th Version is expected to be released during the course of 2010, and working groups are currently being established to carry out this process.

#### **iii. Where can I find the GFSI Guidance Document?**

The current edition of the GFSI Guidance Document is freely available in five languages on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under 'Information Resources'.

#### **iv. What are the differences between Edition 4 and Edition 5 of the GFSI Guidance Document?**

There is a document detailing the differences between the two editions of the GFSI Guidance Document freely available on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under 'Information Resources'.

## 4. Scheme Benchmarking

### i. What is the benchmarking process?

The benchmarking process is defined as:

*‘Procedure by which a food safety-related scheme is compared to the GFSI Guidance Document’*

The GFSI operates within defined procedures to ascertain whether a standard and its certification system can demonstrate conformity against the Guidance Document. The GFSI ensures that the defined procedure used to benchmark schemes is implemented in an independent, impartial, technically competent and transparent manner.

The procedure is clearly specified in the GFSI Guidance Document itself and is freely available from [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com).

### The Benchmarking Process in 10 steps

1. GFSI will appoint an independent **Benchmarking Committee** to conduct a **preliminary screening** of the application. (Independent Chairman, one retailer, one manufacturer or producer, (all with at least 5 years experience relevant to the food industry) and the GFSI manager).
2. If the application is accepted, it will then be **reviewed in further detail** by the Benchmarking Committee and the scheme owner will be invited to participate in the deliberations.
3. Once the Benchmarking Committee is satisfied that the application meets the requirements of GFSI, a **written consultation period will ensue with the Benchmarking Committee**.
4. Once the consultation period is over, the responses will be reviewed and one of the **following recommendations will be issued after consultation with the GFSI Board**:
  - a. Compliance is accepted
  - b. Compliance is not accepted until modifications recommended by the Benchmarking Committee have been made by the scheme owner.

Scheme Owner should provide the Benchmarking Committee with a written proposal on implementation of the modifications in the existing scheme within a mutually accepted time frame.

If the scheme is already in use, the scheme owner should also provide a proposal on implementation of the modifications at suppliers already certified.
  - c. Rejection of the application
5. The **GFSI Foundation Board will** review the documentation and decide whether to accept or reject the application.
6. If successful, a **compliance statement** will be then issued to the Standard Owner and all stakeholders notified of the result.
7. Any changes to the conforming scheme which could result in non-conformity with the Guidance Document should be promptly communicated to GFSI.

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8. A conforming scheme owner shall update his conforming scheme in line with the updates incorporated into the GFSI Guidance Document within one year of the publication thereof to maintain compliance status.
9. There will be a **five yearly review** of conforming schemes.
10. Conforming standard owners will submit an **annual report** regarding the delivery of their food safety management system and provide to GFSI any new documents having a material impact on the performance of the scheme.

**ii. Which standards have been benchmarked against the GFSI Guidance Document 5<sup>th</sup> edition?**

The following standards have been formally benchmarked and recognised by GFSI:

**Manufacturing Schemes**

- BRC Global Standard Version 5 <http://www.brcglobalstandards.com/>
- Dutch HACCP Option B <http://www.foodsafetymanagement.info/>
- FSSC 22000 <http://www.fssc22000.com/>
- Global Red Meat Standard <http://www.grms.org>
- IFS version 5 <http://www.food-care.info/>
- SQF 2000 level 2 <http://www.sqfi.com/>
- Synergy 22000 <http://www.synergy-gss.com/>

**Primary Production (Pre Farm Gate) Scheme**

- GLOBALGAP IFA Aquaculture V3 <http://www.globalgap.org/>
- GLOBALGAP IFA Livestock V3 <http://www.globalgap.org/>
- GLOBALGAP IFA Fruit and Vegetables V3 (Options 1 and 2 only) <http://www.globalgap.org/>
- SQF 1000 Level 2 <http://www.sqfi.com/>

**Primary Production and Manufacturing Scheme**

- PrimusGFS <http://www.primusgfs.com/>
- Global Aquaculture Alliance Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification scheme  
<http://www.gaalliance.org/>
- CanadaGAP <http://www.canadagap.ca/>

BRC Global Standard (BRC) was introduced in 1998 originally for British retailers, and GFSI benchmarked the scheme for the first time in January 2003. The scheme has since been adopted by retailers around the world and is managed from the UK through multi stakeholder Technical Advisory Committees based in the UK and North America.

Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (Dutch HACCP) was introduced in 1995 and also benchmarked by GFSI in January 2003. Their Board is comprised of a mix of government officials, enforcement agencies, food retailers, manufacturers, trade associations and consumer groups,

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helping Dutch HACCP to focus on food safety through the whole supply chain. Dutch HACCP has two certification options, A & B, and of the two, option B is recognized by GFSI.

The Foundation for Food Safety Certification (FSSC) was founded in 2004. FSSC 22000, the ISO 22000 and PAS 220 based certification scheme for certification of food manufacturers that it developed, was benchmarked by GFSI during the first half of 2009. The GFSI Board has granted conditional recognition of the scheme as a result of it meeting the GFSI Guidance Document Version 5 requirements, and is now encouraging the FSSC to move the scheme towards full implementation.

GLOBALGAP is a private sector body that sets voluntary standards for the certification of agricultural products around the globe. The GLOBALGAP standard is primarily designed to reassure consumers about how food is produced on the farm by minimising detrimental environmental impacts of farming operations, reducing the use of chemical inputs and ensuring a responsible approach to worker health and safety as well as animal welfare. In May 2009 GFSI announced its formal recognition of the alignment of the food safety elements of the GLOBALGAP Fruit and Vegetable scope (Options 1 and 2 only) with the GFSI Guidance Document Version 5.

The Global Red Meat Standard, GRMS, managed by the Danish Agriculture & Food Council and launched in late 2006, was developed specifically for slaughtering, cutting, deboning and the sale of red meat and meat products. GRMS was successfully benchmarked by GFSI in October 2009.

International Food Standard (IFS) was introduced in 2002 and benchmarked by GFSI in January 2003 as well. IFS is comprised of a coalition of French, German, Italian and Polish retailers and is divided at three levels. The IFS Board concentrates on development, while the IFS Working Groups focus on content.

PrimusGFS is a private scheme that establishes requirements for the certification of products of the agricultural sector in a voluntary manner at a world-wide level. PrimusGFS was successfully benchmarked by GFSI in February 2010.

Safe Quality Food (SQF) was introduced in 1995 and benchmarked by GFSI in 2004. SQF implements sector-specific guidelines and is split into two programs; SQF 1000 for pre-farm gate audits and SQF 2000 for post farm gate audits. The scheme has three levels of certification, and a specific guidance document is available for produce. Level 2 is recognised by GFSI.

Synergy Global Standardisation Services is an international neutral and independent organisation with a mission to draft and publish standards and schemes completing the national or international standards, according to market needs & initiatives. The Synergy 22000 scheme is based on the internationally recognized standard ISO 22000 and the new ISO 22002-1 standard (or the equivalent Synergy PRP 22000 standard, for the same scope), and integrates additional auditing protocol

required to meet GFSI requirements. GFSI has recognized Synergy 22000 for the scopes of the processing of animal and vegetal perishable products as well as processing of long shelf life ambient products (ref. ISO/TS 22003 Food Chain Category Scopes C, D, E and L {biocultures, additives and vitamins only}).

**iii. Are other schemes eligible to be benchmarked?**

GFSI will accept any application for the benchmarking process if the scheme owner believes and can demonstrate they meet the requirements of the GFSI Guidance Document. Currently there are several applicants going through the benchmarking process. The GFSI does not wish to, nor has any desire to restrict the opportunity for any scheme to be formally recognised by the GFSI. However please be aware that as the Guidance Document is currently being revised, any scheme benchmarked to version 5 of the Guidance Document will have to be re-benchmarked once version 6 is issued, which will incur another fee for the scheme owner.

All applications submitted must follow the Guidance Document version 5 requirements and processes, and all information submitted is kept confidential until a decision has been made for acceptance, and if the application is denied the document is kept permanently confidential. We would point out that if applicants put forward schemes for benchmarking, all information is confidential and GFSI will not openly discuss the application with any third party. Those wanting such information must go to the scheme owner.

**iv. Are the different elements "weighted" in the same manner in each scheme?**

The Guidance Document version 5 is used as the core for each audit scheme, and the scheme will not be benchmarked successfully if GFSI cannot find the evidence that they are equivalent to the Guidance Document version 5. Every scheme has different components that appeal to the customer, but all must meet the requirements in the Guidance Document.

**v. Is GFSI a standard with its own audit?**

GFSI is not a standard and does not own an audit program. Rather, it benchmarks other schemes and develops guidelines to ensure that the schemes follow the requirements set forth in the Guidance Document version 5.

**vi. Has the GFSI enhanced food safety or is it just measuring quality compliance?**

As food safety is paramount, the main goal of GFSI is to ensure that the global supply chain is safe for the consumers. To guarantee that GFSI fulfils its goal, they hold scheme owners responsible to comply with the food safety requirements set out in the Guidance Document version 5. Each of the recognized standards must meet the Guidance Document requirements, but may add supplementary requirements to their own schemes, as their technical committees deem necessary.

**vii. Are the results of the benchmarking process publically available?**

The results of the benchmarking process are openly available, if there is agreement from the applicant to do so. The results of the benchmarking are available on the GFSI website.

There is no intention to make any supporting documentation publically available as this can be extensive and much of the decision making will be based on the dialogue which takes place between the GFSI and the applicant.

**viii. How can I obtain copies of audits of suppliers through GFSI?**

The audit reports belong to the suppliers and only those companies can decide whether or not to release information on audits and to whom. GFSI does not have a web-based interface/directory to obtain copies of audits of suppliers who have been audited to a GFSI recognized scheme and each recognized scheme operates their own systems.

**ix. Does GFSI profit from the audit schemes they benchmark?**

GFSI is a non-profit making independent foundation. There is a charge to cover any fixed costs relating to the benchmarking of each scheme. Membership of The Consumer Goods Forum (formerly CIES) is not mandatory to become involved or have a scheme recognized by GFSI.

## 5. ISO 22000

### i. Does the GFSI recognise ISO 22000?

At the present time GFSI does not formally recognise the ISO 22000 standard. The GFSI has no intention to be restrictive in its activities, but by the very nature of the benchmarking process, any submitted standard must meet the requirements defined in the GFSI Guidance Document.

There are three main areas where differences exist:

- The lack of defined pre requisite programmes in ISO 22000
- The accreditation requirement for ISO 22000 differs from that specified in the GFSI Guidance Document
- Ownership and accountability issues

In September 2007 the GFSI Technical Committee published a paper 'What is ISO 22000?', which has led the way for further work by a number of organisations interested in gaining recognition by the GFSI. The document is freely available on the GFSI website.

### ii. Will GFSI ever recognise ISO 22000?

The GFSI Board has recognised that ISO 22000 has an important role in global food safety and will consider its recognition but within the GFSI benchmarking framework.

The CIAA (the European Food Manufacturers Trade Body) has developed a pre requisite programme (PAS 220) which is available from BSI in the UK. The Foundation for Food Safety Certification (FSSC) has developed a new certification scheme combining ISO 22000, PAS 220 and specific audit protocols which has been conditionally recognised by GFSI. This scheme has been officially recognised by GFSI. However, ISO 22000 as a standalone standard will not be recognised by GFSI.

## 6. Auditor Competence

### i. Why is auditor competence an issue?

Auditor competence is a key factor relating to the integrity of any scheme and has long been recognised by scheme owners as a matter which must be managed and controlled to ensure consistency and fairness. At each of the stakeholder meetings held by the GFSI at previous conferences, this has been the subject of much debate.

### ii. What has GFSI done about auditor competence?

There are a number of things that GFSI have done in the past year in this area and work with other stakeholders will continue in order to address the concerns of the Industry.

**2008** - In 2008 an Accreditation Task Force was formed, comprised of GFSI recognised standard Owners, IAF and EA representatives and Technical Committee members to assist with a review to create a more harmonised approach to accreditation.

Each GFSI recognised scheme validates and monitors each auditing company and individual that works for them. In addition, GFSI requirements also mean that the auditing companies have to meet internationally recognised accreditation rules that are in place, validated and monitored on a regular basis by other accreditation bodies who ensure that the auditing companies also abide by these rules. This provides a system of checks and balances that helps to ensure the integrity of each audit, and that they are all carried out in a uniform and consistent manner.

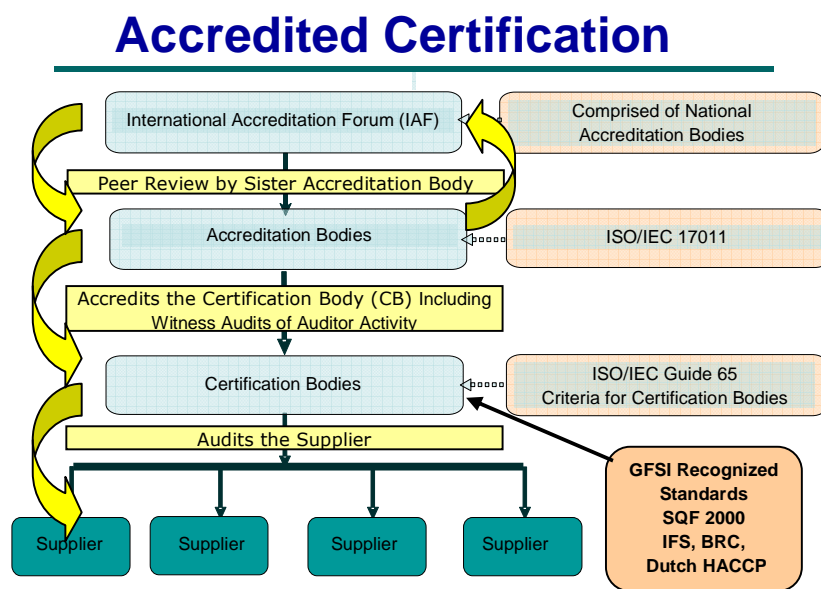
**Future work** – There are a number of areas where the GFSI will work in relation to auditor competence

- As members of the IAF (International Accreditation Forum), there will be active engagement to ensure the food industries requirements are made known to the Accreditation Bodies and close co-operation work to develop a harmonised approach to accreditation processes.
- Work closely in Europe with the EA (European Accreditation Body) under a memorandum of understanding
- Provide technical support from GFSI Technical Working Group members to ISO committees developing standards relating to accreditation and certification.
- Continue to look at auditor competence within the GFSI Technical Working Groups framework on issues such as emerging markets.

## 7. Working with Accreditation Bodies

### i. Why is GFSI working with Accreditation Bodies?

The GFSI recognises the importance of the accreditation process in relation to scheme ownership and feels that it is important to gain co-operation with organisations which can influence accreditation processes on a global or regional basis.



### ii. Which organisations are working with GFSI?

The GFSI is working with two organisations:

- IAF – International Accreditation Forum
- EA – The European Co-operation for Accreditation

Both of these organisations are highly influential in the management and control of National Accreditation Bodies and the GFSI welcomes the opportunity to work closely with these important organisations.

The GFSI believes that by working closely with such organisations, this will provide some guarantee of consistent implementation of food safety certification schemes by providing the industry expertise and perspective which may be absent in these organisations.

Some progress has already been made by representatives of the GFSI Technical Working Groups and we look forward to even closer co-operation in the coming months.

### iii. GFSI and ISO 17011

In February 2008 GFSI created a taskforce to build awareness in the accreditation world of what the food business standards are trying to achieve, to get consistency between accreditation bodies worldwide with regards to auditor competence and the accreditation requirements that each GFSI

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recognised scheme has in place at the moment to harmonise these. This taskforce is comprised of GFSI recognised scheme owners, IAF and EA representatives and GFSI Technical Working Group members.

The group has drafted a document with additional requirements to ISO 17011 (Conformity assessment for general requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies). The document was circulated to Accreditation Bodies, through the International Accreditation Forum, the Standard Owners and the Technical Working Groups for comment, and the 161 comments were integrated into the final document where appropriate. This was well received when it was presented at the IAF Technical Committee meeting in Mumbai in March 2009. A copy of the 'GFSI Requirements on the Application of ISO/IEC 17011:2004', can be found on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under Information Resources.

## 8. The relationship with GlobalGAP

On 4th February 2009, GFSI and GlobalGAP announced that together they are developing a joint approach to benchmarking for farm assurance scheme owners.

The first stage of this partnership was completed in May 2009 when the GFSI Board announced its formal recognition of the alignment of the food safety elements of the GLOBALGAP Fruit and Vegetable scope Options 1 and 2 with the GFSI Guidance Document Version 5. Since then, the GlobalGAP Aquaculture and Livestock IFA V3.0 has also been successfully benchmarked.

To further provide a transparent and coherent approach, GFSI and GLOBALGAP began a review of the GFSI Guidance Document and the GLOBALGAP Good Agricultural Practice Reference Standard. The aim is to align the two benchmarking processes and benchmarking criteria, to provide equivalent end results.

This partnership will provide a harmonised and streamlined framework for benchmarking services to farm assurance food safety scheme owners specifically within the scope of food safety. The end result will create greater recognition and confidence along the entire supply chain for all stakeholders from farm to fork.

## 9. The relationship with Codex

The Global Food Safety Initiative recognizes a series of schemes that via systematic benchmarking process using an agreed set of criteria, which is defined within a Guidance Document (currently the GFSI Guidance Document Version 5). All the schemes recognized by GFSI have been derived, over many years, from standards developed by individual organisations, e.g. retailers or inspection/certification organisations. The GFSI-recognized standards have their origins based on standards dating back to the early 1980s, with the major influence being the requirements specified by retailers on their own brand suppliers.

The GFSI-recognized standards, by their very nature, are written in differing style, but all 'amplify' or describe in more detail the requirements laid down in the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene Code of Practice. They are revised and implemented more regularly than the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene Code of Practice and therefore have attempted to address issues that are currently faced by the Food Industry; good examples of this are incident management, food security and allergen management.

There are within all GFSI recognized standards, requirements above and beyond those laid down in the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene Code of Practice, which are seen by the Food Industry as being important to food safety or highly desirable to ensure continuing compliance with requirements; good examples of these are requirements related to product specifications, product analysis, purchasing procedures, internal audit and full product/ingredient traceability.

Although it is very difficult to trace the origin of these standards, they all reflect the need for compliance to meet legal requirements and are based on HACCP principles, food safety management standards and prerequisite programmes (GMP). It must be appreciated however, that these standards were all based on best practice and therefore by inference can be traced back to the base requirements of Codex standards, but are not particularly referenced as such.

As these standards were developed, there are a relatively small number of specific requirements that cannot be referenced back to Codex standards, however were placed in these standards to emphasis business needs between supplier and customer; good examples of these are stock control, complaint handling and internal audit.

A detailed document has been developed by the GFSI to cross reference Codex standards to the GFSI Guidance Document and each of the recognised post farm gate standards. This document also takes into account not only food safety requirements, but also supporting management mechanisms. This document is freely available on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under 'Information Resources' and 'GFSI Recognised Schemes'

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## 10. The relationship with Public Authorities and International Institutions

Efforts have been made to develop relationships with governmental organisations and international institutions. GFSI and members of the GFSI have held a number of meetings with organisations such as the European Commission, the World Trade Organisation, the FAO and the UN, in addition to other national governments. There is a lot more to do in this area and we will continue to build and enhance these relationships. GFSI is in an ideal position to act on the behalf its members and stakeholders to facilitate discussions and dialogue on a number of important issues with these influential organisations.

## 11. Other Questions

### **i. Has the GFSI considered the development of one global scheme?**

This was the subject of great debate in the early years of the GFSI and it was decided that the preferred option was benchmarking of existing or new schemes. It was felt that, if there had been a move to develop one global standard, there were a number of complex issues, such as legislative, political and cultural differences, that would have been extremely difficult to overcome and the time frame to actually develop such a scheme would have been seen, by the then users of standards, as being excessive.

The framework for benchmarking was also a complex and difficult issue, however was successfully achieved by the commitment of the GFSI members. We believe, given the developments seen in 2008, the GFSI vision has been achieved albeit after several years' hard work.

### **ii. Why are there no members of Consumer Associations involved with the GFSI?**

The GFSI was initially formed to meet retailer requirements; it was felt that there was detailed knowledge and awareness of consumer needs within the GFSI and as much of the activities related to matters of a highly technical nature, there would be little benefit from direct involvement with Consumer Associations at that time.

However as the GFSI moves forward and it is felt that involvement with Consumer Associations would be appropriate and add value to the either the Board or specific Committees, then obviously this will be considered as part of the new Advisory Council that will begin as of January 2010.

### **iii. Why do not all retailers accept GFSI benchmarked schemes?**

The use of any scheme is voluntary and therefore the use is purely at the discretion of the individual retailer or supplier. Individual companies are also responsible for their own food safety systems and the use of schemes does differ widely depending upon company policy, general regulatory requirements and liability.

The GFSI can only encourage the use of recognised schemes and cannot dictate to individual companies how, or if, they use them. GFSI however has been successful in promoting harmonisation and facilitating co-operation between global retailers and suppliers and will continue to do so as this is one of the GFSI founding principles.

### **iv. Does GFSI support the practice of only specifying certain Certification Bodies?**

In relation to the use of specific Certification Bodies by individual scheme users, there is little GFSI can do on this issue, as it is the responsibility of the scheme user to utilise a scheme how they see fit. GFSI

can only provide a harmonised framework to work within but cannot dictate to individual organisations how they control and manage their food safety programmes.

**v. Does GFSI support the practice of Scheme Owners only specifying certain Accreditation Bodies?**

The GFSI Guidance Document defines the requirements for Accreditation Bodies and their relationship with Certification Bodies, i.e. the requirement for the Accreditation Body to be a member of the ISO Guide 65 mutual lateral agreement for product certification. However there is still some inconsistency in approach by national Accreditation Bodies and GFSI has actively engaged with IAF (the International Accreditation Forum) to promote best practice in the accreditation process.

**vi. Why do some retailers keep performing their own audits?**

There are two reasons:

1. They do not recognise any scheme
- or
2. They carry out supplementary audits to a scheme they recognise

If they do recognise a scheme, but still carry out audits, this may be a policy decision as they feel that they require more information or have a different requirement to those within a scheme standard itself. For example they may wish to assess their own label product being manufactured rather than rely on an audit where their product may have not been made on the date of the audit.

Users of schemes are responsible for the way in which they use the audit information and GFSI cannot dictate to individual companies how they manage and control their food safety systems.

However with recent announcements by several major retailers and GFSI members the number of such audits is likely to reduce.

**vii. If I am a supplier, how do I implement GFSI?**

GFSI is actually a benchmark framework in which we recognise existing pre and farm gate standards that meet internationally recognised criteria that we lay out in our Guidance Document (currently in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition). This document has been put together by all the actors in the food supply chain. These standards are recognised once they meet the minimum food safety requirements laid out in the document and once audited, the certificates are recognised by many international and regional and national retailers or suppliers. GFSI does not intervene in retailer or supplier policy.

For certification to a GFSI recognised scheme, contact the scheme owner directly (all scheme owner contact details can be found on [www.mygfsi.com](http://www.mygfsi.com) under 'Contact us'), or an audit company that is accredited to audit against a GFSI recognised scheme.

**For any further information, please contact [gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsinfo@theconsumergoodsforum.com)**

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