

Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) are all good places to start in certification to a GFSI-recognized standard scheme. “Having both ISO 9001:2008 and HACCP certification was definitely an advantage when it came to getting our SQF certification,” says Post at G.S. Dunn.

While HACCP is no longer a GFSI-recognized standard scheme (since 2013), there are many overlaps in HACCP requirements with various GFSI-recognized schemes. For example, the SQF Code requires that food quality plans be “developed, effectively implemented, and maintained in accordance

with the HACCP method. Post notes, “we like the extra measure of food safety [in SQF] by ensuring the company does risk analysis for food quality – identifying Critical Control Points and Critical Quality Points.”

ISO 9001

A fair amount of ISO 9001 documentation, requirements, and quality reviews are compliant with SQF. And as mentioned, the FSSC 22000 standard scheme is based in large part on the ISO 22000: Food safety management systems — Requirements for any organization in the food chain.

cGMP

All GFSI-recognized standard schemes require the company to have effective PRPs (prerequisite programs) in place, which can include Current Good Manufacturing Processes (cGMP), enforced by the U.S. FDA.

Choosing an Auditor

The availability, or lack of, auditors in your area is key. If there are no SQF, BRC or FSSC auditors close by, you will have to pay more for their travel. That factor could even play into your company’s decision on which standard scheme to choose.

Depending on your food sector and the type of products you make or distribute (as well as where your facility is located), you’ll want to shop around for the right auditor to fit your business. For example, Quality Assurance International (QAI) claims to be “the only USDA-accredited organic certifying agency able to offer joint certification to the British Retail Consortium (BRC), Safe Quality Food (SQF) and FSSC 22000 global food safety standards, which is required by many retailers.”

This could be where the GFSI-recognized standards field is going next –conformance to more than one GFSI-recognized standard scheme, for maximum effectiveness. Some auditors are now receiving requests to conduct back-to-back audits for two schemes; for example, when developed at the same time, the documentation can be coded for both SQF and BRC with only slight changes.

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Your Phone May Be Smart, But Is It Sanitary?

Smartphones can cause risk in food facilities; precautions need to be taken.

Recent reports from the United Kingdom indicate that one out of six phones tested contained fecal contamination. There are several foodborne illnesses associated with fecal material transfer onto food, including E. coli.

The insanitary condition of our phones becomes particularly concerning when working in food facilities and hospitals. Although we may wash our hands and/or use gloves, touching a contaminated phone post-washing could compromise our hand hygiene and spread disease.

Complicating the issue of keeping your phone clean can be the phone manufacturer’s guidelines for cleaning the screen. In general, the hard plastic components can be cleaned with alcohol, the preferred cleaning ingredient for sanitizing, but manufacturers may warn against the use of alcohol or sanitizing wipes on the screen portion of the phone. Many manufacturers call for the cleaning of screens with a lint free cloth. Yet, this does little to control microbes.

How can you make sure your phone isn’t causing any unnecessary risks?

- Check the manufacturer’s recommendations and follow them to prevent damage to the phone and screen. Use sanitizing wipes on the screen at your own risk if the manufacturer warns against it.
- Some food facilities prohibit cell phone use in their facilities. Comply with those requirements. If cell phones are permitted, consider washing hands after handling phones, especially if the phone has not been recently sanitized.
- Contractors should consider wiping down equipment they bring into a food facility prior to use in a food plant, like flashlights, spatulas, PDA’s and other service and inspection items. Keep in mind that equipment can get contaminated during service due to the handling of rodent traps and surfaces touched, such as drains during pest management inspections.

It is important to remember that your hands are not the only thing that should be decontaminated in a sensitive environment. Consider the link between the equipment you use and the potential for compromising food safety.

Source: McCloud Services, a leader in integrated pest management solutions.



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