Introduction

This document provides a guide for applicants and suppliers about how AIB International CS evaluates and certifies food companies against FSSC 22000 Food Safety Systems which includes ISO 22000, ISO/TS 22002 – 1 or ISO/TS 22002 – 4 or ISO/ TS 22002-6 and additional requirements based on the decisions of the FSSC 22000 Board of Stakeholders and published by the Foundation on www.fssc22000.com and provide details on specific requirements in addition to PR4 Rules for Certification.

The AIB International CS Quality System is designed to meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1. Many of the documents that are part of this system are provided at various stages of the certification process. AIB International CS has received accreditation from UKAS to provide FSSC certification services, according to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 & provisions within ISO/TS 22003:2013.

In the case there is a change to the accreditation status of AIB International CS, written notification is provided to the Foundation within 3 working days detailing the circumstances leading to this and the action plans authorized to recover accreditation.

When conducting an evaluation AIBI-Certification Services 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 CS is located in Manhattan, Kansas, USA. AIBI-CS’s General Manager 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 however, stakeholders in GFSI schemes including FSSC 22000 food safety systems. The Board meets according to the ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065 requirements and oversees compliance to the whole certification scheme.

FSSC 22000 – Food Safety Systems

FSSC 22000 is a certification scheme for Food Safety Systems based on ISO 22000 - the International Standards Organisation (ISO) Food Safety Management System Standard, Pre requisite programs ISO/TS 22002 - 1 (Prerequisites Programs on food safety for Food manufacture) and/or ISO/TS 22002 - 4 (Prerequisites Programs on food safety for Food Packaging Manufacture) and/or ISO/TS 22002 – 6 (Prerequisites Programs on food safety for Feed and Animal Food Production) and additional requirements based on the decisions of the FSSC 22000 Board of Stakeholders and published by the Foundation on www.fssc22000.com.

FSSC 22000 is a certification program based on HACCP principles; designed to provide international harmonization in the field of food safety for all participants in the food supply chain. These documents combine generally recognized key elements to ensure food safety along the food chain with interactive communication; system management; control of food safety hazards through pre-requisite and HACCP plans; and continual improvement and updating of the management system. The use of the FSSC 22000 system will ensure participants have a Food Safety System.
acceptable worldwide that will demonstrate a company’s commitment to the manufacturing of safe products.

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

**Application Stage**

AIBI-CS will forward a copy of the application form (REC10) with a number of other documents that will include:

- an Overview of the AIBI Certification Scheme (this document)
- the Rules for Certification and Use of the AIBI-CS Logo (PR4) that must be followed by both parties
- additional information if required

In order to progress further, the application form should be completed and returned to the AIBI-CS office. At this stage if you have any questions, please contact the office.

AIBI-CS will forward the Certification Agreement and other documents that are needed for contract purposes and to allow the evaluation and certification stages to take place. Every effort will be made by AIBI-CS to carry out the audit on the date(s) requested by the client. In the case of a surveillance audit, similar documentation will be sent to make sure that the exact scope or any other changes are known in advance. An audit plan for all types of audit will be forwarded to client in advance of the agreed audit date.

**Contract Aspects of the Certification Scheme**

The signed documents (Application and Certification Agreement) form the basis of the contract. Terms and conditions and specific scheme requirements are detailed later in this document.

**Pre-assessment**

A pre-assessment evaluation can be carried out if the applicant is not sure if they will meet all the aspects of the certification standard. A pre-assessment is not mandatory to achieve FSSC certification. This involves an audit against the agreed scope and a report detailing possible non-conformances that are found.

**Audit and Certification Stage**

Once all the final application stage documentation has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale, on the agreed date(s) and in a mutually agreed language. Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. AIBI-CS will operate discretely in the case of emergencies (e.g. fire, major catastrophic event, another on-going audit).

Certification is open to all companies’ food manufacturing or related products or services. Applicants who wish to become certified are required to fill in the appropriate application forms giving full details of all locations and types of operations.
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Requirements

FSSC does not allow the application of multi-site certification for food chain categories C, D & I, as described in ISO/TS 22003 and ISO/IEC 17021-1. Each location requires a separate audit, report and certificate, and will be entered separately on the FSSC database. FSSC does offer exceptions for two main categories of organizations that have multiple locations and want to apply for certification. The two exception categories are:

- Organizations where some functions pertinent to the certification are controlled by a head office separate to the manufacturing location(s). In this case the head office does not receive a standalone certificate. The Head Office audit shall be carried out prior to the site audits and the subsequent audits at the site(s) shall include a confirmation that the requirements set out by the head office are appropriately incorporated into site specific documents and implemented in practice. All individual sites will be audited within a timeframe of 12 months from the audit of the Head Office.

- Organizations where a single manufacturing process is split between different sites that are part of the same legal entity, operate under the same FSMS and are the sole receiver/customer of each other. Storage facilities at another location shall also be included in the same audit provided they meet the requirements set above. The scope statement shall show the audited locations with activities per location. The audit report shall include all relevant requirements at all locations and allow audit findings to be identified as site specific.

For new applicants, the first stage referred to as Stage 1, is conducted to assess the preparedness of the client for the audit. Any areas of concern that could be classified as a nonconformity shall be resolved before the Stage 2 audit. At this stage the following shall be reviewed:

- Identification of PRPs as defined in ISO/TS 22002-1 / ISO/TS 22002-4 / ISO/TS 22002-6 and how appropriate they are to the business
- Processes and methods for identification and assessment of the organizations food safety hazards and subsequent selection and categorization of control measures
- Food safety legislation is in place for relevant sector of the organization
- Food Safety Management System [FSMS] designed to achieve food safety policy
- FSMS implementation program justifies proceeding to the audit (stage 2)
- Validation, verification and improvement programs conform to the requirements of the FSSC 22000 (ISO 22000 + ISO/TS 22002 – 1 or ISO/TS 22002 – 4 or ISO/TS 22002 - 6) system.
- FSMS documents and arrangements are in place to communicate internally and with relevant suppliers, customers and interested parties

Once the client considers their system is in compliance, the next step referred as Stage 2, is scheduled within 6 months of the Stage 1, otherwise a further desk top review will be required. The scope of the Stage 2 is to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the food safety system. The initial certification audit (stage1 and stage2) cannot be performed unannounced.

Clients can combine the Stage 1 and 2, but Stage 2 is only allowed to be conducted when 1) non-conformities from Stage 1 have been properly addressed and implemented and 2) System implementation allow an evaluation of the systematic implementation of the standard’s clauses. When the auditor finds the facility is not prepared for Stage 2, the audit can be stopped and the facility will be held accountable for all charges and will have to schedule dates for a revisit to complete the certification audit.
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The Stage 2 audit will cover all aspects and interactions of ISO 22000, Applicable Prerequisite Programs (Good Manufacturing Practices) and FSSC Additional requirements described in FSSC22000 Part2 and the Decision List of the Board of Stakeholders: Requirements for certification, version 5 May 2019 published by the Foundation on www.fssc22000.com. This audit also includes a review of:

- Monitoring, measuring, reporting and reviewing objectives of the FSMS
- The FSMS and performance with regards legal compliance
- Operational control of processes
- Internal auditing and management review
- Management responsibility for food safety policy

A certificate is granted if all nonconformities are resolved as follows:

- Critical – Certificate is immediately suspended for a maximum period of 6 months. The client shall provide AIBI-CS with objective evidence of investigation into causative factors, exposed risks and proposed CAP within 14 days after the audit. A follow up audit of a minimum one day onsite duration shall be conducted between 6 weeks to 6 months' time frame to verify closure of the Critical NC and effective implementation of the corrective actions. The certificate shall be withdrawn when the Critical is not effectively solved within the 6-month time line. For Certification audits, a full certification audit shall be repeated.

- Majors – Client shall provide objective evidences of the investigation into the causal factors and exposed risks and a proposed corrective action plan within 14 days from the last audit date. The Major NC shall be fully closed out within further 14 days by implementing the agreed corrective action plan. A follow up audit can be conducted to verify implementation of the corrective action and closure of the Major. A desktop review will suffice in case documentary evidences support the closure of the Major. A Critical NC is raised in the case of non-completion of the approved corrective action plan and current certificate suspended.

- Minors – The client shall provide AIBI-CS with objective evidence of the correction, evidence of an investigation into causative factors, exposed risks and a proposed corrective action plan. AIBI-CS approval shall be completed within 3 months from the last audit date. Exceeding the timeframe of 3 months shall result in certificate suspension. Corrective actions shall be completed within 12 months after the audit. Implementation of the corrective action plan shall be reviewed at the latest at the next scheduled on-site audit. A Major NC on management responsibility and allocation of resources is raised in the event of non-completion of the approved action plan at the next scheduled on-site audit.

The required data and documentation, including certificate, will be uploaded in the FSSC22000 database within 28 days after the certification decision is concluded and with a maximum of 4 months after the last day of the audit. Information on the certified status of the client will be displayed on the FSSC22000 website and in the Portal.

Certificates may only be granted or withdrawn by AIBI-CS and will be awarded to clients that conform to the relevant Standard. This award will also be subject to clients complying with certification rules that will be periodically updated and reviewed as necessary. The certificate and reports remain the property of AIBI-CS. Certification is conditional on initial audit, routine surveillance audits and any other situation or audits that verify continual conformance with Scheme requirements and the 3 years cycle shall be respected at all times.
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AIBI-CS may carry out extra partial or total audits at a short notice to investigate complaints, in response to changes within the certified client, or as a follow up on suspended clients. The certification body will describe and make known in advance to the certified client the conditions under which the short notice audits are to be conducted. The cost of these additional audits shall be covered in full by the client. Additional care will be exercised in the selection and assignment of the audit team.

Transition audits are allowed from Dutch HACCP, ISO22000 and GFSI recognised schemes with equivalent scopes. For FSSC22000-Quality, transition audits are allowed for clients holding a valid ISO22000, FSSC22000 and a valid ISO9001 certificate. Transition audits consist the start of a new certification cycle and as such a stage 2 audit is required, where conduct of a stage 1 audit is at the discretion of AIBI-CS. The FSSC2200 or FSSC22000-Quality certificate issued will have a validity of 3 years.

Certification Status

Certification is valid for 3 years after the date of the initial certification decision; the 3 years certification cycle shall always be respected. In the intermediate period, surveillance audits are carried out. Surveillance audits will be conducted annually. Each surveillance audit will cover all scheme requirements, ISO 22000, relevant PRP documents and FSSC 22000 plus use of marks and references to certification. At each audit, all groups of products covered by the scope of certification need to be observed by the auditor. A plan will be drawn up confirming all areas will be covered during each surveillance audit. Surveillance audits will also include assessment of:

- Internal audits and management review
- Actions taken on non-conformances raised at the previous audit
- Treatment of complaints
- Effectiveness of the FSMS with regard to achieving the Food Safety Policy
- Progress of planned activities aimed at continual improvement
- Continuing operational control and implementation of PRPs and HACCP
- Review of any changes
- Use of marks and/or any other reference to certification

Maintaining certification is dependent on successful annual surveillance audits and on a full recertification audit prior to the end of the 3-year’s period to ensure certificate is granted prior to the expiry date of the current one. Surveillance activities include at least one unannounced audit in the 3-year’s certification cycle. The certified client can voluntarily choose to replace all surveillance audits by unannounced annual surveillance audits. Where there are legitimate business reasons, blackout days may be agreed in advance to avoid periods of extreme inconvenience during which the client would find it difficult to participate fully and/or there is no production.

AIBI-CS sets the date of the unannounced audit typically between 8-12 months after the previous audit, but respecting recertification planning. The consequence of this may be that the audit is not conducted annually. The site shall not be notified in advance by AIBI-CS, of the date of the unannounced audit. AIBI-CS decides which of the scheduled surveillance audits shall be chosen for the unannounced audit. In the event that the certified client refuses to participate in the unannounced audit, the certificate shall be suspended immediately, and AIBI-CS shall withdraw the certificate, if the unannounced audit is not conducted within a six-month timeframe. If access is denied to the auditor the client will be liable for all costs. Head offices controlling certain functions...
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pertinent to certification are not audited during the unannounced audit. Where head office activities are part of the site audit, they will be unannounced. Secondary sites and off-site storage, warehousing and distribution facilities will be audited during the unannounced audit. The unannounced audit takes place during normal operational working hours including night shifts when required. If not all Scheme requirements can be audited, an announced follow up audit shall be scheduled within 4 weeks.

The purpose of the recertification audit is to confirm the continued conformity and effectiveness of the food safety system as a whole. The fulfilment of all requirements is evaluated. The audit also includes a review of the system over the whole period of certification, including previous surveillance audit reports. AIBI-CS determines if another 3-year certification can be awarded on the basis of the recertification audit, the review of the system over the whole period and complaints received from users of the certification. If there have been significant changes in the system, a new Stage 1 may be required. The certified organization can voluntary choose to conduct unannounced the recertification audit.

Certificate suspension, withdrawal or scope reduction

The following three (3) criteria apply:
a) AIBI-CS shall suspend a certification when there is evidence that their client is either unable or unwilling to establish and maintain conformity with Scheme requirements within the time frames applicable to the clearance of major nonconformities (14 days after the last audit day to submit a corrective action plan including root cause analysis and additional 14 days to provide objective evidences for the closure of Major by the implementation of the corrective action).
b) AIBI-CS shall withdraw a certification when there is evidence that their client is either unable or unwilling to establish and maintain conformity with Scheme requirements, within the timeframes applicable to the clearance of critical nonconformities (resolution of the Critical within 6 months).
c) When AIBI-CS has evidence that their client holds a certificate whose scope exceeds their capability or capacity to meet, the certification scope will be reduced accordingly. Exclusions from scope of certification are not allowed when those activities, processes, products or services can have an influence on the food safety of the end products included in scope.

In case of withdrawal or suspension, the organizations’ management system certification is invalid. AIBI-CS shall:
a) Immediately change the status of the certified organization in the FSSC 22000 database and its own Register of Certified Organizations and shall take any other measures it deems appropriate.
b) Inform the organization in writing of the withdrawal or suspension decision within three (3) days after the last day of the audit or any other intervention and confirm the decision.
c) Ensure the organization takes steps to inform clients accordingly and to also include advertising and product labelling of applicable.

In case of scope reduction, the organizations’ management system certification is invalid beyond the revised certification scope statement. AIBI-CS shall:
a) Immediately change the scope of the certified organization in the FSSC 22000 database and its own Register of Certified Organizations and shall take any other measures it deems appropriate.
b) Inform the organization in writing of the scope change within three (3) days after the last day of the audit or any other intervention and confirm the decision.
c) Ensure the organization takes steps to inform clients accordingly to include advertising and product labelling.

In the event that the organization is either unable or unwilling to inform their clients themselves, AIBI-CS shall take appropriate steps to protect the integrity of its own Food Safety Management System certification service by using direct mail or advertising for example.

Whenever there is a change to the certification status of an organization certified by AIBI-CS and included in the FSSC Register of Certified Organizations, AIBI-CS will inform the Foundation within 3 working days for any certificate suspension or withdrawal or restoration of a suspended or withdrawn certificate.

**Documentation and Supplementary Action**

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of six years by the Client (applicant/supplier) and AIBI-CS.

**Appeals and Complaints**

AIBI-CS will formally reply within 10 working days from the day of receipt. A person independent from the certification decision will handle and the result of the investigation/outcome will be finalised within 30 working days. In the event of an unsuccessful result, the supplier will be charged for conducting the investigation.

**Changes in the Certification Scheme**

New information or changes with regards to the requirements in the FSSC 22000 scheme will be communicated by AIBI-CS to those parties involved, such as certificate holders and auditors (auditors and experts), within a period of one month from publication.

**Exceptions to Confidentiality Requirements**

Clients are aware that the certification rules established by the Foundation oblige AIBI-CS to provide the Foundation itself with information concerning the company, the certification process and the certification status, and that this is an exception to the confidentiality clause described by AIBI-CS in document PR4 Rules for Certification and Use AIBI-CS Logos. Moreover, at the request of food safety authorities, information related to the certification and auditing process will be shared.

Therefore, the client irrevocability authorizes AIBI-CS to communicate the results of the audits and any consequent action carried out according to FSSC 22000 to the Foundation, including the audit summary report, and the list of non-conformities and observations. This data will be inserted in the Foundation’s on-line data base.

In particular it is recognized and clearly understood that the Foundation’s on-line data base provides public access to the following basic details of a supplier’s FSSC 22000 Certification status:

- name and location of the certified organization
- scope of the certification
- Identification number of the certificate
- date of the initial certification (Stage 2)
- expiry date of the certificate
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- in case of suspension or withdrawal; the date of suspension or withdrawal.

**Serious Events**
The client shall inform AIBI-CS about serious events that impact food safety and/or the integrity of the certification and the organization's entry in the FSSC 22000 Register of Certified organizations.
The client shall report serious events to AIBI-CS immediately and these include at a minimum:
- legal proceedings, prosecutions and the outcomes of these related to food safety or legality,
- public food safety events (such as e.g. public recalls, calamities, etc.)
- extraordinary events which pose major threats to food safety or certification integrity such as war, strike, riot, political instability, geopolitical tension, terrorism, crime, pandemic, flood, earthquake, malicious computer hacking, other natural or man-made disasters.
AIBI-CS in turn will take appropriate steps to assess the situation and will take any appropriate action including additional verification activities. These activities may have implications for the certified status of the organization.

**Product Recall**
Clients shall notify AIBI-CS thru e-mail (gfsi@aibonline.org) immediately and no more than 3 business days if they become aware of legal proceedings with respect to product safety or legality, in the event of a product withdrawal or recall (Class I, II, or III) or actions related to product safety or legality including, but not limited to:
- Boil water advisory
- Receipt of a raw material that is under recall (a reportable food under Reportable Food Registry.)
- Major threats to business continuity such as an earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, force majeure that would require implementation of the Crisis Management Program related to quarantining products, equipment, production areas, or product storage areas. In this case, notification as soon as possible is required.

Formal written confirmation shall be kept at affected sites.

AIBI-CS will assess the situation and the implications for the certification, including further investigation, conduct an un-scheduled audit or Certificate withdrawal.

**Scheme Certification Marks**
Clients must comply with the certification scheme relating to the use of their marks of conformity and on information related to the product. Clients certified to the FSSC Scheme must follow the requirements detailed in FSSC22000 Parts 2 & 3: Requirements for certification and certification process, version 5 May 2019.

**FSSC 22000 Fee Payment**
AIBI-CS will collect, on behalf of the Foundation, the Administration Fee established by the Foundation itself. The fee is due irrespective of certification status. At the date of issue of this document, the Foundation’s Administration Fee is 150 € per year.
queries

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

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