



Application

All applicants to QMSCERT for BRCGS Global Standards are required to complete the application form depending on scheme(s) required to certify; Food Safety, 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/>

Audit Options

- **Announced Audit Program:** for certificates sites and for new to certification. The audit date is agreed with certification body in advance of the audit and all requirements of the Standard are audited within the audit visit.
- **Unannounced Audit Program:** All sites certificated to a GFSI Benchmarked Standard for food safety, packaging materials or storage & distribution using an announced audit programme to have at least 1 unannounced audit every 3 years. The unannounced audit can take place at any time during the 4 months prior to the audit due date. This period, when an audit can occur, includes the 28 days immediately prior to the audit due date. The first (initial) BRCGS audit at a site should be announced, unless the site has specifically requested an unannounced audit.
- **Blended Audit:** is an audit which comprises an offsite - remote assessment followed by an onsite audit. This option is only available for the announced audit programme. The remote audit takes place using ICT (Information & Communication Technology). Can be used for all BRCGS GFSI benchmarked Standards (i.e. Food, Packaging, Storage & Distribution, Agents & Brokers), Consumer Products and Gluten-Free Certification Program. Can be used for additional modules as well. The onsite audit shall be conducted within 28 days of the remote audit in a way that the site has enough time for non-conformity closure and the certification decision can take place within 42 days of onsite audit. Although it is recommended that remote and onsite audits shall be planned as close to each other as possible. The total audit duration is the same as specified in the specific Standard.

This option is only applicable for re-certification audits and not for the first BRCGS audit at a site. For BRCGS Agents & Broker Standard the initial audit shall also be fully onsite, however, subsequent audits can be completed as a full remote audit (i.e. no onsite audit required) providing this is supported by the risk assessment.

Planning Audit Visits

BRCGS Global Standards: Audits for all BRCGS 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 non-conformities are based on the number and type of non-conformities found at the audit.

1) BRCGS Global Standard for Food Safety:

- Documentary evidence can be accepted where up to 24 minors or 1 major and up to 16 minor 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 BRCGS Food audit duration calculation and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRCGS 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 BRCGS. 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) BRCGS 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 (i.e. 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 BRCGS for A&B Audit Duration Calculator and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRCGS Standard for A&B.
- For Unannounced Scheme everything is the same as BRCGS for Food Safety.

3) BRCGS Global Standard for Packaging Materials:

- Documentary evidence can be accepted where up to 24 minors, or 1 major and up to 16 up minor, 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 2 days of which a minimum 5 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 BRCGS Packaging Materials Calculating Audit Duration and discussion in line with guidance contained in the BRCGS Standard.
- Site decides to join the unannounced audit scheme shall notify certification body within 3 months of last audit date to join or remain within the unannounced audit program.

4) BRCGS 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.

- Table 2 (Audit grades, non – conformities and corrective actions required) in Part III describes the possible outcome of an audit depending on the number and type of non – conformities.
- The duration of an audit depends on various factors as per Standard’s relevant requirements (SD402: Audit Duration Calculator).
- The auditor shall allocate sufficient time to ensure that appropriate attention is given to the document review and the site and vehicle inspection.
- Regardless if the Site decides to join the unannounced audit scheme or not at least one mandatory unannounced audit must be conducted every three (3) years.

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 BRCGS 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 Non-conformity
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 Non-conformity
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, unannounced or blended audits}
2. Self-assessment of compliance with the BRCGS 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 BRCGS Standard.

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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS Food Safety)
- Vehicle audit (only for BRCGS 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.

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.

Audit Reports

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



Corrective Actions

In order for a certificate to be issued it is necessary that all non-conformities 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 for work completed) shall be provided to the QMSCERT within 28 calendar days.

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 non-conformity 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 BRCGS Directory and will only be made available to BRCGS 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 BRCGS Certification protocol. The certificate remains the property of QMSCERT and is issued subject to the client complying with the Certification Terms/Contract.

Communication with certification body

The company shall inform its certification body about any change that may affect its ability to conform to the certification requirements (e.g. product recall or regulatory food safety non-conformity, significant damage to the site, change of ownership or any significant change to the operation or scope, etc.) within three (3) working days.

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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS by QMSCERT.



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.

BRCGS GLOBAL STANDARDS LOGOS

Companies that achieve BRCGS Global Standards certification and have no exclusions from their scope are qualified to use the BRCGS Global Standards logo on site stationery and other marketing materials. BRCGS Global Standard “Food” logo cannot be used for promoting traded products even when they form part of the certificated scope.

BRCGS Logo request form <https://form.jotform.com/61323530244949>.

The BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS 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 BRCGS by the certification body and the status in the BRCGS Global Standards Directory amended accordingly.