



## **NSF Certification UK SERVICE PROTOCOL**

For Certification against ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000

The purpose of this Protocol is to provide existing and prospective customers with information on the way in which NSF Certification UK operates its certification scheme against the ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000 standards and to provide an explanation of the requirements of this standard.

### **1 Application**

All Applicants to NSF Certification UK's ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000 schemes are required to complete the NSF Certification UK scheme Application Form for initial audits, when changes occur i.e. an extension to scope and for re-certification audits. The Application Form also asks for an undertaking that the Applicant will abide by the NSF Certification UK scheme rules and conditions for certification as required for all UKAS Accredited schemes which must be adhered to during the period of certification. These signed Application Forms should be returned to your local in country office.

The ISO 22000 Standard and the Technical Specification ISO/TS22003 and ISO/TS PRP (i.e. ISO22002-1; ISO/TS22002-4) Guidance on the application of ISO 22000 and FSSC22000 are copyright protected documents and can be obtained from the ISO organisation [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org). Information on additional requirements for FSSC can be found on their website: [www.fssc.com](http://www.fssc.com).

All enquiries and requests for certification should be directed in the first instance to your local in-country office. Certification is provided by: NSF Certification UK Ltd, Long Hanborough, Oxon, OX29 8SJ

### **2 Arranging Assessments Visits**

Assessments are conducted at a mutually convenient date within the requirements of the Scheme and the accreditation requirements.

The initial audit process consists of two visits:

- 1) An on-site Stage 1 audit to determine the state of readiness of the Food safety management system (usually 1 day).
- 2) A stage 2 visit. This is a full on-site Stage 2 audit, which will vary dependent on: the type of operation, the number of employees and the management systems. A further half a day is required to prepare the report. If an FSSC audit is being conducted, additional time will be added as per the FSSC requirements (both on-site time and report writing).

Once certificated, surveillance audits are undertaken at a frequency of 6 or 12 months, as determined at the time of the proposal, or following review by the certifying office during the course of the cycle at which time it will be communicated to the client. The first surveillance audit has to take place within 12 months of the last day of the Stage 2 audit to avoid suspension. These surveillance audits will between them cover the entire scope of the standard. FSSC surveillance audits cover the full Standard at each audit. FSSC Version 4.1 requires that at least one of the surveillance audits in the cycle is done as a fully unannounced audit. Should these unannounced audits be refused, it will lead to the immediate suspension of the certificate and the site will be required to pay for any related expenses occurred. A full renewal audit is carried out every 3 years prior to the expiry of the current certificate.

Arrangements for audits will be fully discussed in advance and the audit allocated to an experienced auditor with relevant industry knowledge and expertise. Confirmation will be sent to the site and/or agent, detailing the audit date, time and audit plan.

Travel arrangements including flights, hotels, car hire as required will normally be organised in consultation with the customer and the auditor to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective service.

### **3 Certification Charges and Invoicing**

Assessment charges are calculated after consideration of the size, type and location of the plant and in accordance with the guidance given in ISO/TS 22003 Annex B (Food Safety Management Systems – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems) and any applicable Scheme requirements. The annual fee payable to the FSSC Foundation will be charged back to the client at the current rate on an annual basis.

### **4 Scope of Assessment**

The scope of the audit will be defined with the client prior to undertaking the audit and reconfirmed at the opening meeting. Parts of a site or operation may be excluded from the scope; such exclusions; will be clearly defined in the report and certificate. However, it should be noted that it is not acceptable to exclude part of the processes, sectors, products or services from the scope of certification when those processes, sectors, products or services have an influence on the food safety of the end product. In addition, the standard will be used in its entirety and no relevant elements of the ISO22000 standard may be omitted. All exclusions to scope have to be agreed with NSF Certification before the audit. Note exclusions are generally not permitted for FSSC22000.

Audits against the ISO 22000 or FSSC22000 Standard may be combined with other audit activities, i.e. GFSI recognised schemes such as IFS or BRC, or bespoke audits at the Client's request. In all instances additional time has to be allocated and approved by NSF Certification UK to ensure that the requirements of the individual Schemes are being met.

### **5 Preparation for the Assessment**

Prior to each assessment 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 most up to date issue of the ISO22000 standard and the appropriate ISO/TS standard i.e. ISO/TS22002-1 for Food manufacturing; ISO/TS22002-4 for Food packaging as well as additional requirements that apply to FSSC 22000. The relevant ISO standards can be obtained from the ISO Store while the FSSC Additional Requirements are included in Part II and can be downloaded from the FSSC website.

It is important that the production programme at the time of the audit represents products included within the intended scope of certification. Where possible the widest range of these products shall be in production for the auditor to assess. Where the product range is large or diverse the Auditor has the discretion to continue the audit until sufficiently satisfied that the intended scope of the certification has been audited.

### **6 Assessment Process**

Audits will usually be conducted in English, however NSF Certification UK have the facility to offer foreign language audits through the NSF Certification UK network of local offices. Where translators are used, 20% additional time will be allocated to the minimum audit duration.

Audits consist of six main elements:

- Opening meeting
- Review of the site's HACCP and pre-requisite programme
- Factory inspection – assess implementation of the FSQMS and interview staff
- Document review
- Food Safety Management Systems
- Performance monitoring, measuring and reporting
- Check back of audit trails, verify and further documentation checks
- Traceability exercise
- Final evaluation 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 senior managers who have the appropriate authority to ensure that corrective action can be progressed, if non-conformities are found.

During the Stage 1 audit, the readiness of the company to proceed to the Stage 2 audit is determined via an on-site audit. A written report detailing any areas of potential non-conformity which should be addressed prior to the Stage 2 audit is produced. These potential non-conformities are not allocated significance. Results from the Stage 1 may lead to postponement or cancellation of the Stage 2 audit. The Stage 1 audit is conducted up to 6 months maximum, prior to the Stage 2 audit. Where the 6 month window is exceeded, the Stage 1 audit has to be repeated.

The Client is required to inform NSF immediately of any significant changes that could impact the FSMS following the Stage 1 audit. Depending on the nature of the change, part or all of the Stage 1 might have to be repeated.

During the Stage 2 and surveillance audits, detailed notes are made of the Client's ability to comply with the standard. These will be used as the basis for the audit report. Should a clause of the standard not be met, the Auditor will consider the nature and significance of any non-conformity (critical, major or minor) against the standard and the site representative will be made aware of the non-conformity.

At the closing meeting, the Auditor will present his/her findings and discuss any non-conformities that have been identified. The Auditor will prepare a copy of the audit summary and non-conformities, which are left with the company's representative on the day or in exceptional circumstances provided within 1 day of the audit. The company will be advised of the action to be taken regarding the non-conformities including time lines.

A critical nonconformity is issued in a circumstance in which direct food safety impact without appropriate action by the organisation is observed or when legality and/or certification integrity is at stake. Detailed corrective action plans with root causes are required within 7 calendar days and an onsite verification visit is carried out within 28 days for ISO22000 audits.

FSSC Version 4.1 requires the current certificate to be suspended with immediate effect in the case of identifying a critical non-conformity for a maximum period of 6 months. Detailed corrective action plans with root causes are required within 14 calendar days. A follow-up audit shall be conducted by the CB within the six (6) month time frame to verify the closure of the critical nonconformity. The certificate shall be withdrawn when the critical nonconformity is not effectively resolved within the six (6) month time frame. In case of a certification audit the full certification audit shall be repeated.

The FSSC database will be updated with the suspension within 3 days of the date of certification decision.

A Major non-conformance shall be raised where there is:

- The absence of, or substantial failure to meet the requirements of the Standard or when the non-conformity which may lead to a serious health hazard
- The absence or total breakdown of a procedure required as part of the Audited Food Safety Management System

Detailed corrective action plans with root causes are required within 14 calendar days and evidence of close out within 28 days. Verification of close out could be onsite or documentary evidence review depending on the nature of the non-conformance. Should the same non-conformity be found at the next audit, then a critical non-conformity will be raised and the certificate will be suspended.

A MINOR non-conformity shall be raised where there is:

- A failure to fully meet the requirements of an element of the Standard, but where there is no risk to product safety or legality
- A temporary or isolated instance of breakdown of a procedure required as part of the Audited Food Safety Management System

**FSSC22000:** Detailed corrective action plans with root causes and evidence of close out are required within 28 calendar days of the audit. Verification of close out could be onsite or documentary evidence review depending on the nature of the non-conformance. Should the same non-conformity be found at the next audit, then a major non-conformity will be raised.

**ISO22000:** Action plans with root causes for minor non-conformities are required within 28 days of the audit. Verification of the corrective actions is carried out at the next audit. Failure to address

minor non-conformities by the next audit, will lead to an escalation of the non-conformity to a major.

## **7 Assessment Report**

After each assessment a full written report is prepared by the Assessor.

## **8 Corrective Actions**

In order for a certificate to be issued it is necessary for all non-conformities to be addressed and corrected in line with the Standard requirements and the appropriate action plans and supporting documentary evidence provided to your local office, as discussed with the assessor at the closing meeting of the audit. This evidence must be provided to your local office within the required timescales or an on-site clearance of findings might be required dependant on the nature and classification of the non-conformity. The evidence is then verified independently by NSF Certification UK Ltd, prior to approval. Critical non-conformities require a follow-up visit in all cases.

In the case of an initial audit, where sufficient corrective evidence is not provided within the required timeframe following the Stage 2 audit, another full Stage 2 audit has to take place within 6 months of the last day of the initial Stage 2 audit in order to proceed with certification. Where the 6 month window is exceeded, a new audit cycle will commence with a Stage 1 and 2 audit.

## **9 Distribution of Assessment Report**

After initial preparation of the report, this is usually held for the receipt of evidence of corrective action taken in response to critical or major non-conformities, the auditor or other technically competent trained person will check the evidence of corrective action and corrective action plan provided. The report is then further checked and signed off together with verification of any evidence of corrective actions, by a technically competent authorised manager. The report is despatched to the client usually within 30 days of the receipt of documentary evidence and after payment is received.

## **10 Certification Decision**

The decision to award certification has to be taken following a review of the audit report and any documentary corrective action provided, independently by NSF Management and cannot therefore be given at the audit, but the auditor can advise the client of their recommendation.

## **11 Certificate**

Certificates will be issued to Clients who meet the requirements of the standard and in accordance with the requirements of ISO17021-1.

The certificate is issued for a period of 3 years and is maintained subject to satisfactory surveillance audits. The certificate remains the property of NSF Certification UK and is issued subject to the Client complying with the NSF Certification UK Scheme Regulations and the relevant Scheme Rules.

Details of FSSC certification is uploaded onto the FSSC database as per the Scheme owner requirements. The company name, scope, status of certification, expiry date etc. are therefore publicly available on the FSSC website.

## **12 Maintaining Certification**

It is the Client's responsibility to consistently achieve the intended results of implementation of the management system standard and conformity with the requirements of certification.

The issue of the certificate provides an assurance to customers that NSF Certification UK has assessed the certified site and is satisfied that the requirements of the standard have been met through the audit and any corrective actions and 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 the standard that in the event that there are substantial changes to the premises or products, these must be notified in writing to NSF Certification UK.

### **Significant changes**

The organisation shall report significant changes to the CB within three (3) working days as stipulated in the certification contract. These include changes relating to:

- a) legal, commercial, organisational status or ownership,
- b) organisation and management (e.g. key managerial, decision-making or technical staff),
- c) organisation name, contact address and site details,
- d) scope of operations and product categories covered by the certified management system,
- e) management system and/or processes,
- f) any other change that renders the information on the certificate inaccurate.

The organisation shall seek the advice of the CB in cases where there is doubt over the significance of a change.

### **Serious events**

The organisation shall inform the CB immediately about serious events that impact food safety and/or the integrity of the certification and the organisation's entry in the FSSC 22000 Register of Certified organisations.

### **Reporting**

The organisation shall report serious events to the CB immediately and these include at a minimum:

- a) legal proceedings, prosecutions and the outcomes of these related to food safety or legality,
- b) public food safety events (such as e.g. public recalls, calamities, etc.)
- c) 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.

### **CB review**

- The CB 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 status of the certified organisation.
- The CB reviews the reported changes, decides upon the significance and consequences for conformity with the Scheme requirements, and comes to a conclusion whether or not additional verification activities are necessary.
- The CB decides also whether or not certification changes of scope shall be granted.
- If granted, the current certificate will be replaced by a new certificate using the same expiry date as detailed in the original certificate.
- The organisation's entry in the FSSC 22000 Register of Certified Organisations will be updated accordingly.

### **Scope extensions**

- In the event of a change which requires an Extension to Scope of Certification, the Client is asked to complete a new Application Form which supersedes the original form. Time is then calculated to ensure all required processes and quality management systems are covered and any new product(s) will need to be observed during the scope extension audit. Additional verification activities are at the discretion of the CB based on the information supplied. Granting scope extensions is at the discretion of the CB. If granted, the current certificate will be replaced by a new certificate using the same expiry date as detailed in the original certificate. The organisation's entry in the FSSC 22000 Register of Certified Organisations will be updated accordingly.

In the event of a change which requires an Extension to Scope of Certification, the Client is asked to complete a new Application Form which supersedes the original form. Time is then calculated to ensure all required processes and quality management systems are covered and any new product(s) will need to be observed during the scope extension audit. The organisation shall seek the advice of the CB in cases where there is doubt over the significance of a change.

### **Recertification**

At the end of the 3 year cycle a recertification audit is carried out that requires a full re-audit of all the requirements. During the application review it may be determined that a Stage 1 audit may be required. The re-certification audit should be scheduled to ensure sufficient time for the close out of any major or critical non-conformities raised during the re-assessment as well as certification

activities to take place prior to the expiry of the current certificate. The re-certification audit will therefore be scheduled 2-3 months prior to the expiry of the current certificate.

Following the successful completion of the recertification audit and activities, a new 3 year certificate can be issued where the certification decision is taken prior to the expiration of the current certificate. The expiry date of the new certificate will be based on the expiry date of the current certificate i.e. expiry date of the current certificate + 3 years.

In cases where the recertification audit has not been completed or NSF Certification UK Ltd is unable to verify the implementation of corrections and corrective actions for any major and critical non-conformities prior to the expiry date of the certification, then recertification will not be recommended and the validity of the certification shall not be extended.

Following the expiry of the current certificate, certification can be restored within 6 months provided that the outstanding recertification activities are completed, otherwise at least a stage 2 shall be conducted. The effective date on the certificate shall be on or after the recertification decision and the expiry date shall be based on the prior certification cycle.

### **13 Short notice audits**

It may be necessary to conduct audits of certified clients on short notice or unannounced to investigate complaints, or in response to changes, or as a follow up audit in the case of suspensions. In all instances, apart from unannounced audits, the company will be informed in writing of the requirements of these audit activities.

### **14 Complaints and Appeals**

NSF Certification UK operates a documented complaints and appeals procedure as part of the quality system. Complaints and appeals must be made in writing by named person(s) and addressed to the Quality Manager, NSF Certification UK Ltd, Long Hanborough, Oxford, OX29 8SJ. Refer to the NSF Scheme Regulations for more information.

# Certification Process

