Application

All applicants to QMSCERT for BRC Global Standards are required to complete the application form depending on scheme(s) required to certify; Food Safety, Packaging and Packaging materials, Storage & Distribution, Agents & Brokers. The application form(s) also asks for an undertaking that the applicant will abide by the QMSCERT certification terms/contract. These can be found at the QMSCERT web link: http://www.qmscert.com/en/certification-procedures/

Planning Audit Visits

BRC Global Standards: Audits for all BRC Global Standards are conducted at a mutually convenient date, unless the company participates to the unannounced scheme, where the days are planned according to the provisions of the standard.

The audit frequencies and the method of demonstrating correction of nonconformities are based on the number and type of non-conformities found at the audit.

1) BRC Global Standard for Food Safety:

- Documentary evidence can be accepted where up to 24 minors or 1 major and up to 16 minors non conformities are found.
- For higher numbers of NCs described above, a revisit, an enrolment scheme score or a full re-audit after a period for improvement is required.
- Audit frequencies are either 6 or 12 months in line with performance.
- An audit is typically 2-3 days but certain factors can necessitate an increase or decrease in the duration of the evaluation, e.g. number of employees, factory size, number of HACCP plans. The time required will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form using the BRC Food audit duration calculation and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRC Standard. About 50% of audit duration is typically spent in production areas.
- Unannounced Scheme**:** Where Clients select to enter the unannounced scheme, no change of CB is permitted after 3 months of their anchor date, unless specific circumstances enable a concession from the BRC. Also the client shall notify CB within 3 months of last audit date of choice of scheme. Next unannounced audit may occur at any stage from 3 months after the last audit due date to 42 calendar days prior to certificate expiry day. The client completes this on the Application Form, and when the auditor visits the site they should check the previous certificate and record the previous audit date and next audit due date on the report as required. Unannounced audit program allows sites to nominate 15 days when site is not available for audit. The days and the reasons must be provided within 3 months of opting into the program.

2) BRC Global Standard for Agents & Brokers:

- Documentary evidence can be accepted for grades A - C, for non-certificated sites a full re-audit is required usually no less than 3 months following the initial audit.
- Audit frequencies for announced audits are either 6 or 12 months in line with performance.
- The minimum audit duration is at least one-man day (ie 8 hours) at the company's office facility but certain factors can necessitate an increase or decrease in the duration of the evaluation. The time required will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form using the BRC for A&B AB006: Audit Duration Calculator and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRC Standard for A&B.
- For Unannounced Scheme everything is the same as BRC for Food Safety.

3) BRC Global Standard for Packaging & Packaging Materials:

- Documentary evidence can be accepted where up to 24 minors, or 1 major and up to 16 upminor, or 2 majors and up to 10 minor non-conformities are found; for higher numbers a revisit, an Enrolment Scheme score, or a full re-audit after a period for improvement is required.
- Audit frequencies are either 6 or 12 months in line with performance.
- The typical duration of an audit is 1.5 days of which a minimum 4 hours shall be spent auditing the production environment, but certain factors can necessitate an increase or decrease in the duration of the evaluation. The time required will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form using the BRC for Packaging & Packaging Materials P509: Calculating Audit Duration and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRC Standard.
- Site decides to join the unannounced audit scheme shall notify certification body within 3 months of last audit date of choice of scheme; *Unannounced scheme (option 1)* Full unannounced audit occurs 3 to 12 months after the last audit date and *Unannounced scheme (option 2)* Part 1 unannounced audit (good manufacturing practice only), typically occurs 6 to 10 months after the last audit date & Part 2 announced audit (systems/documentation), 28-day window 11 to 12 months from last audit date. Corrective action submitted within 28 days and verified at part 2 audit.

4) BRC Global Standard for Storage & Distribution:

- Audit frequencies are either 6 or 12 months in line with performance. Subsequent audits of certificated sites shall be carried out either 6, 12 or 18 months after the previous audit due date according to the number and type of non-conformities identified at the previous audit.
- Documentary evidence can be accepted where up to 24 minors or 1 major and up to 16 minor, or 2 majors and up to 10 minors non conformities are found. For higher numbers of NCs described above, a revisit, an enrolment scheme score or a full re-audit after a period for improvement is required.
- The typical duration of an audit is 1.5 days (maximum 8 hours/day) at the site but certain factors can necessitate an increase the duration of the evaluation, e.g. the number of locations, any need to witness the unloading of vehicles or to accompany drivers, use of contracted services, a large, widely dispersed site, high numbers of site staff, the audit not being carried out in the first language of the auditor, difficulties experienced during the audit that require further investigation, an ill-prepared site or poorly coordinated documentation. The time required will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRC Standard.
- The auditor shall allocate sufficient time to ensure that appropriate attention is given to the document review and the site and vehicle inspection. The site and vehicle inspection process shall typically take a minimum of 3 hours to complete.
- Site decides to join the unannounced audit scheme shall notify certification body within 3 months of last audit date of choice of scheme; *Unannounced scheme (option 1)* Full unannounced audit occurs 3 to 12 months after the last audit date and *Unannounced scheme (option 2)* Part 1 unannounced audit (site practices only), typically occurs 6 to 10 months after the last audit date & Part 2 announced audit (systems/documentation), 28-day window 11 to 12 months from last audit date. Corrective action submitted within 28 days and verified at part 2 audit.

Scope of Audits

The scope of the assessments will be defined with the client prior to undertaking the assessment and reconfirmed at the opening and closing meetings.

Exclusions are allowed under exceptional circumstances which are described in the standards. Such exclusions will be clearly defined in the report and certificate and the justification recorded on the audit report.

It is expected that all critical processes and/or products (or product groups) are covered during the BRC audit. If that's not the case, then these processes and/or products are excluded from the scope of certification and in order to be included, a re-audit must be scheduled.

Where a company has several manufacturing sites (food / packaging) all of which are operating to a centralized system managed at Head Office, a separate uncertified audit of the HO function may be undertaken. Separate manufacturing units which are part of the same manufacturing process may be audited as part of a single audit and included in the scope and certificate.

Findings Classification

Minor Nonconformity
Where a clause has not been fully met but, on the basis of objective evidence, **the conformity of the product is not in doubt.**
Major Nonconformity
Where there is a substantial failure to meet the requirements of a statement of intent or any clause of the Standard, or where a situation is identified which would, on the basis of available objective evidence, **raise significant doubt as to the conformity of the product or services being supplied**.
Critical
Where there is a **critical failure** to comply with a product safety or legal compliance issue.

Audit Preparation

1. Select an audit option {announced or unannounced or Global Markets (only for BRC Packaging)}
2. Self-assessment of compliance with the BRC Global 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.
3. Selection of a certification body QMSCERT
4. Company/ QMSCERT contractual arrangements: A contract shall exist between the company and the QMSCERT in accordance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, detailing the scope of the audit and the reporting requirements.
5. Define scope of the audit
6. Auditor selection: Auditors must be skilled to audit in the relevant product category of each BRC Standard.
7. Determine hygiene category using hygiene category determination decision tree (only for BRC Packaging)

Prior to each audit the operation should be reviewed in relation to the requirements of the Standard with a view to making any necessary amendments or improvements to the operation and systems. It is the supplier's responsibility to ensure that they are using the issue of each BRC standard valid at the time of the audit and any additional position statements. It is important that the activities to be certified are in operation at the time of the audit and this will be discussed when arranging the audit.

Audit Process

Assessments will usually be conducted in local languages. In cases where the auditor's language is not the same with the language spoken by the company or the company's system, an approved translator will be used. Extra time for translation will be taken into account; usually, 20% extra time will be added to the calculated audit time.

Assessments consist of eight elements:

- Opening meeting
- Production facility inspection (not facility inspection for BRC Agents & Brokers) (50% of the audit duration or 4-6 hours is typically spend within production sites) and review of production facility inspection.
- Document review
- Label review (only for BRC Food Safety)
- Vehicle audit (only for BRC Storage & Distribution where applicable)
- 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.

The assessor will prepare a copy of the assessment summary, deviations and non-conformances, which are left with the company's technical representative on the day or in exceptional circumstances provided within 1 day of the assessment. Signed copy of the non-conformity summary sheet will be requested by the company.

The decision to award certification has to be taken independently of the auditor following a review of the assessment report and any documented action plans provided or re-visit corrective action verification provided, independently by QMSCERT Certifications Managers.

Audit Reports

After each audit a full written report is prepared in accordance with the required format dictated and formatted per BRC rules.

Corrective Actions

In order for a certificate to be issued it is necessary that all nonconformities to be closed and the appropriate documentary evidence provided to QMSCERT or available for a revisit, e.g. for food manufacturing sites: grade C, C+, D and D+, to enable this to be verified within 28 days of the audit. Reports, corrective actions and root cause analysis where applicable are included in the decision to award a certificate.

Where a revisit is not required, suitable documentary evidence (e.g. updated procedures, records, photographs, invoices forwork completed) shall be provided to the QMSCERT within the timescales for certification – i.e. **28 calendar days for certificated sites, and 90 calendar days for initial audits**.

Submitting Documentary Evidence for Corrective Actions

Submit all corrective actions to postaudit@qmscert.com

The corrective action section of the report is used to aid the certification decision process, as it enables us to find and review the evidence you have submitted for **each** non-conformity.

The corrective action section should be completed in English. Please:

- Link the evidence you are attaching to the nonconformity number or clause
- Include a description of the corrective action you have taken
- Include the details of the evidence you have 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 is being submitted as documentary evidence it should be by any associated documentation such as evidence of the procedure being issued and evidence of training, if appropriate.
- Consider examples of associated documentation such 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 then.
- Translate the title of documentary evidence in English when not submitted in English.

Note: An intention or plan to rectify a nonconformity is not sufficient, corrective actions must have been completed.

- If it is not possible to complete a corrective action within the 28 days then an alternative strategy needs to be put in place to close the nonconformity until such time as the permanent corrective action can be completed.

Certification Manager Review

The audit report will be submitted in full to the Certification Manager for review. You may be contacted at this time for clarification of this corrective action documentation. Within three days and only one resubmission is accepted.
Please be aware that if we are unable to close out any deficiency quickly you may be subject to reassessment before a certificate can be issued.

Distribution of Audit Reports

The report is dispatched to the client usually within 42 days of the audit date. The entity assigning the audit is regarded as the customer. As such, it is this party that receives the audit report. Reports are also uploaded to the BRC Directory and will only be made available to BRC members when permitted by the owner of the report. QMSCERT will also retain a copy of the report and the information on which a certification decision is based for a period of five years.

Certificates

Certificates will be issued to clients who meet the requirements of the Standards and in accordance with the requirements of the BRC Certification protocol. The certificate remains the property of QMSCERT and is issued subject to the client complying with the Certification Terms/Contract.

Certification Withdrawal

The certificate may be withdrawn by QMSCERT in a number of circumstances where the site may no longer comply with the requirements of the BRC certification scheme(s) and ISO/IEC 17065 requirement. Examples of these instances are:

- Evidence that the site no longer complies with the requirements of the Standard, raising significant doubt over its operating standards and product safety
- Failure to implement adequate corrective action plans within appropriate timescales
- Evidence of falsification of records.

Maintaining Certification

It is the client's responsibility to maintain certification, except in the case of unannounced audits. The issue of the certificate provides an assurance to customers that QMSCERT has assessed the certified site and is satisfied that the requirements of the BRC Standard(s) have been met through the audit and any corrective actions implemented. In addition, that processes are in place to ensure that the Standard is maintained for at least the duration of the certificate. It is important therefore for the integrity of BRC Standards that where substantial changes to the premises or products, these must be notified in writing to QMSCERT. **The audit must be conducted on, or before, the audit due date, if the audit is late a Major non- conformity will be raised.**

Certification Charges and Invoicing

Assessment charges are calculated after consideration of the size, type and location of the operation. The time duration of an assessment depends on the evaluated standard(s) that is to be audited and the information contained in the company's application and is calculated and agreed with the company before the audit.
An additional day is allocated for report writing.
In the event that assessment includes voluntary BRC modules or is intended to be combined with other audit Standards, the total audit time will need to be appropriately extended.
Travel to and from assessments will be charged at the current mileage rates and will be declared on any quotes. Overnight expenses are charged at cost. All assessment charges are agreed with the client and confirmed in writing. Normally the client is invoiced after completion of the assessment.
In addition to the costs for the assessment the BRC shall charge a registration fee for the annual assessment, according to standard(s) being audited. This charge will be shown separately on the invoice and is paid directly and in full to BRC by QMSCERT.

Unannounced Schemes

There are two options for unannounced audits BRC Standard for Packaging & Packaging Materials & Storage & Distribution. With both options the date of the audit of the factory Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) is unannounced.

Option 1: The whole Standard is audited on a single unannounced audit visit, typically lasting 2 days but dependent on the audit duration calculation* which is based on size, complexity, staff numbers and other factors.

Option 2: The audit visit is split into two separate visits, each typically lasting one day, as above*. The first visit which is unannounced, audits the factory GMPs. The second part of the audit, which is announced (planned), focuses on the documented Food Safety Management Systems and records. More details are available on Standard.

The decision to join the unannounced audit programs must be made within the first 3 months following a qualifying audit where a grade AA, AA+ A, A+, B or B+ was achieved, or within 1 month for a grade C, C+, D or D+. After this period only the announced scheme will be available.

The Unannounced Schemes are available to sites producing seasonally.
If you decide to select one of the unannounced schemes please confirm in writing with your Scheme Administrator.

Company Obligations under the Unannounced Schemes

The auditor will arrive on site and shall be granted immediate access.
Factory inspection will start within 30 minutes of arrival, following a brief opening meeting.
Companies must be able to access to all documents, records, personal information, etc.
If key staff are absent competent, knowledgeable deputies must be available for interview and to assist with the audit processes.

Cancellation of Audit Visits

In the event a client wishes to cancel or postpone an audit visit, written notification must be sent to QMSCERT at least ten working days prior to the date the audit visit is due.
In the event that an audit visit is cancelled or postponed QMSCERT will charge the client any expenses that occurred such as air tickets, hotel payments, car rental, audit time etc.

BRC GLOBAL STANDARDS LOGOS

Companies that achieve BRC Global Standards certification and have no exclusions from their scope are qualified to use the BRC Global Standards logo on site stationery and other marketing materials. BRC Global Standard "Food" logo cannot be used for promoting traded products even when they form part of the certificated scope.
The BRC logo is not a product certification mark and shall not be used on products or product packaging. Any certificated site found to be misusing the mark will be subject to the BRC complaints/referral process and may risk suspension or removal of its certification.

Complaints and Appeals

QMSCERT operates a documented complaints and appeals procedure 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 named person(s) and addressed to the Quality Manager, QMSCERT, Vlasiou Gavriilidi 28, Thessaloniki 54627, Greece.

Surveillance of certificated companies

For certificated companies, where appropriate, the certification body or the BRC may carry out further audits or question activities to validate continued certification at any time. These visits may take the form of announced or unannounced visits to undertake either a full or part audit. Refusal of access to the site may affect certification status. Any change in certification status shall be notified to the BRC by the certification body and the status in the BRC Global Standards Directory amended accordingly.