



AUDIT INFORMATION & EXPECTATION

IFS – ALL STANDARDS

NUMBER: F-2123

ISSUE DATE: 01/09/20218

REVISION NO: 8

REVISION DATE: 17/11/2025

CONTENTS

1. GENERAL	3
1.1 Audit Options	3
1.3 Registration Process	3
1.4 Certification Scope	4
1.5 Certificate and Certification Cycle	5
1.6 IFS Scoring System	6
1.7 Scoring and issue of certificate	7
1.8 Certification Process	8
1.9 Combined audit with BRCGS or another Standard with IFS	9
1.10 Transfer of certification	9
1.11 Maintaining Certification	9
1.12 Technical Review and Certification Decision	10
2. APPLICANT'S OBLIGATIONS	10
3. QMSCERT'S OBLIGATIONS	12
4. USE OF IFS LOGO AND Q-CERT IFS LOGO	13
5. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	14
6. IFS INTEGRITY ON-SITE CHECKS	14



1. **GENERAL**

The present certification regulation is about:

IFS Scheme – All standards, as they apply in their current version.

1.1 Audit Options

- Announced audit program (with mandatory unannounced audit every 3 years): The audit date is agreed with the certification body in advance of the audit, and all requirements of the Standard are audited within the audit visit. All sites certificated to a GFSI Benchmarked Standard for IFS Food, Logistics, or PACsecure using an announced audit program are affected by the GFSI rule for mandatory unannounced audit every three years. Broker and HPC Standards are not affected by this rule.
- Unannounced audit program (voluntary): Every year, the audit is conducted Unannounced. The actual date of the unannounced audit will not be communicated to the site to ensure the unannounced character of the Assessment. The audit shall be performed on consecutive days.

1.2 Type of IFS Audits

- IFS Audit (full on-site): An IFS Food Audit shall always be performed on-site and during consecutive working days, for both announced and unannounced audit options.
- IFS Split Audit: Under exceptional circumstances (e.g., due to a widely acknowledged crisis) and when a full on-site audit is hardly possible, the company may agree with the certification body to perform an IFS Split Audit. The on-site part of this audit shall be performed first, followed by a remote part using ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).

1.3 Registration Process

The applicant:

- Must submit to QMSCERT the respective application, including all the relevant information. The application form can be found at the QMSCERT web link: <http://www.qmscert.com/en/certification-procedures/>.
- Upon registration, it is committed to continuously complying with the certification requirements and informing QMSCERT of any changes to its data, as well as being informed of payments of the applicable fees determined by IFS and by QMSCERT
- The contract with QMSCERT includes:
 - ✓ Sign the F-2002 QMSCERT's Certification Contract.
 - ✓ Acceptance of the IFS Standard and Guidelines
 - ✓ Acceptance of the IFS Framework Agreement



1.4 Certification Scope

The scope of certification covers:

- IFS Food**: *Standard for assessing product and process compliance in relation to food safety and quality.*

IFS Food shall be used when a product is processed or where there is a risk of product contamination coming from primary packaging.
- IFS Logistics**: *Standard for auditing logistical services in relation to product quality and safety.*

IFS Logistics is a Standard for auditing companies whose activities are logistics-oriented for food and non-food products, such as transport, storage, loading/unloading, etc. It applies to all types of transport: delivery by road, rail, ship, or plane; frozen/refrigerated products or ambient stable products (different states of matter: liquid, solid, or gas). This Standard also applies to freezing and thawing service providers' simple ripening processes of fruit, as well as for logistics companies using service providers for their transport and/or storage activities.
- IFS Broker**: *Standard for auditing Trade Agencies', Importers', and Brokers' service compliance in relation to product quality and safety.*

IFS Broker is a Standard for auditing / assessing services compliance of companies/persons who carry out trading activities related to food, household, and personal care products and/or packaging materials.
- IFS ESG Compliance Check**: is a voluntary tool that auditing companies can use to become familiar with sustainability requirements. The IFS ESG Compliance Check helps to record involvement in Environmental, Social, and Governance issues in small and mid-sized companies, thus guiding businesses into the next phase of their growth. The criteria of the IFS ESG Compliance Check can be assessed as an extra to annual IFS Certification audits and shall be performed onsite. Companies that are not IFS-certified can also benefit from this new program. The optional additional modules relate to specific sustainability impact areas that might be relevant for the auditing companies and their sustainability scope. The **IFS Carbon Footprint module** is available and can optionally be requested in combination with the IFS ESG Compliance Check.



1.5 Certificate and Certification Cycle

Certificates will be issued to the audited site that meets the requirements of the Standards and in accordance with the requirements of the IFS Certification protocol. The certificate remains the property of QMSCERT and is issued to the client, complying with the Certification Terms / Contract.

The validity of the IFS Certificate remains the same each year and is determined by the date of the initial Assessment.

If the recertification audit is not scheduled in due time, or if the steps of the certification process were not completed in time, a break in certification will occur, and a new initial certification cycle will be initiated.

For an announced Assessment, the validity of the IFS Food Certificate is defined as follows:

- it starts from the date of issue of the certificate,
- it ends on the last day of the initial Assessment date + eight (8) weeks – 1 day + 1 year.

The time window to schedule the announced recertification Assessment is calculated as follows: [– eight (8) weeks; + two (2) weeks] from the last day of the initial Assessment. Companies are responsible for maintaining their certification. The time window to schedule the recertification of an unannounced Assessment is calculated as follows: [– 16 weeks before Assessment due date; + two (2) weeks after Assessment due date].

A site that has undergone an unannounced audit will obtain the IFS Star Status, which will be visible on the IFS Database and IFS Certificate.

1.6 IFS Scoring System

Result	Explanation	Points
A	Full compliance.	20 points
B (deviation)	Almost full compliance.	15 points
C (deviation)	Part of the requirement is not implemented.	5 points
D (deviation)	The requirement is not implemented.	-20 points
Major (non-conformity)	A Major non-conformity can be issued to any regular requirement (which is not defined as a KO requirement). Reasons for Major rating are: • There is a substantial failure to meet the requirements of the standard, which includes but is not limited to food safety and/or the legal requirements of the production and/or destination countries. • A process is out of control which might have an impact on food safety.	Major non-conformity will subtract 15% of the possible total amount; the certificate cannot be issued.
KO requirement scored with a D (non-conformity)	The requirement is not implemented.	KO non-conformity will subtract 50% of the possible total amount; the certificate cannot be issued.
N/A Not applicable	The requirement is not applicable. N/A can apply to any requirement, except for KO requirements numbers 1, 3 and 5 to 10. The auditor shall provide an explanation in the report.	Not included in the calculation of the total score.



1.7 Scoring and issue of certificate

Audit result	Status	Company action	Report form	Certificate
Total score is $\geq 95\%$	Passed at IFS Food Higher Level following the receipt of the action plan	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the action plan with the list of findings.	Report including action plan provides status	Yes, certificate at higher level, 12-month validity. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are implemented.
Total score is $\geq 75\%$ and $< 95\%$	Passed at IFS Food Foundation Level after receipt of the action plan	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the action plan with the list of findings.	Report including action plan provides status	Yes, certificate at foundation level, 12-month validity. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are implemented.
Maximum one Major and total score is $\geq 75\%$	Not passed unless further actions taken and validated after follow-up audit	Send completed action plan within four (4) weeks of receiving the action plan with the list of findings. Follow-up audit maximum six (6) months after the audit date.	Report including action plan provides status	Certificate at foundation level, if the Major non-conformity is effectively solved during the follow-up audit. The certificate shall only be issued when the corrections are implemented.
> one Major and/or total score is $< 75\%$	Not passed	Actions and new initial audit to be agreed upon	Report including action plan provides status	No
At least one KO requirement scored with D	Not passed	Actions and new initial audit to be agreed upon	Report including action plan provides status	No



1.8 Certification Process

- ✓ Select an audit option {announced or unannounced}
- ✓ Self-assessment of compliance with the IFS Standard. The Standard(s) should be read and understood, and a preliminary self-assessment should be conducted by the company against the Standard(s) to prepare for the audit.
- ✓ Selection of QMSCERT as certification body in the IFS Database
- ✓ Company and QMSCERT contractual arrangements: A contract (F-2002) shall exist between the company and the QMSCERT in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, and the IFS Standards
- ✓ Completed application form sent to QMSCERT by the company.
- ✓ Application review by QMSCERT to confirm the scope of audit, any exclusion from the scope, the IFS Product Scopes and Technology scopes, and define the audit duration.
- ✓ Auditor selection.
- ✓ Scheduled audit dates. The activities to be certified must be in operation at the time of the audit. The audit duration required will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form and by discussion in line with the guidance contained in the individual IFS Standards.
- ✓ The minimum audit duration for IFS Food Standard, as provided by the calculation tool, will always be two days (16 hours). For IFS Logistic and IFS PAC secure Standards, the minimum audit time duration is set to 1 day (8 hours), and for IFS Broker Standard, 6 hours.

Additionally:

Assessments will usually be conducted in local languages. In cases where the auditor's language is not the same as the language spoken by the company or the company's system, an approved translator will be used. Extra time for translation will be considered; usually, a minimum of 20% additional time will be added to the calculated audit time.

Assessments consist of eight elements:

- Opening meeting
- Production facility inspection (not facility inspection for IFS Broker) - At least 50% of the total IFS Audit duration shall be allocated to the on-site evaluation (within the production areas of the production site).
- Document review
- Traceability challenge
- Final review of findings by the auditor in preparation for the closing meeting.
- Closing meeting.



It is expected that at the opening and closing meetings, those attending on behalf of the company will be managers who have the appropriate authority to ensure that corrective action can be progressed, if nonconformities are found.

Where a company has several manufacturing sites (food/packaging), all of which are operating under a centralized system managed at the Head Office (HO), then the procedure for multisite with HO is activated.

The auditor shall issue the action plan (with the list of findings) to the company at the latest within two (2) weeks from the last audit day. A provisional score and report can be available upon request. A signed copy of the non-conformity summary sheet will be requested by the company.

1.9 Combined audit with BRCGS or another Standard with IFS

It is possible to combine an IFS audit with a BRCGS audit / or another Standard. In this case:

- The requirements of both standards are simultaneously audited in one audit.
- The audit is carried out under the same conditions for both standards.
- Additional audit time added to the audit duration.

1.10 Transfer of certification

The client has the right to request a change of CB during the period of validity of its certificate. QMSCERT is obliged to provide all the necessary documents for the transfer of certification directly to the new CB, and vice versa.

In case a company wants to transfer its IFS certification to QMSCERT:

- QMSCERT is obligated to review the transferred certification after the client has sent the signed application form and contract.
- Client accesses the IFS Database and chooses QMSCERT as the Certification Body.
- QMSCERT gains access to company and site details in the IFS Database.
- If QMSCERT decides not to accept the certification, a new certification audit needs to be conducted.
- If the certification is accepted, it must still be ensured that QMSCERT continues to monitor the implementation of the corrective actions or the change of the CB.
- The regulations regarding unannounced audits must be considered by QMSCERT.
- If there are Major and/or KO non-conformity(ies), that have not been corrected at the time of the change of CB, a new certification audit needs to be conducted.

1.11 Maintaining Certification

It is the client's responsibility to maintain certification, except in the case of unannounced audits. The issue of the certificate assures customers that QMSCERT has assessed the certified site and is satisfied that the requirements of the IFS Standard(s) have been met through the audit and any corrective actions implemented.



In addition, processes are in place to ensure that the Standard is maintained for at least the duration of the certificate. The audit must be conducted during the audit window indicated on the certificate. If the audit is performed before or after the audit window, the certification cycle will be changed.

1.12 *Technical Review and Certification Decision*

The audit report will be submitted by the auditor in full to the QMSCERT Certification Manager for review. The company may be contacted for clarification if needed. The decision to award certification will be taken independently of the auditor following a review of the assessment report and any documented action plans provided or revisit corrective action verification provided, independently by QMSCERT Certifications Managers. QMSCERT is required to make a certification decision and upload the Audit Report, Action Plan, and Certificate to the IFS Database between six (6) and eight (8) weeks from the last audit day.

2. APPLICANT'S OBLIGATIONS

Corrective Actions

The client shall forward the completed action plan, including evidence of implementation of corrections, to the QMSCERT's email postaudit@qmscert.com/auditor within a maximum of four (4) weeks of having received the action plan.

The corrective action section should be completed in English. The client must:

- Link the evidence attached to the non-conformity number or clause
- Include a description of each corrective action that has been taken
- Include the details of the evidence submitted to support the action taken, e.g., the document number/file name, etc.
- Complete all parts of the form, except the final column marked for QMSCERT use.
- Submit evidence that is comprehensive and detailed as if requested and inspected during an audit.
- Accompany a new or updated procedure that is being submitted as documentary evidence; it should be accompanied by any associated documentation, such as evidence of the procedure being issued and evidence of training, if appropriate.
- Consider examples of associated documentation such as completed production records, audit reports, non-conformance reports, training records, etc.
- Send, where appropriate, certificates, invoices, and contractor records may be submitted.
- Use photographic evidence where changes required are physical or structural.
- Translate the title of documentary evidence in English when not submitted in English.
- If it is not possible to complete corrective action within 28 days, then an alternative strategy needs to be put in place to close the nonconformity until the permanent corrective action can be completed.



Incident/ Product Recall

The client must notify QMSCERT **within 3 working days** in the following specific situations:

- any product recall
- any product recall and/or withdrawal decided by authorities for food safety and/or food fraud reasons
- any product recall/withdrawal where the broker company is legally responsible for the products
- product recall/withdrawal caused by the logistics company in case the logistics company is the owner of the product or is responsible for the initiation of the procedure
- any visit from authorities that results in mandatory action connected to food safety, and/or food fraud.

Sites are responsible for investigating and subsequently providing the details, including the Corrective Action, Root Cause Analysis, and Preventive Action Plan to the Certification Body within a maximum of 10 days of the incident date.

The Client must also inform QMSCERT in the following cases:

- changes in organisation and management,
- important modifications on the products and/or the production methods or logistics service(s)
- changes in contact address and production sites
- new address of the production site or logistics site
- office location change (in case of Broker site)

In case of unannounced audits

- The decision for the unannounced audit option must be communicated between the client and QMSCERT at least six (6) months before the audit due date to ensure that the site is aware of the year in which the unannounced audit will take place.
- The auditor, upon arrival on-site, shall be granted immediate access.
- Factory inspection will start within 30 minutes of arrival, following a brief opening meeting.
- Auditors must be able to access all documents, records, personal information, etc.
- If key staff are absent, competent, knowledgeable deputies must be available for interviews and to assist with the audit processes.
- Whereas justified, the client can select a blackout period of a maximum of ten (10) working days when the production site is not available for audit, as well as non-operating periods, which can be split into a maximum of three (3) periods. The blackout period must be notified to the certification body in advance of the audit, at the latest four (4) weeks before the start of the audit time window (to allow the QMSCERT to register it in the IFS Database).



3. QMSCERT'S OBLIGATIONS

- ❖ Must send the audit plan to the client's management before the audit day.
- ❖ Will not inform the client about the visit in case of an unannounced audit.
If the client refuses to have an unannounced audit conducted, QMSCERT will decide whether the refusal is justified. In case the refusal is unjustified, QMSCERT must suspend the certificate.
- ❖ Must upload the Audit Report, Action plan, and Certificate to the IFS Database within a maximum of 56 days from the last audit date.
- ❖ If the implementation of corrective actions is not conducted appropriately and on time (28 days from the audit) by the client, QMSCERT:
 - Must decide whether the granted certification needs to be withdrawn.
 - Will inform IFS about the late corrective actions submitted.
- ❖ Will send to the client the uploaded final audit report, as well as the client's access to site records via the IFS Database.
- ❖ Informs the client on time and in writing if there are changes during the review of the audit report.
- ❖ Must change the certificate status to the IFS Database in case of certificate is withdrawn or suspended.
- ❖ Is responsible for informing the client about the costs of the whole process, as they are determined by IFS and QMSCERT. If a further visit to its premises is needed to prove the closure of a non-conformance, there may be a new charge.
- ❖ Can issue a certificate only when a positive certification decision is granted by Certification Manager.
In case QMSCERT wants to end its Accreditation, or in case it loses its IFS accreditation, it must inform its clients in writing that they must undergo the certification process again or transfer their certification to another CB. QMSCERT must also inform its Accreditation Body. Only authorized members of the system have access to the data, such as the client, QMSCERT, and the auditor.



4. USE OF THE IFS LOGO AND Q-CERT IFS LOGO

An IFS Food certified production site, which accepts IFS Certificates from its suppliers or service providers (brokers, logistics service providers, or wholesalers), may use the general IFS Logo for promotional reasons and publish information about IFS Certification. The IFS Logo can only appear on a website section related to quality management or to quality and safety in general.

The IFS Logos shall be downloaded via the secured section of the IFS Database.

Terms and conditions for using the IFS Logos can be found in Part 1, Section 6 of the IFS Standards.

Q-CERT IFS Logo

Q-CERT provides an additional logo to IFS certified sites that includes the Q-CERT Logo, the IFS Standard name and version, and the unique certificate number issued by Q-CERT. The use of the Q-CERT IFS Logo is included in the OP-2040, which is provided together with the logo.



5. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

QMSCERT operates a documented Complaint Management process, OP-2080, as part of the quality system. Complaints and appeals must be made in writing, within 7 calendar days of receipt of the certification decision, by the named person(s) and addressed to the Quality Manager, by email to info@qmscert.com or by letter to the address QMSCERT, 5 Maria Kallas Str., GR 555 35, Pylaia, Thessaloniki, Greece.

6. IFS INTEGRITY ON-SITE CHECKS

As part of the IFS Quality Assurance activities, IFS has implemented procedures to monitor the performance of the IFS-approved certification bodies, IFS Auditors, and IFS certified companies, the IFS Integrity Program, which ensures the quality and the integrity of the implementation of IFS Standards.

IFS Integrity On-site Checks are carried out to evaluate IFS certified sites and can be organized risk-based or following complaints. In general, the Integrity On-site Checks are carried out unannounced (announcement 30 minutes before the start). Refusal of access to the site may affect certification status. Any change in certification status QMSCERT shall be notified to the IFS, and the status in the IFS Database will be amended accordingly