IFS
INTERNATIONAL FEATURED STANDARD

WHAT IS IFS Food

In 2002 German HDE (Hauptverband des Deutschen Einzelhandels) retailers developed a common food safety standard called International Food Standard, IFS. In 2003, French retailers and wholesalers from the FCD (Federation des enterprises du Commerce et de la Distribution) entered a collaboration with the IFS Working Group and contributed to the development of the 4th IFS Edition. Since 2005 also Italian trade associations are involved in the joint project. By now the IFS is also highly valued as a food specific quality assurance system, which can be used by all food producing companies. Version 7 is the latest IFS version since 1st of March 2021.

IFS Certification is a valuable asset for food businesses who wish to export their products to Germany and France, as more and more retailers from these countries require an IFS certificate from their suppliers. IFS Regulation specifies a quantified assessment of requirements that have been fulfilled and the evaluation result is expressed in percentage terms. Thus, a supplier's customer can evaluate quantitatively the performance of their supplier.

OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF THE AUDIT

IFS Food (version 7) covers six primary areas of the business, and all are considered key to establishing effective processes that guarantee the safety and quality of the products.
1. **Governance and Commitment** – review of the commitment of senior management to support the sustainability of the food safety culture and quality assurance policy.
2. **Food Safety and Quality Management System** – required to meet legal and food safety requirements as well as customer specifications.
3. **Resource Management** – management of human resources, working conditions, hygiene, and sanitation to ensure product safety.
4. **Operational Processes** – production of safe, quality products according to customer specifications.
5. **Measurements, Analysis and Improvements** – inspections, process validation, and management of complaints and corrective actions.
6. **Food Defense Plan** – protection of the integrity of the company and products produced.

IFS recognizes 10 requirements of the standard as extremely important. These are called 'Knock Outs'.

1. Governance and commitment
2. Monitoring system of each CCP
3. Personal hygiene
4. Raw materials specification
5. Product and recipe compliance
6. Foreign material risk mitigation
7. Traceability
8. Internal audits
9. Procedures of withdrawals and recalls
10. Corrective actions

The IFS standard creates an important opportunity for appraisal and certification in two levels: HIGHER LEVEL and FOUNDATION LEVEL, which helps companies, assess their ability to meet the necessary requirements. FOUNDATION LEVEL requirements are considered to be the same as the minimum requirements that must be met by all companies of the international food industry. HIGHER LEVEL sets higher-level requirements. IFS also includes requirements under the title RECOMMENDATIONS which represent "best practice" in the food industry.

WHY CERTIFY WITH EUROCERT?

EUROCERT is accredited by UKAS (Cert. No.180 - B) so that it may perform IFS audits. An important fact is that IFS audits can only be performed by auditors approved by IFS, and under IFS supervision. Certification Bodies are required to publish their audit reports on the IFS website. IFS validity is 12 months.

CERTIFICATION IN 8 STEPS

1. Application for IFS Certification sent to Eurocert.

2. Decision on date of audit. Note that an important step of the IFS certification process is the conduct of internal audits in order to ascertain the company's compliance with the IFS requirements.

3. HACCP- IFS Manual reviewed in order to be reviewed by auditors.

4. Audit program is sent to the company. The audit length is determined by the size, people and complexity of processes and products of the company.

5. Audit.

6. A preliminary report is sent to the company. Please note that the standard's regulation does not allow the issue of the IFS certificate in case of more than one Major non-compliances.

7. The Action Plan is sent to the Certification body. The Certification Body issues a Final Report and the IFS certificate.

8. The IFS Certificate and the Final report are sent to the company.

The time between the date of the audit and the awarding of certificate is determined as follows:
• 2 weeks to draw up the pre-report of the audit
• 4 weeks for the company to respond to the deviations and non-conformities (i.e. draw up the corrective action plan)
• 2 weeks for the auditor /certification body to review the action plan (all corrections shall be implemented) and upload of the audit report, the corrective action plan and the certificate to the IFS Database.
The timeline is 6 weeks (as a target time) or 8 weeks (as a maximum time) between the date of audit and the upload of the audit report in the IFS Database/issue of the certificate