

## Collaboration between IFS and SQF certification programmes

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News



During last week's [CIES/GFSI Food Safety](#) Conference in Amsterdam, the International Food Standard (IFS) and Safe Quality Food (SQF) certification programmes announced their future collaboration.

Areas of cooperation will include auditor qualifications, selection of accreditation and certification bodies and connection between the databases. The actual standards will not be affected and both [IFS](#) and [SQF](#) will continue to provide global services for food safety certification worldwide.

IFS is the food safety standard of the German, French, Italian, Austrian, Swiss and Spanish retailers with currently more than 8,500 certifications per year.

SQF is the food safety standard provided by the Food Marketing Institute, United States with over 8,000 certifications per year.

With the harmonisation of the services by the two standard owners, suppliers and retailers will benefit by efficiencies in the system. Both schemes are recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), which is managed by CIES – The Food Business Forum. GFSI's mission is to continuously improve food safety management systems to ensure confidence in the delivery of safe food to consumers.

The GFSI Guidance Document Version 5 (released September 2007), contains commonly agreed criteria for food safety standards, against which any food or farm assurance standard can be benchmarked. GFSI does not undertake any accreditation or certification activities. This benchmarking assists retailers who need to accept certificates based on standards in order to be able to make an assessment of their suppliers of private-label products and fresh products and meat, to ensure that production is carried out in a safe manner. There are many of these standards and, because they have many customers, suppliers may be audited many times per year, at a high cost and with little added benefit.

The benchmarking work undertaken by the standard owners and other key stakeholders on four food safety schemes (BRC, IFS, Dutch HACCP and SQF) has now reached a point of convergence. Each scheme has now aligned itself with common criteria defined by food safety experts from the food business, with the objective of making food manufacture as safe as possible. As a result, this will also drive cost efficiency in the supply chain and reduce the duplication of audits.

The GFSI vision of 'once certified, accepted everywhere' is already a reality. Carrefour, Tesco, Metro, Migros, Ahold, Wal-Mart and Delhaize have agreed to reduce duplication in the supply chain through the common acceptance of any of the four GFSI benchmarked schemes.