

General information regarding elements of the certification process is described below. A degree of flexibility and options in the certification process are available so 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. It describes the procedures for application, audit, certification, complaints and appeals. 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 Approved Suppliers who comply with the Standard and follow the Rules set out in this manual (“the Rules”). Participation is conditional on an initial audit together with routine surveillance and spot checks to ensure continual conformance with the Standard.

Participation must be renewed annually or when the next audit is due. 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. Applicants and Approved Suppliers will be given advance notice in writing of any changes.

The registration, audit and certification of Applicants and Approved Suppliers against the IFS Standards is administered under licence by SAI Global, an ISO /IEC 17076 accredited certification body.

Application

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

Application forms must be completed in full giving details of all locations and types of production. If there is insufficient space on the form any additional information should be given on a separate sheet and attached to the form. The Supplier should determine the product or process types to be evaluated using the standard document for reference and provide this information on the application form.

The application form shall detail the scope of the audit and the duration. IFS has implemented a tool to calculate the minimum audit duration, However a number of factors, play a role in determining the time required for a comprehensive audit. They include:

- the size of the company/ service provider
- the type and size of production/ service process
- the scope of the audit
- the number of personnel employed at the site
- the number of non-conformities found in the previous audit

The audit shall take place when products of the audit scope are being actually processed.

The audit shall preferably be carried out in the language of the company and the certification body shall make every attempt to appoint an auditor whose native language or main working language is the language of the company.

The owner of the business must sign the application form. Alternatively, a senior representative authorised to sign on behalf of the business may sign the form. In signing the form the Applicant subscribes to a number of declarations, which constitute the contract with SAI Global, and in so doing agrees to comply with the Standard(s) and Rules.

SAI Global Certification against the IFS Food Standard can be achieved via various means. Please see the applicable Standard for options regarding multiple site certification; unannounced audits etc.

The application fee (detailed on a separate fee sheet) is payable upon submission of the application form. If the Applicant withdraws his application before the initial audit, the fee may be refundable in part at the discretion of SAI Global. Withdrawals of applications must be made in writing to the SAI Global office.

Audit

The Applicant will be contacted by a member of SAI Global to make an appointment for an audit at a mutually acceptable date. If an Applicant cannot agree a suitable appointment date for the audit the onus is on the Applicant to contact SAI Global when they are ready for the audit. The applicant must contact SAI Global within 6 months of this notice; otherwise their application will be withdrawn. This only applies to new applicants. Once certified, Approved Suppliers must make themselves available for audit promptly (see surveillance).

The Auditor will send the applicant an audit plan. The audit plan includes appropriate details concerning the scope covered and the complexity of the audit. The audit plan shall be sufficiently flexible to respond to any unexpected events which may arise during the site inspection activity within the certification audit. The audit plan takes into consideration a review of the audit report and action plan relating to the previous audit, whatever the date when the previous audit has been performed. 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 audit. The audit plan will be sent to the applicant before the audit, to ensure availability of responsible persons at the day of the audit.

Audits will cover all aspects of the Standard.

The purpose of the audit is to check that Applicants conform to all the requirements of the Standard. The auditor will need to talk to staff and to see records so that he/she can be assured that conformance can be maintained between audits. The person responsible for the day-to-day management must be available to accompany the auditor and answer any questions. The auditor will need to see a representative sample of production. If any of these requirements are not possible on the day of the audit Applicants must contact SAI Global in advance and preferably in writing to explain the situation. If the auditor cannot complete the audit in full on the day of the appointment due to the Applicant not making available all aspects required for audit, the application cannot be progressed and a further fee will be payable for the auditor to return.

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 audit, 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 or certification body shall send the applicants and approved suppliers both the pre-report of the audit and the outline action plan within two weeks of the audit date.

SAI Global are interested in receiving feedback from Applicants and Approved Suppliers on the work of auditors. Following an audit, suppliers may receive a questionnaire asking for their comments.

Certification

The Applicants and Approved Supplier shall forward the corrective action plan to the auditor within 2 weeks of having received the pre-report of the audit and the action plan layout. If this deadline is not respected, the company has to undergo a complete initial or renewal audit

Following an audit, the auditor will submit the report and complete action plan to the SAI Global Office. SAI Global will determine the eligibility of the Applicant for certification as an Approved Supplier.

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

If the auditor reported that an Applicant did not conform to all requirements of the Standard, SAI Global will make a decision as to certification based on the degree of non-conformity. In case of 1 major non-conformity and total score > or = 75% a follow up audit will be required to verify that the major non-conformity have been rectified. If a follow up visit or new audit is

necessary a further fee will be incurred. Where possible, each Applicant will be notified in writing of the decision in relation to their application for certification within a maximum of 8 weeks of the initial audit.

If an application is deferred the reason(s) will be given in writing. This letter will detail the non-conformities, which were identified during the audit. The Applicant must either rectify these non-conformances and a new audit must take place not earlier than 6 weeks or put in writing to SAI Global any queries regarding the type or level of non-conformity identified during the audit (see Complaints).

If an application is refused SAI Global shall, by written notice, advise the Applicant of the reason(s) for the refusal, their right of appeal and provide details of the Appeal Procedure (see Appeals). If an Applicant wishes to be reconsidered following refusal a new application is required.

The final decision relating to certification (whether on appeal or otherwise) rests with the SAI Global Certification Committee whose decision is final and binding.

By joining the scheme the Applicant / Approved Supplier consents to the processing by SAI Global of data and the subsequent release of the audit report to the IFS portal. In all other cases the audit reports will be confidential to SAI Global and the client unless a consent form (available from the SAI Global office or SAI Global auditor) has been signed by the Applicant or Approved Supplier.

Certificates are not transferable and remain the property of SAI Global. Only Approved Suppliers can use SAI Global certificates, and strictly only in relation to the scope of their certification. Approved Suppliers must not make any express or implied claim that certification applies to product, locations or activities that are not included in the scope of their certificate. Only Approved Suppliers can use SAI Global marks or logos and only in accordance with the Conditions of Use. By joining the scheme the Applicant / Approved Supplier consents to the transmission of certification status details including an electronic copy of the Certificate of Conformity (where one is issued) to IFS for inclusion on the IFS portal.

Obligations of Approved Suppliers

Approved Suppliers must, at all times, continue to comply with the Standard and Rules, and with the declarations detailed on the application form. The Standard and Rules are additional to any statutory requirements and nothing in the Standard or Rules shall be deemed as providing exemption from current legislation.

Approved Suppliers must inform SAI Global if their circumstances change during the period of certification, which may affect their conformity to the Standard. These would include changes to ownership and significant changes to facilities or management. SAI Global will assess whether a re-audit is necessary to ensure continued suitability for certification.

Approved Suppliers must notify SAI Global immediately if they are subject to any legal action with regard to legislation concerned with food safety (including use of illegal substances, pesticides, animal welfare, infestation, food poisoning and any other serious contamination issues). Approved suppliers must also notify SAI Global of any product withdrawals or recalls. This information shall be made available within 3 working days. SAI Global will assess whether a re-audit is necessary to ensure continued suitability for certification.

Approved Suppliers must obtain the consent of SAI Global to use certification against the IFS Food Standard as a defence to any legal action or investigation against them. Prior to giving this consent, SAI Global reserves the right to undertake an audit to confirm continued conformance to the Standard and Rules at any time for an additional audit fee which will be paid by the Approved Supplier.

Surveillance

SAI Global will carry out routine surveillance and spot checks to ensure that Approved Suppliers continue to meet the Standard. Surveillance audits will involve a full audit against all the requirements of the Standard. Spot checks can be announced or unannounced to investigate a recall/incident or complaint to confirm maintenance of the requirements of the standard and provide confidence with respect to on-going certification. It is a condition of these rules that Approved Suppliers make themselves available for these audits. Details of costs for surveillance, follow up visit to clear a major non-conformity and spot checks are published on the fees sheet.

Frequency of audit will be as defined by the Standard depending on the result of the audit attained in the previous audit and with due account of the seasonality of any production.

It is not acceptable for Approved Suppliers to delay surveillance audits. The audit must take place within the audit time window associated with the Certificate of Conformity. It is the responsibility of the Approved Supplier to maintain certification.

If not, participation may be suspended. If the Approved Supplier has difficulties in fixing an appointment then the Approved Supplier must contact the SAI Global office to explain the position.

Spot checks may be conducted with or without prior notice. Details of costs for spot checks are published on the fees sheet.

Audit reports from both surveillance and spot checks will be reviewed by SAI Global to ensure that the requirements of the Standard are being maintained. If it is, the Approved Supplier will be sent a formal communication confirming certification, a certificate of conformity and the audit report normally within 6 weeks (target) or 8 weeks (maximum time) of the audit.

If the auditor reports that an Approved Supplier no longer conforms to the Standard, the Approved Supplier will receive on the day hand written details of non-conformities identified during the audit (Major non conformities or KO scored D,).

In case one or several Major Non-conformities or KO's scored with D during the audit, the current IFS certificate shall be suspended in the IFS audit portal by the as soon as possible and a maximum 2 working days after the audit date.

The Approved Supplier must either rectify these non-conformities before a follow up audit or a full new audit can take place or put in writing to SAI Global any queries regarding type or level of non-conformity raised (see complaints).

Renewal of Membership

The period of validity of certification shall be in line with the requirements specified in the applicable Standard. A member of SAI Global staff will normally contact approved suppliers 3 months before the re-audit due date to arrange renewal.

SAI Global reserves the right to amend fees as necessary and will notify Applicants and Approved Suppliers in writing of any amendments to fees.

If SAI Global does not receive a renewal notification within 14 days after the due date then certification will be suspended. The Supplier must return their Certificate of Conformity and must not make any further claims, whether express or implied, that he is certified by SAI Global.

If a suspended supplier does not make contact with the SAI Global office within a further 14 days (28 days after the due date), the sites registration and certification will be revoked. A fresh application will then be needed if the Supplier wishes to be certified against the Standard.

Refusal/Suspension

An Applicant or Approved Producer who has had a conviction for any offence in connection with food production in the past 3 years or in any longer period which corresponds with any sentence imposed by a Court must declare this (in the case of the Applicant, on the Application form and in the case of an Approved Supplier immediately in writing to the SAI Global office). The Applicant or Approved Supplier may be refused/suspended from certification with immediate effect by written notice from SAI Global. Re-application/re-admission will not normally be considered for 3 months from the date of conviction and will be subject to a re-audit.

Suspended Suppliers must return their Certificates of Conformity to SAI Global forthwith and must not make any further claims whether express or implied, that they are certified by SAI Global.

In all cases of refusal/suspension of participation, there is no entitlement to any refund of fees.

Any Applicant/Approved supplier who is refused/suspended from participation has the right of appeal against this decision. SAI Global shall by written notice advise the applicant/approved supplier of the right of appeal and provide details of the Appeal Procedure (see Appeals).

Revocation of Participation

Any Approved Supplier who is in breach of any provisions of the Standard and/or Rules may have their certification against the Standard revoked with immediate effect by written notice from SAI Global. This notice will inform the Approved Supplier of the reasons for revocation and will also provide details of the Appeal Procedure (see Appeals).

An Approved Supplier may voluntarily withdraw from certification against the Standard by notification of such in writing to SAI Global. In all cases of revocation/withdrawal of participation, there is no entitlement to any refund of fees. The supplier must return their Certificate of Conformity and must not make any further claims, whether express or implied, that they are certified by SAI Global.

Approved Suppliers whose certification is revoked must make a new application if they wish to re-gain certification. No new application will normally be considered by SAI Global for a period of at least 3 months following revocation.

An Approved Supplier whose certification has been revoked has the right of appeal against this decision. SAI Global shall by written notice advise the Approved Supplier of the right of appeal and provide details of the Appeal Procedure (see Appeals).

Appeals

If an Applicant or Approved Supplier wishes to appeal against a certification decision (whether in relation to non-conformities noted on reports, or suspension, refusal or revocation of certification) they must write to SAI Global giving reasons why they believe the decision is wrong, and should also provide any relevant supporting evidence. Requests for Appeal may be subject to a non-refundable administration fee. In the event of an unsuccessful appeal SAI Global reserve the right to charge costs of conducting the appeal.

This appeal must be received in the SAI Global office within 7 days of the Applicant/Approved Supplier receiving notification of the certification decision.

SAI Global will usually contact the Applicant/Approved Supplier to clarify the basis for appeal. This may lead to the issue being resolved.

If this does not resolve the issue, SAI Global will appoint the SAI Global Certification Committee or an Appeal Panel which will meet to consider the appeal within 30 days.

The Appeals Panel will be appointed by the SAI Global Certification Committee to consist of 3 appointees who are independent, impartial and competent.

The decision of the Appeal Panel will be sent to the Applicant/Approved Supplier within 30 days and will be final and binding on both the Applicant/Approved Supplier and SAI Global. For the avoidance of doubt, only one appeal will be allowable for each certification decision arising from the same factual circumstances.

Complaints

Where a complaint is made to SAI Global the complainant will be asked to make the complaint in writing.

All complaints whether about Applicants/Approved Suppliers, SAI Global Auditors or SAI Global Administration will be properly investigated including consideration by SAI Global of any representatives, and all necessary action taken.

Confirmation of Participation

Other than releasing the Applicant / Approved Supplier certification status to IFS by uploading final documents into the IFS portal (report, complete action plan and certificate of conformity), SAI Global will treat all information about Applicants and Approved Supplier with strictest confidence, only the Applicant/Approved Supplier through the IFS portal can release information to their clients.

SAI Global will not divulge specific information to any third party, without the Applicants/Approved Suppliers written agreement.

Liability

SAI Global will not be liable for any potential, estimated loss of earnings by Applicants or Approved Suppliers with regard to any provisions of the Standard or Rules or the administration or operation of the Standard or rules by SAI Global.

SAI Global will not be liable in regard of any audit, or the exercise of any of their rights, or powers, or duties under the Standard or Rules.

SAI Global will not be liable for any losses that arise from, including without limitation, any industrial action or the failure of any machine, data processing system, transmission link or any other events outside its reasonable control.

IFS Integrity Program

To protect the integrity of the IFS standards and to provide assurance of the quality of IFS audit 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. (Refer to the IFS Annex 4 for further detail)

Witness Audits /Assessments

SAI Global reserve the right to conduct witness audits /assessments, be this for Accreditation or internal/external monitoring of SAI Global Auditors. The auditor may be accompanied by other personnel for training, assessment or calibration purposes. Witness audits are carried out to a documented procedure; this procedure is available on request. These activities may be:

- Training of new auditors by SAI Global
- Routine SAI Global shadow audit programmes
- Witness audits by Accreditation Bodies
- Witness audits by the IFS Integrity Team:

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

Integrity on-site Checks

Usually are unannounced audit 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.

In some circumstances the integrity on-site check may be announced in which case the IFS will inform your company by email or fax 0-48 hours prior to the date of the on-site check.

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

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

A copy of the IFS Annex 4 of Framework Agreement – Version 3 can be found at the following link:

[IFS Annex 4 of Framework Agreement](#)