

General information regarding elements of the IFS Food certification process is described below. However, it is important that you visit www.ifs-certification.com to access and review all the IFS Food Scheme documents in full, including any additional update from IFS MANAGEMENT and guidance documents. Please feel free to contact us to discuss how we can better serve your organization.

SAI Global Full Service Team

Upon selection of SAI Global as your Registrar and submission of the signed Application for Certification, SAI Global will assign your dedicated service team.

Introduction

This document provides information for Applicants and Approved Suppliers. SAI Global is accredited for IFS according to ISO/IEC 17065 product and process certification.

Certification against the applicable IFS Food standard (“the Standard”) provides a mechanism for giving assurances to retailers and consumers about the production standards of suppliers and thereby assurances regarding the safety, and integrity of the product. The Scheme has been designed to provide assurances that food products are manufactured in accordance with a specified Standard, which goes beyond the relevant legislation and demands best commercial practice.

Certification will only be granted to Applicants and Approved Suppliers who comply with the Standard and follow the Rules set out in this manual.

In the event of any changes to the Standard or Rules, Applicants and Approved Suppliers must conform to the new requirements from the effective date of introduction of the changes.

The registration, assessment and certification of Applicants and Approved Suppliers against the IFS Standards is administered under licence by SAI Global, an ISO /IEC 17065 accredited certification body.

Application

Companies who wish to be certified against IFS Food should read carefully the applicable Standard, Standard Doctrine, Guidelines and documents published on the IFS Portal, Rules and other information in this document before completing and sending in an application on the official form to SAI Global.

Company Profile must be completed every year in full giving details of all locations and types of production, scope of the assessment and the data used for duration calculation. The Supplier should determine the product or process types to be evaluated using the standard document for reference and provide this information on the company profile.

Types of assessment

Pre-assessment (optional) - A pre-assessment is an on-site assessment conducted prior to the initial certification assessment. In the case of a pre-assessment, the auditor who performs this assessment shall be different from the auditor who performs the initial assessment.

Initial Assessment - The initial Assessment is a full and thorough Assessment of a production site, ideally resulting in the issue of a certificate. During the Assessment, all IFS Food requirements shall be assessed by the auditor.

An initial Assessment can be:

- a production site’s first IFS Food Assessment or
- the Assessment performed after an interruption in the certification cycle (see chapter 4.3, Part 1) or
- the Assessment performed after a failed recertification Assessment due to a D evaluation of a KO requirement (Knock Out non-conformity) or

- the Assessment performed after a failed recertification Assessment due to a total scoring < 75 %.

Note: If an initial IFS Food Assessment is failed due to a D evaluation of a KO requirement and / or more than one Major non-conformity, the IFS Food Assessment report shall be uploaded in the IFS Database and this Assessment cannot be considered as a pre-Assessment.

Recertification assessment – A recertification Assessment is the Assessment performed to renew the existing IFS Food Certification. The period in which a recertification Assessment shall be performed is shown on the certificate.

A recertification Assessment is a full and thorough Assessment of a production site, ideally resulting in the issue of a new certificate. During the Assessment, all IFS Food requirements shall be assessed by the auditor. Particular attention shall be paid to the deviations and non-conformities identified during the previous Assessment, as well as to the effectiveness and implementation of corrections and corrective actions laid out in the company's action plan.

Assessed companies shall always inform their certification body if they have already been IFS certified in the past. The auditor shall read the Assessment report and verify the action plan of the previous Assessment, even if another certification body issued the report or if the previous Assessment took place more than one year ago. If C and / or D scorings of requirement(s) are still present from one Assessment to the next, or if the scorings deteriorate, the auditor shall assess the situation in accordance with chapter 5.11 of the Assessment checklist, Part 2 of the Standard. The link between two (2) consecutive Assessments ensures a continuous improvement process.

A recertification Assessment can be performed either announced or unannounced. The unannounced option is mandatory at least once every third IFS certification Assessment.

Production sites are responsible for maintaining their certification. All IFS Food certified companies will receive a reminder from the IFS Database three (3) months before certification expiration.

We will contact you in advance to set a date for an announced Assessment or to register them for an unannounced Assessment.

Follow-up assessment – A follow-up Assessment is required in a specific situation where the results of the Assessment (initial or recertification) did not allow a certificate to be issued due to one Major non-conformity and a total scoring ≥ 75 %.

During the follow-up Assessment, the auditor shall focus on the implementation of actions taken to correct the Major non-conformity determined in the previous Assessment.

The closure of the Major non-conformity shall always be verified by an on-site evaluation by the auditor. The follow-up Assessment shall generally be performed by the same auditor who performed the Assessment where the Major non-conformity was identified.

If the follow-up Assessment is successful, certification shall be issued at foundation level only.

Extension assessment – If new processes or products different to those included in the scope of the current IFS Assessment are implemented between two (2) certification Assessments (e.g. seasonal products), the certified company shall immediately inform its certification body, who shall perform a risk assessment to decide whether and when an extension Assessment should be performed or not. The results of this risk assessment, based on hygiene and safety risks, shall be documented. If the certification body decides that an extension Assessment is needed, it is not necessary to perform a full new Assessment but an on-site extension Assessment during the validity period of the existing certificate (on-going certification cycle).

An extension Assessment shall always be performed as long as products and / or technology scopes and the HACCP plan (and especially the CCPs) are different from the one(s) assessed during the “

main” Assessment (this rule also applies in case of production lines which were not working during the “main” Assessment) and / or if a significant change to the production process and / or its environment has been made.

If the extension Assessment demonstrates compliance, the certificate shall be updated with the new scope and uploaded to the IFS Database together with the extension Assessment report. The updated certificate shall keep the same expiry date as the current certificate. When an extension Assessment has been performed, the recertification Assessment shall include the activity assessed during the extension Assessment (all in one certificate). In the event of a Major non-conformity, a D evaluation of a KO requirement or a total scoring < 75 % after an extension Assessment, the full Assessment (including the main one) is failed and the current certificate shall be suspended.

Before scheduling and performing the IFS Food Assessment, the company shall decide whether the Assessment is conducted on an announced or unannounced basis, ensuring that at least one IFS Food Assessment is performed unannounced every three (3) years

Announced Assessment option

The announced Assessment is conducted at a time and date agreed between the company and the selected certification body and shall be performed on consecutive days. The recertification Assessment shall be scheduled at earliest eight (8) weeks before the assessment due date and at latest two (2) weeks after the Assessment due date (anniversary date of the initial Assessment).

Unannounced Assessment option

This option is preferably aimed at recertification Assessments, but may also apply to initial Assessments if the company prefers starting directly with an unannounced Assessment. This option only applies to initial and recertification and not to extension and follow-up Assessments. The option „unannounced“ shall be mandatory at least once every third IFS certification Assessment. Based on this rule, in case the certification cycle is interrupted where an unannounced Assessment was due, the next certification Assessment (=initial Assessment) has to be conducted unannounced.

The certification body shall discuss audit/assessment options with the sites, and notify them which year an unannounced audit/assessment will take place.

The unannounced Assessment is performed within a time window of [- 16 weeks before Assessment due date; + two (2) weeks after Assessment due date] and shall take place without prior notification of the date to the company, to ensure the unannounced character of the Assessment. The Assessment shall be performed on consecutive days.

The following rules apply when the unannounced option is chosen:

- The company shall provide the certification body with the name(s) of the on-site person(s) to be contacted on the production site.
- For multi-location production sites with a head office / central management:
 - Head office / central management shall either be assessed through an announced or unannounced Assessment.
 - The Assessment of the head office / central management shall always take place before the Assessment of each production site and shall be performed before the start of the unannounced Assessment time window of the production site(s).
 - An unannounced Assessment shall be performed in the production sites.
 - When the head office / central management is assessed through an announced Assessment: the announced Assessment of the head office / central management and unannounced Assessment of the production site shall not be performed on consecutive days (e.g. if the head office / central management is located within one of the production sites, there shall be two (2) different Assessments: an announced Assessment for the centrally organised processes and an unannounced Assessment for the production site).
 - When the head office / central management is assessed through an unannounced Assessment: unannounced Assessments of the head office / central management and the production site can be organised to take place on the same day (e.g. if the

head office / central management is located within one of the production sites, there can be one Assessment: an unannounced Assessment for centrally organised processes and for the production site. This Assessment shall start with the production processes.).

- All Assessments, including that of the head office / central management, shall be performed within a maximum time frame of 12 months.

If a company denies the auditor access (apart from “force majeure”), the currently valid IFS Certificate shall be suspended by the certification body within a maximum of two (2) working days of the Assessment date. All users with access to the IFS Database and with the respective company in their favourites list will receive an e-mail notification from the IFS Database, informing them that the current certificate has been suspended. This information will be visible in the company’ s history in the IFS Database. The company shall be invoiced by the certification body for the total cost of the Assessment. Furthermore, the next Assessment can only be scheduled as announced.

Please refer to IFS Food Standard for more information about types of assessment.

Certification process

All assessment activities are mutually planned with your assigned Auditor prior to the assessment.

The Auditor will send an assessment plan. The assessment plan includes appropriate details concerning assessment dates, duration, the scope covered and the complexity of the assessment. The assessment plan shall be sufficiently flexible to respond to any unexpected events which may arise during the site inspection activity within the certification assessment. It also specifies which of the company’s products or product ranges are to be audited. The company can only be audited at a time when it is actually producing the products specified in the scope of the assessment. The assessment plan will be sent before the assessment, to ensure availability of responsible persons at the day of the assessment.

The purpose of the assessment is to check that the company conform to all the requirements of the Standard.

The assessment shall be scheduled based on the following steps:

- the opening meeting
- the evaluation of existing quality and food safety systems; achieved by checking documentation (HACCP, quality management documentation)
- the on-site inspection and interviewing of the personnel
- Documentation and record review and inspection
- the final conclusions drawn from the assessment
- the closing meeting.

The company will assist and co-operate with the auditor during the assessment. As part of the assessment, personnel from different levels of management are interviewed. It is advisable that the company’s senior managers are present at the opening and closing meetings so that any deviations and non-conformities can be discussed.

If the auditor identifies any areas that do not comply with the Standard, the Applicant will be informed of these at the time. At the end of the assessment, the auditor will list these areas of non-conformity/deviations on a preliminary report.

The auditor may only issue a provisional assessment of company’s status during the closing meeting. The auditor shall send the company both the pre-report of the assessment and the outline action plan within 2 weeks of the assessment date.

The company shall provide the following in the action plan:

- proposed corrections and corrective actions for all deviations (C, D), KO requirements scored with a C and for non-conformities (Major or D evaluation of a KO requirement) listed by the auditor
- responsibilities and implementation deadlines for both corrections and corrective actions

Timescale for corrections and corrective actions:

Corrections - As soon as possible. Evidence of implementation shall be provided to the certification body within a maximum of four (4) weeks after the receipt of the provisional Assessment report and the provisional action plan for completion.

Corrective actions - Relevant for a sustainable and successful implementation (may take longer than the deadline for issuing the certificate, need to be reasonably justified by the company). Implemented before the recertification Assessment at the latest.

The company shall forward the action plan to the certification body within maximum four (4) weeks of having received the provisional report of the Assessment and the provisional action plan. If this deadline is not adhered to, the company shall undergo a full initial or recertification Assessment.

Following an assessment, the auditor will submit the report and complete action plan to the SAI Global Office. SAI Global Certification Team is responsible for making the certification decision. The issue of the certificate is dependent on the assessment results and on agreement on an appropriate action plan.

Companies will normally receive a certificate within 6 weeks (target) or 8 weeks (maximum time) of the assessment.

Scoring and conditions for issuing assessment report and certificate

Assessment result	Status	Action company	Report form	Certificate
At least 1 KO scored with D	Not passed	Actions and new initial assessment to be agreed upon	Report gives status	No
> 1 Major and / or total score < 75 %	Not passed	Actions and new initial Assessment to be agreed upon	Report gives status	No
Maximum one Major and total score is ≥ 75 %	Not passed unless further actions taken and validated after follow-up Assessment	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the provisional report. Follow-up Assessment maximum six (6) months after the Assessment date.	Report including action plan provides status	Certificate at foundation level, if the Major non-conformity is finally solved during the follow-up Assessment. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are closed.



Total score < 75 %	Not Passed	Actions and new initial Assessment to be agreed upon (no earlier than six (6) weeks after the Assessment where the final score was < 75 %).	Report provides status	No
Total score is ≥ 75 % and < 95 %	Passed at IFS Food foundation level after receipt of the action plan	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the provisional report.	Report including action plan gives status	Yes, certificate at foundation level, 12-month validity. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are closed.
Total score is ≥ 95 %	Passed at IFS Food higher level following the receipt of the action plan	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the provisional report.	Report including action plan provides status	Yes, certificate at higher level, 12-month validity. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are closed.

Note: In case one or several KO is / are scored with D during the assessment, the current IFS certificate shall be suspended in the IFS assessment portal by the certification body as soon as possible and a maximum 2 working days after the assessment date. The same applies in case one or several Major non-conformity(ies) is/are issued during the assessment.

Certification cycle

For all products and for all certification levels, the assessment frequency for IFS Food audits is 12 months, starting from the date of the assessment and not the date of issue the certificate.

The validity of the IFS Certificate remains the same each year and is determined by the date of the initial Assessment.

The renewal assessment shall be scheduled at earliest 8 weeks before and at latest 2 weeks after the renewal assessment due date (due date is the anniversary date of initial assessment). If this is not the case, or if the several steps of the certification process were not completed in time, the certificate cannot be renewed with the “due date” but with the actual new date; this will lead to a break in the certification.

Companies are responsible for maintaining their certification. All IFS certified companies will receive a reminder from the IFS on-line assessment portal three months before certification expiration.

For Announced audits, SAI Global shall contact companies in advance in order to set a date for a new assessment. In general, the expected date of each assessment shall be uploaded in the IFS

assessment portal, in the diary function and at latest 2 weeks (14 calendar days) before the assessment due date.

Transfer from a different Certification body to SAI Global

A site can change its certification body after every time during the certification cycle, provided that there has been closure of all outstanding non-conformities, and that 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, and the responsibility of the certification is remains to the old Certification body until the certificate is expired.

The COID number and re-certification date are transferred with the site to the new certification body via the IFS Database only after the previous certificate is expired and a new audit report and related certificate is issued and uploaded in the portal by the new Certification body. It is site's responsibility to delete the link with the previous Certification body and create a new link with the new Certification body.

The new certification body shall undertake a pre-transfer review of the site's certification to:

- i. Confirm the certificate is current and valid (by checking the QR code on the certificate);
- ii. Confirm the site's certificate and report are in compliance with the IFS Food Standard' expectation (check scope, exclusion, outsourcing and applicable product and technological scopes);
- iii. Confirm any complaints received by the site are actioned;
- iv. Review the site's audit history (where the site 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);
- v. Confirm the stage of the current certification cycle.
- vi. Check if any audit date has been recorded in the IFS Diary and/or any registration for Unannounced audit has been made by the previous Certification body.
- vii. If the new certification body detects during the on site assessment any Major NC or KO that will lead to the suspension of the certificate, it is responsibility of the new certification body to inform IFS that will escalate to the old CB to suspend the certificate in the portal.

When a site changes their certification body, the site shall make the last re-certification audit report and surveillance audit report (where applicable) available to the new certification body.

Information about the conditions of withdrawal / suspension of a certificate

Any information indicating that the products / processes may no longer comply with the requirements of the certification system, will lead to a withdrawal / suspension of the current certificate. At the same, the non-payment for the current Assessment by the certified company will lead as well to the withdrawal / suspension of the current certificate.

If certification is reinstated after suspension, all necessary modifications to formal certification documents, public information, authorisations for use of brands, etc. will be made in order to ensure all appropriate indications exist and that the products / processes continue to be certified.

Site Obligations

The IFS Food Scheme has numerous obligations that apply as well as SAI Global Accredited Assessment Services Terms and Conditions. You need to refer to IFS Food Scheme documents and all normative documents, below are some highlights:

- Allowing the supervised training/witnessing of new auditors by SAI Global
- Routine SAI Global shadow witness assessment program
- Witness audits by Accreditation Bodies, IFS, GFSI or other stakeholders
- By joining the scheme, the company agrees to the content and implications of the IFS Integrity Program (see IFS Integrity Program Section below).
- The company shall inform its certification body about any change that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements including any legal entity name change and/or any

production site location change. For the following specific situations, the certification body shall be informed within three (3) working days:

- any product recall
- any product recall and / or withdrawal by official order for food safety and / or food fraud reasons
- any visit from health authorities which results in notifications and / or penalties issued by authorities.

IFS Integrity Program

To protect the integrity of the IFS standards and to provide assurance of the quality of IFS assessment results IFS operates an IFS Integrity program. This involves complaint investigation, integrity on-site checks, integrity witnessing audits, integrity audits of Certification Bodies and analysis of administrative indicators for CB's.

IFS certified companies are required to participate in:

- IFS complaint investigations
- Integrity on-site checks and / or
- Integrity witness audits

IFS Complaint Investigations

IFS usually receives complaints about IFS audits from retailers and from CBs, employees of IFS certified companies or other natural persons or legal entities.

If IFS is informed of significant discrepancies between results of an IFS assessment and a subsequent retailer assessment, this will also be investigated within the complaint management process.

The IFS offices will gather all necessary information in order to investigate the cause of the complaint and to establish if there are deficiencies by certified companies, accredited CBs or IFS-approved auditors in meeting IFS requirements.

Integrity on-site Checks

Usually are unannounced audits whereby IFS sends an independent auditor to check on the integrity of a certification based on:

- A complaint, or
- As part of risk-based quality check.

Based on the complaint, the Integrity on-site check will mainly be performed on an unannounced basis (announcement 30 minutes before the start of the Integrity on-site check). In case the **auditor has to wait 30 min (up to 59 min)** before starting the Integrity onsite Check **a deviation will be raised** by the IP auditor ("Starting" refers to the check itself (entry to the facility), not the factory tour.

In case the Integrity onsite Check cannot be started **one hour** after arrival at the site (no entry to the facility), the Integrity onsite Check is classified as "**non realizable**" which needs to be considered as a breach of certification contract, that can result in certificate suspension / withdrawal by the responsible certification body.

If a KO or major non-conformity is issued at an integrity on-site assessment, then:

- SAI Global is required to suspend the certificate
- A certificate will be reissued once an on-site assessment by SAI Global and objective evidence has been provided to the IFS that the KO or major non-conformity is no longer valid.

IFS certified companies are obliged to provide IFS MANAGEMENT and the auditor of the Integrity Program assigned by IFS MANAGEMENT access to their premises and to support the Integrity auditor in the realisation of the Integrity on-site Check wherever they can.

Witness Audits by the IFS Integrity Team

An IFS integrity auditor attends a planned IFS certification assessment to observe the auditor undertaking an assessment to ensure their continued competency in the IFS program.

Integrity witness audits are usually conducted by the IFS based on:

- A complaint
- An IFS internal quality assurance investigation
- When a penalty has been imposed on an IFS auditor.

IFS Portal

SAI Global is obligated to transmit to IFS MANAGEMENT the relevant (detailed) results from IFS audits and certifications, independently of the results of the assessment; this data will be deposited in an online database – the IFS portal – kept by IFS MANAGEMENT.

All relevant IFS assessment documents and supporting records including the report, the action plan and well as the certificate (where one is issued) are being uploaded to the IFS portal by SAI Global. Special users of the IFS portal are notified via e-mail if a certificate has been withdrawn or suspended by SAI Global. Special users of the IFS portal include food safety authorities, as well as certified companies and retailers who have access to the IFS portal and have selected your company as “favourite” in the IFS portal function “My audits”. The notification contains an explanation about the identified non-conformity(ies) which led to the withdrawal or suspension.

IFS Logo rules

The IFS Food Logo shall not be used in any way that may imply that IFS Management GmbH is responsible for the certification decision. **In case of suspension or withdrawal of the IFS Food Certificate, the assessed production site and company have to immediately stop including the IFS Logos on their documents and / or website.** In case of **exclusion** regarding the Assessment scope, the details about exclusions shall be available upon request. The IFS Food Logo can be used, but the following claim shall be written at the bottom: “some products are excluded from the scope of the IFS Food Assessment and exclusion details can be provided upon request”

More information

For more information about IFS Food program, please go visit their official website at www.ifs-certification.com. There you will be able to download specific scheme requirements, guidance documents, and clarification documents.

Data Protection Policy

A copy of the IFS Annex 1 of Framework Agreement (Issue date: May 2018, Version 1) – Information on Data Protection can be found at the following links:

IFS web site: [IFS Annex 1 of Framework Agreement](#)

SAI Global website: [IFS Annex 1 of Framework Agreement](#)

This policy outlines what we, SAI Global, intend to do with personal data relating to you. You will be treated as consenting to the processing of any relevant personal data by us as outlined in this policy. This does not affect any of our obligations or your rights under the Data Protection Act. Personal data relating to you will be processed as follows. We will use the personal data to manage the various schemes administered by us, manage our relationship with you, to promote SAI Global and to provide information to bona fide third parties with an interest in your certification status within the scheme.

We will keep the personal data confidential. We may disclose the personal data as set out below. Where appropriate, we will require anyone to whom the personal data is disclosed to process the personal data only as instructed by us and keep it confidential. The personal data may be disclosed as follows:

- Personal data may be processed by companies owned by or associated with us through agents or contractors for the purpose of carrying out functions on our behalf or in connection with applications in relation to, and participation in, the various schemes administered by us or on our behalf.
- Information relevant to your certification status within the scheme.
- Disclosures may be made to anyone as necessary for the purpose of the prevention or detection of fraud.
- Other disclosures may be made at your written request or with your prior written consent.