

# PR3F: Overview of the AIBI-CS Certification Rules for the PPC 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 companies against the Pandemic Prepared Certification Standard. This includes either the Food and Beverage Supply Chain Standard or the Corporate Office version of the Standard. It is important that the applicant has a copy of the most current version of the applicable Pandemic Prepared Certification Standards as this is the scope and protocol upon which the AIBI-CS Certification scheme is built.

Edition#1 of the Pandemic Prepared Certification Standard was published July 2020. The Corporate Office edition was also published in March 2021. This document follows the requirements laid out in those documents and the associated protocol.

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 PPC Standards. This board meets according to ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065 requirements and overviews the whole certification scheme.

## The PPC Standard

The AIB International Pandemic Prepared Certification was developed as a proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the overall impact it has had on the food and related industries. This impact has included supply chain disruptions, operating challenges, introduction of new protocols to protect the workforce, and a need to re-evaluate the efficacy of established Prerequisite Programs designed to protect food safety. Global companies were interviewed regarding their challenges and how they were negotiating through managing the risks. Food safety agencies from around the world and health agencies including CDC, WHO, and OSHA were sourced for published information regarding maintaining workforce health and food safety. The information

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gathered from all sources was collated, consolidated and supplemented with our expertise and industry knowledge in managing food safety systems to create this standard.

## **First Application Stage**

AIBI-CS will forward a copy of the certification application (REC10) 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 (PR4)
- Whether the audit will be conducted on-site or virtually (included in REC10)
- Confirmation that the remote audit risk assessment has been completed (REC86)
- 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 (REC78) 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 purchase a copy of the PPC standard and ensure you have implemented its requirements.

## **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/does not meet requirements 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.

## **Audit and Certification Stage**

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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). This can be either on-site or virtual depending on what has been agreed between AIBI-CS and the client in the application stage. Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are nine key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening Meeting
2. Review of Crisis Management Plan
3. Review of Supply Chain Management
4. Review of Intermittent Operations Planning
5. Review of Health Mitigation Measures
6. Review of Prerequisite Programs
7. Site Tour and Interviews
8. Notes Preparation
9. 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/does not meet findings 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/does not meet findings raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier shall send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 30 calendar days of the audit to comply with the PPC Standard. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 30-calendar 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/does not meet 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.

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

***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/does not meet findings.***

**In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance/does not meet finding, 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 required 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.

## **Certification Status**

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in section 12 of the audit protocol.

## **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 section 12 of the audit protocol.

## **Appeals and Complaints**

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

A person independent from the PPC 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 Significant Event**

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Notification of significant events (as defined by 12.2 in the PPC protocol) must be sent to certification@aibinternational.com within the deadlines set out within the relevant Standard. Formal written confirmation shall be kept at affected sites. Failure to inform AIBI-CS of such an event may result in suspension of the certificate.

## Suspension of Certification

If your site’s certificate is suspended, AIBI-CS immediately amends the site details on the assessment database to “suspended” status, indicating the reason for the suspension and the effective date. AIBI-CS also:

- informs your site in writing of the reasons for the action taken and the effective date. Acknowledgment of receipt of the suspension notification is required; and

The following action is required, dependent on the reason for suspension:

If	Then
i. Your site does not permit the re certification or surveillance audit to occur within the audit window	The AIBI-CS requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a plan detailing the justification for the delay and the timetable for the rescheduled audit (must be no more than thirty (30) days from the audit window). The AIBI-CS conducts an announced re-certification or surveillance audit (as applicable) within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan. If your site successfully completes the PPC audit the AIBI-CS reinstates your site status on the assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.
ii. Your site does not take corrective action within the timeframe specified	The AIBI-CS requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken to resolve the outstanding non-conformances. The AIBI-CS verifies that the corrective action plan has been implemented through an on-site visit within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan. When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the AIBI-CS reinstates your site status and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.
iv. Your site receives a number of ‘does not meet’ findings indicate you will score below the required % to maintain certification.	The AIBI-CS requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken to resolve the outstanding non-conformances. The AIBI-CS verifies that the corrective actions have been implemented within sixty (60) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan. When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the AIBI-CS reinstates your site status on the assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.

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<p>v. Your site does not maintain the requirements of the PPC Certification Standard including failure to notify AIBI-CS of a pandemic outbreak or a failure to demonstrate the ability to manage or be prepared for a pandemic.</p>	<p>The AIBI-CS requests that within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice of the suspension you provide a detailed plan outlining the corrective actions to be taken regarding the failure to maintain the PPC Standard</p> <p>The AIBI-CS verifies the corrective actions have been implemented within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving your corrective action plan.</p> <p>When the corrective action plan has been successfully implemented, the AIBI-CS re-instates your site status on the assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p> <p>If your site’s PPC certificate is suspended, your site cannot represent itself as holding an PPC certificate for the duration of the suspension or use the PPC certified mark. Appeals regarding decisions on the suspension and/or withdrawal of your PPC certification by AIBI-CS shall not delay the decision to suspend or withdraw the certification.</p>
<p>vi. Your site fails to pay for the AIBI-CS services as agreed</p>	<p>The site completes payment for the services rendered. AIBI-CS reinstates your site status on the assessment database and provides you with written notice that your certificate is no longer suspended.</p>

## Re-certification audits

Certified facilities may have on-site or virtual audits per the requirements laid out in the PPC Standard.

## Explanation

The Certification Manager is responsible for providing explanation to the documents related to certification process. This includes the PPC Standard, PPC Guidance documents and AIBI-CS internal documents. The external sources such as 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 PPC certification must contact [ppc@aibinternational.com](mailto:ppc@aibinternational.com) for further instructions on use of the PPC Logo.

## Certification Fees

These will be reviewed periodically.

## Terms of Business

The certification fees detailed and any revisions are effective following periodic reviews.

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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 Certification Services  
PO Box 3999  
1213 Bakers Way  
Manhattan, KS, 66502-3999  
Tel: 1-785-537-4750  
Fax: 1-785-537-0106  
Email: certification@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) if they make a formal request.

Details of your certification may be displayed on the AIB International website as outlined to you in the summary above.

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