

TUV Staff Highlight



Ashley Smejkal is Project Coordinator for TUV USA's Food Division. Prior to working for TUV USA, Ashley held multiple positions in the restaurant industry and served in administrative and marketing positions for a start-up biotechnology company.

What do new GFSI Benchmarking Requirements mean for suppliers?

By Ashley Smejkal and Lori Carlson

With a fresh new look and streamlined benchmarking process, version 7.0 of the GFSI Guidance Document is ready for action. But what does this mean for the food supply chain? And, what changes will most notably improve currently benchmarked schemes?

As the northern star of global food safety management, the newly named *GFSI Benchmarking Requirements* (a.k.a., GFSI Guidance Document) sets forth requirements for scheme owners in establishing and maintaining certification standards and protocols to ensure safe food for consumers everywhere. This includes currently benchmarked scheme owners like the British Retail Consortium (BRC), GLOBALG.A.P., Food Safety Certification System 22000 (FSSC 22000), International Food Standard (IFS), Safe Quality Foods Institute (SQFI), and others as well as new schemes seeking recognition.

In publishing version 7.0, GFSI and its stakeholders worked to meet the challenge of improving food safety management systems to safeguard the food supply chain through requirements, which focus on increased transparency, objectivity, efficiency, and implementation. So as re-benchmarking of familiar schemes gets underway, what can suppliers expect to see in upcoming versions of their favorite food safety standard?

Greater alignment with FSMA

Several additions to Food Safety Management (FSM) requirements of Part III, Scheme Scope and Key Elements are showing greater alignment with regulation of the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). This is demonstrated in requirements for a verification procedure to confirm effectiveness of the food safety system, expanded food defense requirements to include a

threat assessment and prioritization of mitigation measures, and new requirements for a food fraud vulnerability assessment with corresponding controls.

Modified and new requirements related to food defense and food fraud include the development and implementation of food defense and food fraud mitigation plans where these plans shall be covered in the scope of the operation's internal audit program. Additionally, purchasing processes will need to ensure adherence to food fraud mitigation plan requirements.

Enhancements to manufacturing scopes of recognition include requirements for an allergen management plan, which includes controls to prevent cross-contact, and a risk-based environmental monitoring program inclusive of all high-risk and high-care areas. These new requirements place greater focus on preventing cross-contact and cross-contamination from allergens and pathogens, respectively.

Management review requirements now explicitly include review of food safety programs or prerequisite programs (PRP's)—in addition to the HACCP plan—where changes affect food safety.

Increased flexibility for schemes

Flexibility in *GFSI Benchmarking Requirements* format and content are expected to improve usability for scheme owners in developing, maintaining and (re)benchmarking standards. This flexibility is supportive of increased efficiency, cost-savings, auditor capacity building, and expansion of GFSI benchmarked certification. For example, in applying a modular approach, Key Elements for GFSI scope of recognition BI (Farming of Plants) now has modified HACCP, FSM and GAP requirements, which enables scheme owners to develop standards that work with the variability in produce farming operations, regional factors and regulation.

To learn more about updates to *GFSI Benchmarking Requirements*, [click here](#) to download the documents.

About TUV USA, Inc.

TUV USA, Inc. is an ISO accredited certification body offering food safety certification against the BRC, SQF, FSSC 22000, IFS, and GLOBALG.A.P. standards. TUV USA, Inc. has experienced and highly competent auditors in all categories of the BRC Food Safety Standard and SQF Code and additionally certifies against the BRC Global Standards for Packaging and Packaging Materials, Storage and Distribution, Agents and Brokers, and Consumer Products. [Contact us](#) for more information about our food safety services. Click [here](#) to subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

About the Author

Lori Carlson is an independent technical writer, trainer and consultant for the food and beverage industry with a background in food safety management systems, GFSI benchmarked schemes and regulatory compliance.