

Description of the TÜV NORD CERT Certification Procedure for SQF Code, Edition 8.1

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Do you have any questions about this performance description? We will be pleased to help.

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The rules and performance description regarding SQF certification form an integral part of the offer. They are supplementary to the General Conditions of Certification.

The SQF Code as well as other applicable documents and rules are available on the SQFI website (www.sqfi.com) The below specified items are detailed described in the SQF Food Safety Code Edition 8.1 for

- Fundamentals
- Manufacturing
- Manufacturing for Food Packaging
- Storage and Distribution

1 CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

1.1 Audit preparation

If desired, a voluntary pre-assessment audit can be carried out. It is not mandatory, but recommended to provide a “health check” of the client’s implemented SQF system. A pre-assessment audit can assist in identifying gaps in the client’s SQF system so that corrective action can occur before engaging TN CERT for a full certification audit. It can be conducted using internal resources, an SQF consultant, or an SQF auditor.

Before the certification audit begins, the client registers with SQFI through the ReposiTrak registration <https://www.ac.parkcitygroup.com/>. ReposiTrak registration sends an email to the selected Certification Body notifying them that the client has registered and has selected them.

The client and TN CERT shall agree on the audit scope. The scope of the audit shall cover the required level of certification, the food sector categories, and the products listed under the scope of certification for a site. The audit scope shall cover all processes under the control of the client including from raw material receipt to shipment of finished product.

Once the audit scope is agreed between the client and TN CERT, it cannot be changed once the audit has commenced.

1.2 Certification audit

The SQF certification audit consists of two stages:

- I. The desk audit is undertaken to verify that the client’s SQF System documentation meets the requirements of the SQF Code.
- II. The facility audit is conducted on site and determines the effective implementation of the client’s documented SQF System.

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1.2.1 The Desk Audit

For initial certification, an independent desk audit is conducted. The desk audit is conducted by a registered SQF auditor appointed by TN CERT, and ensures:

- i. An appropriately qualified SQF practitioner is designated;
- ii. The food safety plan and the associated Critical Control Point (CCP) determinations, validations and verifications are appropriately documented and endorsed by the SQF practitioner;
- iii. The documented system is relevant to the scope of certification

TN CERT will notify the client of corrections or corrective action, or any aspects of the SQF System that require improvement or adjustment. TN CERT will also verify that all corrections or corrective actions for major and minor non-conformities have been addressed before proceeding with a facility audit.

1.2.2 The Facility Audit

The facility audit is conducted on site by the SQF auditor appointed by TN CERT. It is conducted at a time agreed between the client and TN CERT, when the main processes are operating. The facility audit must include a review of the entire facility, including the inside and outside of the building, regardless of the scope of certification. The facility audit determines if the SQF System is effectively implemented as documented. It establishes and verifies the:

- i. Effectiveness of the SQF System in its entirety;
- ii. Food safety hazards and food quality hazards are effectively identified and controlled.
- iii. Effective interaction between all elements of the SQF System;
- iv. Level of commitment demonstrated by the client to maintaining an effective SQF System ant to meeting their food safety regulatory and costumer requirements and
- v. The exempted products or areas of the site do not pose a food safety risk to the products covered under certification.

1.2.3 Corporate Audits

Where a site is part of a larger corporation and some food safety functions are conducted at a corporate head office (i.e. an office that does not process or handle products), an optional corporate audit of the Code elements managed by the corporate office can be conducted.

Where a corporate audit is conducted, the audit evidence shall be reviewed and all identified corporate non-conformities closed out before the site audits are conducted. Any open non-conformities will be attributed to the site or sites.

The SQF food safety auditor will also audit the application of the corporate functions relative to the site's scope of certification during the audit of each site managed by the corporate office. All mandatory

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and applicable elements of the SQF food safety Code will be audited at each site irrespective of the findings of the corporate audit.

1.2.4 Seasonal Production

Initial certification audits for sites involved in seasonal production (i.e., a period in which the major production activity is conducted over not more than five consecutive months) shall be conducted during the peak operational part of the season. Where sites seek to include products from more than one season within their scope of certification, the site and **TN CERT** shall agree to conduct the initial certification audit during the highest risk and/or highest volume production operation.

1.3 Surveillance Audit

The surveillance audit is conducted when the client attains a “C – complies” rating at a certification audit or recertification audit. The surveillance audit will be conducted within thirty (30) calendar days either side of the six (6) month anniversary of the last day of the previous certification or recertification audit. A new score and rating is issued at the surveillance audit; however, the recertification audit date is not affected.

The surveillance audit is a full SQF System audit. Major or minor non-conformities raised at the surveillance audit shall be closed out as indicated in section 5

1.4 Issue of the certificate

Certification of the SQF System will be awarded to clients that achieve a “C - complies” audit rating or greater with no outstanding non-conformities. The certification decision will be made within forty-five (45) calendar days of the last day of the facility audit. Once SQF certification is granted, the SQFI issues a unique certification number which is specific to that client’s site.

Within ten (10) calendar days of granting certification, TN CERT will provide an electronic and/or hard copy of the client’s certificate to the client. The certificate is valid for 75 days from the anniversary of the initial certification audit date and will be in a form approved by the SQFI.

Details of the client’s certificate will be made available on the SQFI web site for public display as follows:

Client name, country, certificate type and number, accreditation body logo and accreditation number, audit date, date of next audit, date of issue, certification expiry date, food sector category(s), product(s) covered by the certificate

SQF charges Closed Audit Fee¹ of \$75.00 USD for SQFI audits and \$50.00 USD for associated addendum audits each time an audit is completed and closed and/or any addendum audit in the SQF database. This amount is invoiced by TÜV NORD CERT and then passed on to SQF.

All payments are to be received in full by TN CERT without deduction of withholding taxes, Value Added Tax (VAT) or any other indirect taxes in the clients country. Should the client be required by law to withhold tax, VAT or any other indirect taxes on the amounts payable to TN CERT, then such amounts shall be grossed up so that the net amount received by TN CERT shall be equal to the payments prescribed above.

¹ This amount is continuously updated to correspond to the current fees of Food Marketing Institute

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1.5 Re-certification audit

The re-certification audit shall be conducted within thirty (30) calendar days either side of the anniversary of the last day of the initial certification audit.

The requirements for the re-certification audit are the same as those described in 1.2 (certification audit), with the following exceptions:

- i. An independent desk audit is not required as part of a re-certification audit. However, an integrated desk and facility audit will be conducted at each re-certification. The client's documentation will be reviewed as necessary as part of the facility audit.
- ii. If the client fails to permit the re-certification or surveillance audit within the agreed timeframe, TN CERT will immediately suspend the client's certificate.
- iii. If the client receives an "F – fails to comply" rating at the re-certification or surveillance audit, TN CERT will immediately suspend the client's certificate.

If the client fails to close out non-conformities within the agreed timeframe, TN CERT will immediately suspend the sites's certificate.

1.6 Unannounced re-certification audit

Within three (3) certification cycles TN CERT will conduct one (1) unannounced re-certification audit of the client. The unannounced audit will occur in the client's facility within the sixty (60) day re-certification window (i.e., the anniversary date of the initial certification audit +/- thirty (30) days. Currently certified SQF clients will be required to undertake one (1) unannounced within the three (3) year certification cycle.

A site may forgo the three-year certification cycle requirement and voluntarily elect to have annual unannounced re-certification audits. If annual unannounced re-certification audits are conducted by the site then the protocol outlined for the three-year certification cycle audit shall be followed. Sites with annual unannounced re-certification audits shall be recognized on the SQF certificate as an "SQFI select site."

2 TAKEOVER OF CERTIFICATIONS FROM OTHER CERTIFICATION BODIES

A client can change its certification body after one certification cycle and only when there has been closure of all outstanding non-conformities, provided that the certification is not suspended or under threat of suspension or withdrawal.

Clients that require a surveillance audit are permitted to change certification bodies only after the surveillance audit is conducted or by written approval from the SQFI senior technical director.

In general, only certificates from accredited certification bodies can be taken over. Organization with certificates that were issued by non-accredited certification bodies will be treated as new clients. For

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implementation of the takeover, the client presents the last audit report, action plan and the certificate to TN CERT previous to the audit.

3 MANAGEMENT OF DEVIATIONS AND NONCONFORMITIES

All non-conformities and their resolution will be documented by the SQF auditor. Where the SQF auditor finds deviations from the requirements of relevant modules of the SQF Code, the auditor will advise the client of the number, description, and extent of the non-conformities.

Deviations identified during the audit will be accurately described in the audit report and corrective action requests raised which fully describe the clause of the SQF Code and the reason for the non-conformity.

TN CERT will verify that all corrections or corrective actions for major and minor non-conformities detected during the desk audit have been addressed before proceeding with a facility audit.

3.1 Facility Audit Corrective Actions

A minor non-conformity shall be corrected, verified and closed out in the SQF assessment database within thirty (30) calendar days of the completion of the facility audit. Extensions may be granted where there is no immediate threat to product safety and quality, and alternative, temporary methods of control are initiated.

A major non-conformity shall be corrected and appropriate corrective action verified and closed out in the SQF assessment database within fourteen (14) calendar days of the completion of the facility audit.

In circumstances where the corrective action involves structural change or cannot be corrected due to seasonal conditions or installation lead times, this period can be extended provided the corrective action time frame is acceptable to TN CERT and temporary action is taken by the client to mitigate the risk to product safety or quality. However, in such cases, the non-conformity must still be closed out on the SQF assessment database and the auditor will document all details of justification of the extension, how the risk is being controlled, and the agreed completion date.

If the SQF auditor considers that a critical non-conformity exists during a facility audit, the auditor will immediately advise the client and notify TN CERT. A critical non-conformity raised at a certification audit results in an automatic failure of the audit, and the client must re-apply for certification.

4 CERTIFICATE SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL

TÜV NORD CERT is the owner of the SQF certificates and can suspend or withdraw them at any time. Within six (6) month after suspension a further unannounced site visit will be conducted by TN CERT.

When the client's certificate is suspended / withdrawn TN CERT will immediately amend the site details on the SQFI assessment database to a "suspended or withdrawn" status indication the reasons and the date of effect.

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For the duration of suspension, the client shall not represent itself as holding a SQF certificate. A site that has their certificate withdrawn, will not be permitted to apply for certification for twelve (12) month from the certificate was withdrawn by TN CERT. The withdrawn site will be posted on the SQFI website for twelve (12) month.

5 AUDITS ANNOUNCED AT SHORT NOTICE

If the client becomes aware that a claim could be brought in relation to the safety or legality of a product, he must inform TN CERT immediately from its side, TN CERT will instigate suitable steps for assessment of the situation and its impact on the certification and will take suitable action.

If TN CERT becomes aware of incidents that could have an impact on the safety or legality of the product, it is entitled to perform announced and also unannounced audits at any time and, depending on its assessment of the situation and its impact, to withdraw the certificates.

In the case of a product recall, the client shall notify TN CERT in writing at TNCert-Food-Recall@tuev-nord.de and the SQFI in writing at foodsafetycrisis@sqfi.com within twenty-four (24) hours of the event TN CERT will take corresponding steps for assessment of the situation and its impact on the certification and take suitable measures.

TN CERT will notify the SQFI within a further forty-eight (48) hours of any action they intend to take.

6 USE OF LICENSE, CERTIFICATES AND MARKS OF CONFORMITY

The rules of use for the SQF logo are described in the SQF Food Safety Codes, Appendix 3.

TN CERT will approve the site's application of the unique certification number in the space allocated on the quality shield issued to a site before use.

The rules for use of the SQF quality shield are described in the SQF Quality Code, Appendix 5. Misleading use of the SQF quality shield, logo, certificates, marks or incorrect references to the SQF certification shall be dealt with using the criteria outlined in the SQF Code, part A, section 4 and/or the relevant appendix.