PR3: AIBI-CS Overview of the BRCGS Certification Scheme

Any Update to this Document is Posted on the AIB International website.

Introduction

This document provides a guide for applicants and suppliers about how the AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS) evaluates and certifies food companies against the BRC Global Standard for Food Safety, Storage & Distribution, Agents & Brokers, Packaging Materials, Plant Based and Gluten Free Certification Program. It is important that the applicant has a copy of the most current version of the applicable BRCGS Standard as this is the scope and protocol upon which the AIBI-CS Certification scheme is built.

Issue #8 of the BRCGS Food Standard was published in August 2018 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

Issue #4 of the BRCGS Storage and Distribution Standard was published in November 2020 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

Issue #6 of the BRCGS Packaging Materials Standard was published in August 2019 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

Issue #2 of the BRCGS Agents & Brokers Standard was published in August 2017 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

Issue#3 of the BRCGS Gluten Free Certification Program was published in February 2019 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

Issue#1 of the BRCGS Plant Based Standard was published January 2020 and this document follows the protocol laid out in that version.

The AIBI-CS Quality System is designed to meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 (Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services). Many of the documents that are part of this system are provided at various stages of the certification process. Accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065 Standard is carried out by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB).

When conducting an evaluation AIBI-CS may subcontract to AIB International, use independent contractors or full time AIBI-CS employees.

AIB International Certification Services, Inc.

AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS), a wholly owned and legally separate subsidiary of AIB International provides certification services to organizations around the world within the food industry and associated services. The Certification Office of AIB International is located in Manhattan, Kansas.The General Manager, Certification Services provides oversight for AIBI-CS.

AIBI-CS has an Impartiality Governing Board composed of impartial members (who do not work for AIBI-CS) who are stakeholders in the BRCGS Standards. This board meets according to

ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065 requirements and overviews the whole certification scheme.

The BRCGS Standards

BRC Trading Ltd T/A BRC Global Standards (BRCGS) in consultation with the food industry has developed a food safety and quality standard, "Global Standard for Food Safety" recognized by UK, European, North American and Global retailers and brand owners and Benchmarked by the Global Food Safety Initiative.

It is a requirement that you download a free copy or purchase a printed copy of the relevant standard from www.brcgsbookshop.com or otherwise subscribe to www.brcgsparticipate.com.

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The BRCGS also controls the usage of the BRCGS Logo. Information regarding use of the logo and downloads are available at www.brcgs.com.

To progress with the certification program after the initial inquiry stage, the following stages of the certification process will be followed.

First Application Stage

AIBI-CS will forward a copy of the certification application along with other documents that will include:

An Overview of the AIBI-CS Certification Scheme (this document)
The Rules for Certification that must be followed by both parties
Additional information if required

In order to progress further, the certification application should be filled out and returned to the AIBI-CS office.

AIBI-CS will forward a final application letter and other documents that are needed for contract purposes and to allow the evaluation and certification stages to take place. This work will only be carried out when the relevant documents have been filled out and returned as detailed in the quality system. Every effort will be made by AIBI-CS to carry out the evaluation on the date(s) requested by the applicant/supplier. In the case of a re-certification audit, similar documentation will be sent to make sure that the exact scope or any other changes are known in advance.
An evaluation plan for all types of audit will be forwarded to applicant/suppliers in advance of the agreed evaluation/audit date.

Prior to the audit, you will need to download a free pdf or purchase a printed copy of the applicable BRCGS standard and ensure you have implemented its requirements.

Gluten Free Certification Program & Plant Based Standard

Application to BRC Global Standards

All sites must complete the online application form prior to certification. For GFCP this can be found at www.glutenfreecert.com/product/gfcp-application and for Plant Based at https://www.brcgs.com/contact-us/register-your-interest/

Program License Agreement

Upon review of the application, BRC Global Standards will contact the applicant site to enter into a Program License Agreement (PLA). A separate agreement for fees, as determined by BRC Global Standards, may apply according to the number of products that appear on Schedule A. Payment is due on an annual basis. The duration of the PLA can be one year or multi-year.

Schedule A

Sites must complete and submit a Schedule A and/or an equivalent approved BRC Global Standards process. The Schedule A and/or agreed equivalent BRC Global Standards process must capture all the gluten-free products that will be recognized under the GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard and may require updating from time to time.

Selection of an audit option

Audits must be arranged with the certification body for dates and times when gluten-free or plant based production is scheduled. The options and processes available for sites to demonstrate their commitment to the GFCP / Plant Based Global Standard are as follows:

Standalone audit. The focus of a standalone audit is only on the GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard requirements.
Combined audit. The focus of a combined audit is on the GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard requirements in conjunction with any other third-party food safety management system audit.

Unannounced combined audit. If there is no gluten-free or plant based production when the unannounced combined recertification audit takes place, the audit may still be conducted providing the auditor can walk through the process and understand the controls that operate during gluten-free or plant based production. Records from previous gluten-free or plant based production runs shall be made available. In this case, the next GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard audit must be conducted while gluten-free production is taking place. This option (walk through) is not permitted if it is the first GFCP Global Standard audit.

Self-assessment of compliance
The GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard should be read and understood, and a preliminary self-assessment should be conducted by the site against the GFCP or Plant Based Global Standard, using the GFCP or Plant Based self-assessment checklist. Any areas of identified nonconformity should be addressed by the site before ordering an audit. This can be done as part of an internal audit.

Contract Aspects of the Certification Scheme

The signed documents at both the first and final stage of the application procedure form the basis of the contract. The final contract is when the pre-assessment or audit dates are agreed and the audit is carried out. Terms and conditions regarding payment are detailed later in this document.

Pre-assessment Evaluation

A pre-assessment evaluation can be carried out if the applicant is not sure about meeting all the aspects of the certification standard. This involves an audit against the agreed scope and a list detailing possible non-conformances that are found. At this stage, the process stops, allowing the applicant to apply for final certification when any corrections to the non-conformances raised have been made. The applicant must understand that a pre-assessment audit will identify where the site does not meet the requirements of the standard, but advice on how to correct the issues cannot be given by the auditor. The pre-assessment does not involve training or consultancy.

The certification audit should be scheduled no earlier than three months after the pre-assessment. Special cases require authorization from the Certification Manager or General Manager.

Global Standard Food Safety Issue 8 START!

The basic and the intermediate level requirements of the BRC START! program provide recognized stepping stones leading towards eventual certification to the full Standard if required. The levels, however, also provide a recognition of attainment at basic and intermediate levels

which are increasingly recognized by customers as providing assurance about the food safety systems operated at their supply sites.

The START! Standard for Food Safety sets out the requirements for the manufacture of processed foods and the preparation of primary products supplied as retailer-branded products, branded food products and food or ingredients for use by food service companies, catering companies and food manufacturers. The audit and recognition will only apply to products that have been manufactured or prepared at the site where the audit has taken place and will include storage facilities that are under the direct control of the production site management.

The Standard does not apply to food products that do not undergo any process at the site audited or to activities relating to wholesale, importation, distribution or storage outside the direct control of the company.

Food Safety Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are seven key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening meeting
2. Floor Audit/Factory Inspection
3. Traceability challenge/Vertical Audit
4. Document review of the QMS and FSMS, procedures and HACCP
5. Check back of audit trails, verification and further document checks
6. Final evaluation of findings by the auditor in preparation for the closing meeting
7. Closing meeting

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to sign as an acknowledgement of the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 days of the audit to comply with the BRC Standard It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 day deadline.

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the

deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to avoid to accommodate any request for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct and documented before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued.

In some cases, the grade obtained dictates that a revisit to the site is conducted to close out non-conformances; in these cases, an expedited Technical Review will be conducted so arrangements may be made for a CB representative to visit the plant and confirm that the corrective action/root cause analysis is correct and effective. The representative may or may not be the original auditor.

For sites with a number and severity of non-conformances requiring a revisit, an appointment within 28 days is necessary.

Where a critical non-conformance against any clause or major non-conformance against a fundamental clause in the Standard or the number or type of non-conformities exceeds the limits for certification has been identified, the applicant/supplier will not gain immediate certification. A full audit, at least 28 days after the issuance of such a non-conformance is required.

> ***It is extremely important that the applicant/supplier reads the relevant section of the Standard relating to non-conformities and corrective action as it is this protocol that AIBI-CS will follow for all types of non-conformance.***
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> **In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance, the applicant / supplier will be charged according to the price list at the end of this document and also for additional expenses for travel. The AIBI-CS office will clearly document this.**

A certificate can only be issued after all corrective actions have been completed and verified according to the quality system.

The AIBI-CS office will notify the applicant/supplier of the outcome of the decision, typically by e-mail, and will issue a copy of the final report and certificate to them as well as upload the report to the BRCGS Directory.

Voluntary Modules

In the event that the audit against this Standard includes voluntary BRCGS modules or is intended to be combined with other audit Standards, the total audit time will need to be appropriately extended. Details of combined audits shall be specified on the audit report.

The certification body shall be notified in advance of the audit that a particular voluntary module is intended to be added to the scope of the audit. This ensures sufficient additional time can be scheduled and that an auditor with the appropriate qualifications for the additional module is selected.

The site shall ensure that the production programme at the time of the audit covers products for the intended voluntary module where this is applicable.

At the closing meeting, the auditor(s) shall present their findings and discuss all non-conformities that have been identified against the module during the audit. A written summary of the non-conformities discussed at the closing meeting will be documented by the auditor either at the closing meeting or within one working day after completion of the audit.

The decision to award certification for the voluntary module will be determined independently by the certification body management, following a technical review of the audit report and the closing of non-conformities in the appropriate timeframe.

The company will be informed of the certification decision following this review.

Food Safety Certification Status

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in Part III Audit Protocol, 2.7, and in Table 1 of the Standard. This is determined by the grade achieved. Suppliers achieving grade A, B, C or D will have the option to have future audits unannounced. Details of this are given in Part III Audit Protocol, 3, of the Standard.

Every 3 years the applicant/supplier is required to undertake the audit using the Unannounced model. Sites can nominate 10 “non-audit days” between month 8 and 12 of the audit due date in advance. The AIBI-CS office will assist the applicant/supplier through this process. Details of this are given in Position Statement BRCGS079.

Food Safety Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in the ‘rules for certification’, as detailed in Part III Audit Protocol, 2.6, of the Standard.

Storage & Distribution Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are six key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening meeting

2. Management Review and Hazard Risk Assessment Program review

3. Site Inspection

4. Vertical (traceability) and Documentation Audit

5. Final evaluation of findings by the auditor in preparation for the closing meeting

6. Closing meeting

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to agree and sign the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

For initial audits: The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 90 calendar days of the audit to comply with the BRC Standard. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 90 day deadline.

For certificated sites: The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 calendar days of the audit to comply with the BRC Standard It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 day deadline.

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to accommodate any request for further information.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

When necessary, re-visits to review the action taken in response to the non-conformities identified at the audit will be scheduled within the timescales for certification. (28 calendar days for certificates sites, 90 calendar days for initial audits).

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued.

Where a critical non-conformance has been identified against the Standard, the applicant/supplier will not gain certification.

It is extremely important that the applicant/supplier reads the Audit and Certification Process Section III, Part 3.5 of the Standard, as it is this protocol that AIBI-CS will follow for all types of non-conformance.

In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance, the applicant / supplier will be charged according to the price list at the end of this document and also for additional expenses for travel. The AIBI-CS office will clearly document this.

A certificate can only be issued after all corrective actions have been completed and verified according to the quality system.

The AIBI-CS office will notify the applicant/supplier of the outcome of the decision, typically by e-mail, and will issue a copy of the final report and certificate to them as well as upload the report to the BRCGS Directory.

Storage & Distribution Certification Status

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in Part III Section 2.5 of the Standard.

Every 3 years the applicant/supplier is required to undertake the audit using the Unannounced model. Sites can nominate 10 “non-audit days” between month 8 and 12 of the audit due date in advance. The AIBI-CS office will assist the applicant/supplier through this process. Details of this are given in Position Statement BRCGS079.

Storage & Distribution Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in Appendix III of the Standard.

Packaging Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are six key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening meeting
2. Document review (review of documentation, e.g., hazard and risk analysis)
3. Production facility inspection (to review practical implementation of the systems and interview personnel)
4. Review of production facilities inspection (to verify and conduct further documentation checks)

5. Final review of findings by the auditor (preparation for the closing meeting)

6. Closing meeting

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to agree and sign-off on the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 calendar days of the audit (90 calendar days for major nonconformities at initial audits), to comply with the BRCGS Standard. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 calendar day deadline (90 calendar day deadline for major nonconformities at initial audits).

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to accommodate any requests for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

For sites with a number and severity of non-conformances indicating a possible D grade, a site re-visit within 28 calendar days is necessary (90 calendar days for initial audits).

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued.

If a potential grade C has been identified, arrangements may be made for a CB representative to visit the plant and confirm that the corrective action/root cause analysis is correct and effective. The representative may or may not be the original auditor.

Where a critical or major non-conformance has been identified against a statement of intent of a fundamental clause in the Standard, the applicant/supplier will not gain certification. Any other critical non-conformance against the Standard will result in the applicant not gaining certification until the non-conformance has been corrected. A further full audit shall be carried out to verify that appropriate corrective action has taken place and that there is demonstration of compliance.

It is extremely important that the applicant/supplier reads Section III, Part 2, of the Standard, this is the protocol that AIBI-CS will follow for all types of non-conformances.

In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance, the applicant / supplier will be charged according to the price list at the end of this document and also for additional expenses for travel. The AIBI-CS office will clearly document this.

A certificate can only be issued after all corrective actions have been completed and verified according to the quality system.

The AIBI-CS office will notify the applicant/supplier of the outcome of the decision, typically by e-mail, and will issue a copy of the final report and certificate to them as well as upload the report to the BRC Directory.

Packaging Certification Status

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in Section III, of the Standard. This is determined by the grade achieved.

Every 3 years the applicant/supplier is required to undertake the audit using the Unannounced model. Sites can nominate 10 “non-audit days” between month 8 and 12 of the audit due date in advance. The AIBI-CS office will assist the applicant/supplier through this process. Details of this are given in Position Statement BRCGS079.

Packaging Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in the ‘rules for certification’, as detailed in Section III Standard.

Agents & Brokers Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are **six** key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening meeting
2. Document review (review of documentation, e.g., hazard and risk analysis)
3. Traceability exercise (to provide samples for the audit)
4. Final review of findings by the auditor (preparation for the closing meeting)
5. Closing meeting

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to agree and sign-off on the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 calendar days of the audit (90 calendar days for major nonconformities at initial audits), to comply with the BRCGS Standard. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 calendar day deadline (90 calendar day deadline for major nonconformities at initial audits).

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to accommodate any requests for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued.

Where a critical non-conformance has been identified the applicant/supplier will not gain certification. A further full audit shall be carried out to verify that appropriate corrective action has taken place and that there is demonstration of compliance.

> ***It is extremely important that the applicant/supplier reads Section III, Part 2, of the Standard, this is the protocol that AIBI-CS will follow for all types of non-conformances.***
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> **In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance, the applicant / supplier will be charged according to the price list at the end of this document and also for additional expenses for travel. The AIBI-CS office will clearly document this.**

A certificate can only be issued after all corrective actions have been completed and verified according to the quality system.

The AIBI-CS office will notify the applicant/supplier of the outcome of the decision, typically by e-mail, and will issue a copy of the final report and certificate to them as well as upload the report to the BRC Directory.

Agents & Brokers Certification Status

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in Section III, of the Standard. This is determined by the grade achieved.

Agents & Brokers Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in the 'rules for certification', as detailed in Section III of the Standard.

Gluten Free Certification Program Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are seven key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. **Opening meeting** To confirm the scope and process of the audit.
2. **Document review** A review of the documented GFMS.
3. **Production site inspection** To review the practical implementation of the systems, including observation of product changeover procedures and interviews with personnel.
4. **Traceability challenge** Including a review of all relevant records of production (e.g., ingredients intake, production records, finished product checks, and specifications).
5. **Label review** Including a review of a sample of gluten-free product labels to check against specification and legislation.
6. **Final review of findings by the auditor(s)** Preparation for the closing meeting.
7. **Closing meeting** To review audit findings with the site. A draft of the nonconformity report will be left with the site (note that nonconformities are subject to subsequent technical review by the certification body management).

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to sign as an acknowledgement of the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send objective evidence of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 days of the audit to comply with the BRC Standard, which may include updated procedures, records, photographs or invoices for work undertaken, or by the auditor undertaking a further on-site visit, as appropriate. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 day deadline.

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to avoid to

accommodate any request for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

Occasionally, the nature and number of nonconformities make it unlikely that they can be addressed, and fully effective improvements implemented and established, within a 28-day period. Therefore, the re-audit shall not take place any earlier than 28 days from the audit date.

Where this occurs at a certified site, the certification must be immediately withdrawn.

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct and documented before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued. The certificate of recognition, if granted, shall be issued by the certification body within 42 calendar days from the first day of the audit.

Gluten Free Certification Program Status

The frequency of announced audits shall be 12 months. The due date of the subsequent audit shall be calculated from the date of the initial audit.

The subsequent announced audit shall be scheduled to occur within a 28-day time period up to the next audit due date. This allows sufficient time for corrective action to take place in the event of any nonconformities being raised, without jeopardizing continued certification. Certificate expiry dates shall be calculated from the first day of the audit plus 75 days.

Where combined with a GFSI audit, the re-audit due date shall conform to the protocol of the relevant GFSI scheme.

Gluten Free Certification Program Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in the ‘rules for certification’, as detailed in Section III of the Standard.

Plant Based Global Standard Audit and Certification Stage

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are seven key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. **Opening meeting** To confirm the scope and process of the audit.

2. **Document review** A review of the documented PBMS.
3. **Production site inspection** To review the practical implementation of the systems, including observation of product changeover procedures and interviews with personnel.
4. **Traceability challenge** Including a review of all relevant records of production (e.g., ingredients intake, production records, finished product checks, and specifications).
5. **Label review** Including a review of a sample of plant based product labels to check against specification and legislation.
6. **Final review of findings by the auditor(s)** Preparation for the closing meeting.
7. **Closing meeting** To review audit findings with the site. A draft of the nonconformity report will be left with the site (note that nonconformities are subject to subsequent technical review by the certification body management).

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to sign as an acknowledgement of the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send objective evidence of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 28 days of the audit to comply with the BRCGS Standard, which may include updated procedures, records, photographs or invoices for work undertaken, or by the auditor undertaking a further on-site visit, as appropriate. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 28 day deadline.

The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to avoid to accommodate any request for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

Occasionally, the nature and number of nonconformities make it unlikely that they can be addressed, and fully effective improvements implemented and established, within a 28-day period. Therefore, the re-audit shall not take place any earlier than 28 days from the audit date.

Where this occurs at a certified site, the certification must be immediately withdrawn.

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are

correct and documented before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued. The certificate of recognition, if granted, shall be issued by the certification body within 42 calendar days from the first day of the audit.

Plant Based Global Standard Status

The frequency of announced audits shall be 12 months. The due date of the subsequent audit shall be calculated from the date of the initial audit.

The subsequent announced audit shall be scheduled to occur within a 28-day time period up to the next audit due date. This allows sufficient time for corrective action to take place in the event of any nonconformities being raised, without jeopardizing continued certification. Certificate expiry dates shall be calculated from the first day of the audit plus 75 days.

Where combined with a GFSI audit, the re-audit due date shall conform to the protocol of the relevant GFSI scheme.

Plant Based Global Standard Documentation and Supplementary Action

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in the 'rules for certification', as detailed in Section III of the Standard.

BRC Global Standard Directory

The BRCGS maintains a publicly accessible database on their website of all sites that are certified to all of the BRC Global Standards. This can be accessed at the following address www.brcdirectory.com/ and includes each site address, the category that they are certified to and when their certificate expires.

For each audit that you have to the BRC Global Standard, we shall provide these details to the BRCGS and charge you a fee that we pay to them for this. The report will also be supplied to the BRCGS and uploaded to a secure section of the BRC Directory available only to you and those to whom you grant access.

Appeals and Complaints

The deadline is 7 working days after issuance of a BRCGS Certificate. AIBI-CS will formally reply within 10 working days from the day of receipt.

A person independent from the BRCGS certification process will handle and the result of the investigation/outcome will be finalised within 30 working days.

In the event of an unsuccessful appeal, the supplier may be charged for conducting the appeal investigation.

Notification of Recalls Or Any Other Significant Event

Notification of recalls, withdrawals or other significant events (as defined by the relevant BRCGS Standard) must be sent to gfsi@aibinternational.com within the deadlines set out within the relevant Standard. Formal written confirmation shall be kept at affected sites. Actions taken to be in line with BRCGS issued document BRC 042.

Recertification audits

Certified facilities may have on-site audits be they announced or unannounced per the requirements laid out in the relevant Standard.

Certified facilities may also have Blended (also known as Hybrid) audits as described in BRCGS080. These audits may only be conducted announced. Part of the audit may be conducted off-site using Information Communications Technology supplemented with an on-site audit within 28 days. This option is open to any recertification audit of any Standard. 2 separate auditors may be used for the off and on-site audits. The duration will be divided 50/50 between the 2 activities, note that the on-site portion may never be shorter than the off-site. Non-conformances for both the off and on-site audits must be closed in the usual manner as described in the Standard within 28 days of the on-site audit.

Explanation

The Certification Manager is responsible for providing explanation to the documents related to certification process. This includes the BRCGS Standard, BRCGS Guidance documents and AIBI-CS internal documents. The external sources such as the BRCGS and ANAB or internal experts including the CS management team and the administrative staff will be used as needed.

Scheme Certification Marks

Clients who have achieved BRCGS certification against the relevant standard must contact submissions@brcgs.com for further instructions on use of the BRCGS Logo.

Certification Fees

These will be reviewed annually.

Terms of Business

The certification fees detailed and any revisions are effective from 1 January each year.

Subsistence fees (hotel, meals, transportation, etc.) and travel fees, where applicable, are additional to the cost shown above. AIBI-CS will try to minimize these costs by grouping work whenever possible.

Invoices will be raised in pounds Sterling (£) and should be paid in pounds Sterling (£) for audits conducted in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.
Invoices will be raised in US$ and should be paid in US$ for audits conducted in the US.

Invoices will be raised in CA$ and should be paid in CA$ for audits in Canada.
Invoices will be raised in MXN pesos and should be paid in MXN pesos for audits conducted in Mexico.

Payment should be made within 30 days from the date of invoice. Failure to settle invoices in the specified time will be taken into account for ongoing certification and could result in withdrawal or suspension of certification.

Queries

If you require any more information or clarification on any aspect of the certification process please contact:

AIB International
PO Box 3999
1213 Bakers Way
Manhattan, KS, 66502-3999
Tel: 1-785-537-4750
Fax: 1-785-537-0106
Email: gfsi@aibinternational.com

The office is open from 0800 to 1700 CST Monday to Friday. It will be closed on national / public holidays.

Confidentiality

AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS) shall take all reasonable measures to ensure that AIBI-CS employees and agents keep confidential all information that comes to their knowledge as a result of the certification program. AIBI-CS shall ensure that only a subcontractor / external expert and/ or evaluator who have signed a confidentiality agreement and that you, the applicant/supplier have agreed to will be used. Be advised that AIBI-CS will have to show any documentation of the suppliers to the ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation body (ANAB) and BRCGS, if they make a formal request.

Details of your certification shall be displayed on the scheme owner's website as outlined to you in the summary above.