**PART A**

**Introduction to Implementing a Food Safety Program and 3rd Party Food Safety Audit**

**FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM**

**TOOLS & RESOURCES**

**Provided to Suppliers of**

**Whole Foods Market**

**Version 1**

**March 19, 2020**

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# Introduction

## Purpose of this Guidance Manual

This guidance manual is intended to provide Whole Foods Market suppliers with tools and resources to implement a food safety program and prepare for a 3rd party food safety audit.

Documenting, Implementing and Maintaining a food safety program is a significant amount of work. By providing the material contained in this document and the supporting information, WFM hopes to reduce some of the effort and initial investment required for suppliers to implement a food safety program and prepare for a 3rd party food safety audit.

## Responsibility for Compliance

The responsibility to comply with all applicable local, state and federal food safety regulations and any 3rd party food safety audit standard fall with the supplier. WFM is supplying these tools and resources to support suppliers in the development of a food safety program. The tools and resources in this manual MUST be adapted by the suppliers to meet regulatory requirements and any 3rd party audit food safety audit standard.

# Tips on Getting Started

This section is intended to provide suppliers a high level overview of what is involved in implementing a food safety program and a 3rd party food safety audit.

## Leadership Commitment

Support from the most senior level of the organization is imperative in implementing a food safety program as both financial and personnel resources are required. Once implemented the program will require a person and team to oversee its effective ongoing maintenance.

## Review Food Safety Program Expectations

Part B of these resources outlines expectations for implementing an auditable food safety program. Reviewing these will give suppliers an understanding of the scope of work that lies ahead. Suppliers can also jump to this section for a [quick look at the various elements](#_Food_Safety_Program) that make up a food safety program.

Suppliers must also understand the regulatory requirements that apply to their facility ([see this section](#_Regulatory_References)), FDA, USDA, CFIA requirements will apply depending on the type of product and where it is produced.

## Assemble the Food Safety Team

One of the first steps in building a food safety program is to assemble a cross functional team. The size and roles on the team will depend on the size of the organization. A team leader with primary responsibility for the food safety program should also be identified. Representatives from key areas including human resources, production, maintenance, sanitation and sales should also be included.

Depending on the internal resources available suppliers may want to hire a food safety consultant. It is recommended you interview multiple consultants to ensure they have the expertise needed to support you. Be sure to ask for references for similar work the consultant has completed in the past.

## Set an Implementation Plan

Implementing a food safety program and preparing for a 3rd party is a significant task and should be planned accordingly. [This section](#_Implementation_Plan_for) outlines some of the major tasks in implementing a program and can be customized with start and end dates for your facility.

## Take Food Safety Training

Food safety training is critical in ensuring the effectiveness of your program AND is required by regulations and 3rd party audit standards. [This section](#_Food_Safety_Training) discusses training however it is important to understand now that you may need to dedicate multiple days to food safety training.

## Types of 3rd Party Food Safety Audits

There are two broad categories of 3rd party food safety audits: audits that are certified to a [Global Food Safety Initiative Scheme (GFSI)](https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/), and audits that are not certified to a GFSI scheme. **It is recommended WFM suppliers starting their food safety journey or undergoing their first 3rd party food safety audit choose a non-certified audit** (though all GFSI certified audit schemes are accepted by WFM). A non-certified audit will assess the facilities food safety program however it is a less rigorous standard than a GFSI certified food safety scheme. Examples of a GFSI certified scheme include [SQF](https://www.sqfi.com/what-is-the-sqf-program/sqf-food-safety-program/) and [BRCGS](https://www.brcgs.com/).

All 3rd party food safety audits are completed by independent organizations – these organization can become accredited by an oversight body which adds additional credibility.

A regulatory inspection by the local health department, state or federal agency is NOT a 3rd party audit.

## Pick a 3rd Party Audit Company

WFM accepts 3rd party food safety audits (not certified to a GFSI scheme) from the accredited auditing agencies listed below. While the audits from these companies will be similar, there are subtle differences to the exact requirements.

**Suppliers should get a copy of the specific audit expectations when selecting the audit company. The scope of audit must include GMPs and review of the Food Safety Plan/HACCP Plan.**

The approximate cost of a 3rd party food safety audit is $1500-$2000. Suppliers will enter into a service agreement with one of the companies below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Company Name & Hyperlink** | **Comments** |
| [NSF International](http://www.nsf.org/services/by-industry/food-safety-quality/processing/processing-audits) | Audits for all food and beverage sectors |
| [Meriuex NutriSciences](https://www.merieuxnutrisciences.com/us/services/food-safety-and-quality/audits-and-inspections) | Audits for all food and beverage sectors |
| [Food Safety Net Services](http://fsns.com/services/auditing) | Audits for all food and beverage sectors |
| [AIB](https://www.aibinternational.com/apac/Schedule-Your-Facility-Visit/GMPs/GMP-Inspection)  | Accepted for bakeries only |
| [Primus](https://primusauditingops.com/) | Accepted for produce only |

## Schedule 3rd party audit

Suppliers should call to book the audit at least 3 months in advance of the desired audit date. Be sure as you enter into an agreement with a 3rd party audit company and schedule the audit, **you get a copy of the detailed audit requirements.**

## Preparing for 3rd party audit

Do not move forward with the audit unless you have a copy of the audit requirements. Suppliers should use the requirements before the audit to ensure the food safety program meets the requirements. Suppliers can also schedule a ‘gap assessment’ or pre-audit assessment at their facility with a consultant or a representative from the 3rd party audit company in advance of the audit to ensure readiness.

## Benefits of Food Safety Program and 3rd Party Audit

There are a number of benefits of implementing a food safety program and undergoing a 3rd party audit. Example of these include:

* Better management of food safety risks that could negatively impact your business
* Helps you meet regulatory (i.e. FDA, USDA, CFIA, etc.) requirements
* Provides your customers higher levels of confidence in the safety and quality of your product
* Increased credibility with current and prospective customers – the 3rd party audit can be presented to other customers to help win new business
* Improved efficiency through standard operating procedures
* Improved product quality - many suppliers have reported better quality and consistency of their product after the food safety program has been implemented

# Supporting Resources Provided

There are 3 key resources included in the material provided by WFM and are outlined below.

**Part A:** Introduction to Implementing a Food Safety Program and 3rd Party Food Safety Audit

**Part B:** Food Safety Program Expectations (based on a 3rd party audit standard)

**Document Templates:** Sample templates to develop and document a food safety program (hosted on NSF Egnyte)

Part A provides a general overview of implementing a food safety program and how to prepare for a 3rd party food safety audit.

Parts B, along with the Document Templates, are intended to support food and beverage suppliers document, implement and maintain a food safety program that is aligned with a 3rd party audit standard that is accepted by Whole Foods.

These expectations may be new to certain suppliers, specifically those very small suppliers or those that have traditionally operated as a retail establishment and only been inspected by the local health department.

# What is a Food Safety Program?

A food safety program:

1. Is a **documented system** to manage food safety and meet regulatory requirements
2. Establishes and implements the **facility conditions** to produce safe food
3. Identifies known or reasonably foreseeable food safety **hazards & and implements preventive controls** to ‘significantly reduce or prevent identified hazards’ from impacting the safety of the food

**A food safety program is specific to a facility and consists of the following elements:**

1. Management Commitment
2. Prerequisite Programs / Good Manufacturing Practices
3. Food Safety Plan (FDA) / HACCP Plan (USDA)

This section will discuss the 3 elements above in more detail. It must be noted that some of the specific terminology varies depending on the regulatory body, however the general principles above apply regardless of the regulatory jurisdiction. Suppliers should understand the specific regulations applicable to their operation.

**Management Commitment:**

Support from the most senior level of the organization is imperative in implementing a food safety program as both financial and personnel resources are required. Once implemented the program will require a person and team to oversee its effective ongoing maintenance. The food safety policy should be signed off by the facility’s or the company’s senior leadership demonstrating the organization’s commitment to food safety.

**Prerequisite Programs & Good Manufacturing Practices**

Prerequisite programs are the foundational pieces of a food safety program. They are procedures that include Good Manufacturing Practices and provide the basic environmental and operating conditions required to support food safety. Examples include:

* Personnel
* Plant and Grounds
* Sanitary operations
* Sanitary facilities and controls
* Equipment and utensils
* Processes and controls
* Warehousing and distribution

A number of standard operating procedures and programs for the items above are included as part of the resource material provided by Whole Foods. Supplier will however need to adapt the templates to their specific operation.

**Food Safety Plan / HACCP Plan**

For facilities regulated by the FDA, the term Food Safety Plan is used throughout the regulations to describe how hazards are identified and controlled. For facilities regulated by the USDA, HACCP plan is the term used. For Canadian suppliers, the CFIA uses the term Preventive Controls Plan.

All are similar means of identifying hazards and implementing preventive controls to manage the biological, chemical and physical hazards associated with food products.

**Food Safety Plan** - A set of written documents that is based on food safety principles, incorporates hazard analysis, preventive controls, supply chain programs and a recall plan; and delineates the procedures to be followed for monitoring, corrective actions and verifications

**HACCP** – A system which identifies, evaluates and controls hazards which are significant for food safety. The HACCP plan is the written record of all of the steps of HACCP including how the plan will be used.

**Preliminary Steps in Developing Food Safety Plan/HACCP Plan**

The following 5 steps are critical as you begin to develop your food safety/HACCP plan. This will set the stage for completing the hazards analysis.

1. Assemble the food safety team
2. Describe the product and its distribution
3. Describe the intended use and consumers of the food
4. Develop a flow diagram and describe the process
5. Verify the flow diagram on-site

**With the 5 steps above complete, the food safety team will identify hazards associated with the process.**

**Hazard Analysis:**

* Is the identification and evaluation of known or reasonably foreseeable hazards for each type of food manufactured, processed, packed or held at the facility to determine whether there are any hazards requiring a preventive control
* Includes any biological, chemical (including radiological), or physical agent that has the potential to cause illness or injury.
* It is the process of looking at the food and processes in the organization to find the potential hazards to food safety.

**Preventive controls:**

* Those risk-based, reasonably appropriate procedures, practices, and processes that a person knowledgeable about the safe manufacturing, processing, packing, or holding of food would employ to significantly minimize or prevent the hazards identified under the hazard analysis that are consistent with the current scientific understanding of safe food manufacturing, processing, packing, or holding at the time of the analysis.

A Food Safety Plan template is available as part of the support resources. There are also [worksheets available here](https://www.ifsh.iit.edu/sites/ifsh/files/departments/fspca/pdfs/FSPCA_Ap2_Worksheets__V1.1_Fillable.pdf) to use for suppliers regulated by the FDA.

HACCP resources for USDA regulated suppliers are [available here](http://haccpalliance.org/alliance/haccpmodels.html).

The CFIA provides a guide for Canadian suppliers [here](https://www.inspection.gc.ca/preventive-controls/preventive-control-plans/guide/eng/1427746591578/1427746679297).

## Regulatory References

In the US, there are two regulatory bodies that oversee food safety depending on the type of products produced. The USDA oversees meat, poultry and egg products. The FDA oversees all other food products. In Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency oversees all food products. The table below provides links to applicable resources and regulations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Jurisdiction** | **Requirement** | **Reference with hyperlinks** |
| FDA | Registration of Food Facilities | * [FDA Compliance Guidance](https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/UCM332657.pdf)
* [FDA Registration Site](https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/foodfacilityregistration/default.htm)
 |
| USDA | USDA requirement assistance information  | * [Small & Very Small Plant information](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/svsp)
 |
| USDA | USDA/FSIS **HACCP meat & poultry** | * [USDA Pathogen Reduction/HACCP Guidance](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/haccp/pr-and-haccp-guidance-documents/pathogen-reduction-haccp-guidance)
 |
| FDA | FDA HACCP/Food Safety Plan | * [FSMA Facts includes training info](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/)
* [FDA Small Plant Industry Guidance](https://www.fda.gov/downloads/food/guidanceregulation/guidancedocumentsregulatoryinformation/ucm526507.pdf)
* [FDA FSMA FAQs](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm247559.htm)
 |
| FDA | Seafood HACCP (required for seafood handling locations to include distribution centers) | * [Seafood HACCP](https://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/ucm2006764.htm)
* [HACCP Training](http://www.afdo.org/seafoodhaccp)
 |
| FDA | GMP Food Safety requirements | * [GMP 21 CFR 117](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=117)
 |
| FDA | Sanitation Food Safety requirement | * [GMP 21 CFR 117](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=117)
 |
| FDA & USDA | Recall Plan | * [21 CFR 117](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=117)
* [FSIS/USDA Recall Directive](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/77a99dc3-9784-4a1f-b694-ecf4eea455a6/8080.1.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)
* [FSIS/USDA Recall info](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/production-and-inspection/fsis-food-recalls/fsis-food-recalls)
 |
| FDA & USDA | Allergen Control Program Food Safety requirement | * [Allergen Labeling Law](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/Allergens/ucm106890.htm)
* [Allergen Control Guidance for All Industries](https://farrp.unl.edu/allergen-control-food-industry)
* [FSIS Allergen Compliance](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/f9cbb0e9-6b4d-4132-ae27-53e0b52e840e/Allergens-Ingredients.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)
 |
| Various | Weights & Measures regulatory requirements | * [NIST Handbook 133](http://www.nist.gov/pml/wmd/pubs/hb133.cfm)
 |
| FDA & USDA | Pathogen Environmental Monitoring Program | * [FDA Listeria Control Guidance](https://www.fda.gov/files/food/published/Draft-Guidance-for-Industry--Control-of-Listeria-monocytogenes-in-Ready-To-Eat-Foods-%28PDF%29.pdf)
* [USDA Listeria Control Guidance](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/259fcaf4-ce2b-4ba1-8140-da873243040f/Chapter_3_Controlling_LM_RTE_guideline_0912.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)
 |
| FDA | Supplier Control program | * [FDA FSMA Supplier Verification](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/ucm583475.htm)
 |
| FDA | Foreign Supplier Verification (FSVP)  | * [FSMA FSVP](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm361902.htm)
 |
| FDA | Sanitary Transport FDA FSMA requirement | * [FSMA Sanitary Transport](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm383763.htm)
 |
| FDA | Food Defense & Intentional Adulteration  | * [Food Defense Program and tools](https://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodDefense/default.htm)
 |
| CFIA | Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) | * [SFCR Getting Started Toolkit](https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-safety-for-industry/toolkit-for-food-businesses/eng/1427299500843/1427299800380)
 |

# Implementation Plan for a Food Safety Program

Each supplier’s unique situation will determine the path to implementation and the amount of time required. Factors impacting the amount of time includes things like:

* Current status of food safety programs
* Size and complexity (including number of different products) of the operation
* Internal capacity of staff (including both experience in food safety and time available)
	+ a consultant can be used to support the implementation process if needed

This section is intended to provide a high level guideline to both understand the scope of work required and the implementation process. Suppliers should be in contact with WFM to confirm the deadline to complete a 3rd party food safety audit.

## Sample 6 & 12 Month Implementation Timeline

Based on each suppliers unique situation the timeline on the right hand side of the table below can be adjusted as necessary.

**6 Month Sample Implementation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Implementation Step** | **MONTH** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** |
| 1 | Review the Food Safety Program expectations (Part B) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2 | Assemble the Food Safety Team |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Complete self-assessment to the expectations in Part B |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Complete food safety training |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5 | Implement Food Safety Plan/HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Preventive Controls) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6 | Implement Prerequisite Programs/GMPs |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7 | Complete self-assessment again |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8 | Schedule the 3rd party audit |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9 | Secure audit expectations and review in detail |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10 | Maintain records to verify program is implemented |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11 | Complete 3rd party audit (generally 1 full day) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12 | Complete corrective actions from audit |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13 | Share audit report and corrective actions with WFM |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**12 Month Sample Implementation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Implementation Step** | **MONTH** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** |
| 1 | Review the Food Safety Program expectations (Part B) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2 | Assemble the Food Safety Team |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Complete self-assessment to the expectations in Part B |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Complete food safety training |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5 | Implement Food Safety Plan/HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Preventive Controls) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6 | Implement Prerequisite Programs/GMPs |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7 | Complete self-assessment again |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8 | Schedule the 3rd party audit |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9 | Secure audit expectations and review in detail |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10 | Maintain records to verify program is implemented |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11 | Complete 3rd party audit (generally 1 full day) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12 | Complete corrective actions from audit |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13 | Share audit report and corrective actions with WFM |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

## Implementation Process Checklist

As suppliers begin to implement their food safety program based on the expectations outlined in Part B of these resources, the checklist below can be used to track progress through each element or section of the food safety program.

The **Implementation Process** for each element of the food safety program can follow these 5 Steps:

Step 1 – **Review the expectations** outlined in Part B to fully understand the scope of work with the specific section/element of the food safety program.

Step 2 – **Assess the current status** in the facility against the expectations for each element

Step 3 – Use the food safety document templates provided to **create new procedures** to meet the expectations of each element of the food safety program.

Step 4 – **Provide necessary training** to individuals to ensure the proper implementation of the procedures

Step 5 – By **completing records** suppliers demonstrate that the food safety program has been implemented and is being maintained and also verifies compliance against the program elements.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Food Safety Program Elements | **Implementation Process** |
| **Step 1** | **Step 2** | **Step 3** | **Step 4** | **Step 5** |
| **Reviewed Expectations** | **Assessed Against Current Practices** | **Created New Procedures & Forms** | **Provided Training on Procedures** | **Completed Records to Demonstrate Implementation** |
| Administration |   |   |   |   |   |
| Food Safety Plan/HACCP |   |   |   |   |   |
| Facilities & Equipment |   |   |   |   |   |
| Sanitation, Housekeeping and Hygiene |   |   |   |   |   |
| Rodent and Pest Control Management |   |   |   |   |   |
| Approved Suppliers, Receiving, Storage, Shipping, Inventory Control |   |   |   |   |   |
| Process and Product Evaluation |   |   |   |   |   |
| Foreign Material Control |   |   |   |   |   |
| Packaging and Labeling |   |   |   |   |   |
| Training Requirements |   |   |   |   |   |
| Laboratory Support |   |   |   |   |   |
| Food Defense |   |   |   |   |   |
| Ready to Eat, High Risk/High Care Foods Processing Requirements |   |   |   |   |   |

# Food Safety Training Guidance

There are many options on the type of courses and various service providers when pursuing food safety training. This section will outline a recommended approach along with some suggested training courses and service providers. In addition to the formal food safety training courses below, a number of resources are available [in the ‘References’ section](#_Reference_Page) which can also help suppliers gain a foundational knowledge in food safety.

For facilities regulated by FDA, steps 1, 2 and 3 are suggested. For sites regulated by USDA and CFIA, steps 1 and 2 are suggested.

1. Take Introductory Food Safety course if you’re just getting started
	1. If you are new to food safety programs, it is recommend you take an introductory course to food safety before beginning more advanced training
		1. An ‘introduction to food safety course’ such as this [online webinar](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/introduction-food-safety-and-haccp-webinar) will provide a foundational background in food safety and prepare you for more advanced food safety training
2. Take HACCP Training
	1. Some 3rd Party Audit Standards specify that the individual assigned as the HACCP team leader must have formal HACCP training of a minimum 2 full days (NSF’s audit specifically requires this).
3. If you’re site is regulated by the FDA, take the **FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food** course
	1. FDA regulations, require food safety plans be prepared or overseen by a “Preventive Controls Qualified Individual” (PCQI).
	2. The “FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food” course is the standardized curriculum recognized by FDA to become a PCQI
	3. This is a 2.5 day training course
	4. In person and online training can be found here: <https://fspca.force.com/FSPCA/s/courselist?language=en_US>

**Potential Training Courses:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Course** | **Service Provider** | **Difficulty** | **Duration** | **Cost** |
| Introduction | [Introduction to Food Safety & HACCP (webinar)](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/introduction-food-safety-and-haccp-webinar) | NSF International | Beginner | 7 hrs | $450 |
| GMP Training | [GMP Refresher Training - Online](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/online-gmp-refresher) | NSF International | Intermediate | 3 hrs  | $150 |
| HACCP Training | [HACCP Training for Processors Online](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/haccp-training-processors-online) | NSF International | Advanced | 13 hrs | $750 |
| HACCP Training | [HACCP Training for Processors In Person](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/haccp-training-processors) | NSF International | Advanced | 16 hrs | $750 |
| HACCP Training | [HACCP Training in Person](http://fsns.com/services/education/haccp-training-course) | FSNS | Advanced | 16 hrs | $795 |
| PCQI Training  | [Online PCQI Training](https://www.aibinternational.com/en/Training/Food-Safety-Quality/FSMA/PCQI-Online) | AIB International | Advanced | n/a | $995 |
| PCQI Training  | [In Person PCQI Training](https://www.nsflearn.com/us/courses/fspca-preventive-controls-human-food-pcqi-training) | NSF International | Advanced | 20 hrs | $899 |
| Various | [Various Training Options](https://www.alchemysystems.com/business-needs/food-safety/) | Alchemy Systems | Various | n/a | n/a |

## GFSI Training Resources

The service providers listed above also provide training on GFSI recognized scheme for suppliers interested in pursuing those standards (ex. SQF, BRCGS, FSSC 22000). Below are links to access the various courses available:

* NSF International - <https://www.nsflearn.com/ca/course-categories/gfsi-training-sqf-brcgs-ifs-fssc>
* FSNS - <http://fsns.com/services/education>
* AIB International - <https://www.aibinternational.com/en/Training/Food-Safety-Quality/GFSI>

# FAQ

**Q: How is a 3rd party audit different than an inspection from the Health Department?**

A: A health inspection will focus the sanitary conditions of the facility. A 3rd party food safety audit will include a review of the site conditions, as well as a review of the systems and programs in place to manage food safety.

**Q: Why do I need a 3rd party audit if I am already inspected by the local health department?**

A: A 3rd party audit is a more thorough assessment of how food safety is managed at the facility.

**Q: How long will it take to document and implement a food safety program?**

A: If no documented programs are in place it can take several months to get a food safety program documented and fully implemented. The exact timing will vary based on facility size, and the resources available (including staff or consultants).

**Q: After I implement my food safety program how long before I can get an audit?**

A: Once you have completed implementing your food safety program an audit company will want to review at least 1-3 months of records (evidence showing that you are following your food safety programs and procedures). This should be confirmed when you schedule the audit.

**Q: Should I hire a consultant to help me implement my food safety program?**

A: If you don’t have time or are struggling with how to implement your program you should consider hiring a food safety consultant.

**Q: Can I get a checklist of the things the auditor will look for?**

A: Yes. Before entering into an agreement with an audit company be sure to get a copy of the specific audit requirements.

**Q: Who from my company needs to be involved in the audit?**

A: The person responsible for your food safety program would be the primary contact during the audit and key leadership from the company/facility should also participate or be available during the audit. All management should attend the opening and closing meetings during the audit day.

**Q: How far in advance do I need to schedule an audit?**

A: Schedule the audit at least 3 months in advance of the preferred audit date.

**Q: How long will the audit take?**

A: A GMP & Food Safety Plan/HACCP based audit generally takes 1 full day on site. An audit against a GFSI certified scheme (ex. SQF, BRCS) can take 2 full days or more.

**Q: How much does a 3rd party audit cost?**

A: A typical cost is $1500-$2000/day. Travel time fees expenses will be in addition to the audit cost so ask for a cost estimate of travel expenses.

**Q: What documentation should I prepare to have ready for the review during the audit?**

A: All of your procedures and records should be organized and available for the auditor. The audit will review your documented food safety programs and verify they have been implemented by reviewing completed records.

**Q: What is the passing score on an audit?**

A: A passing grade 85% of greater. Score lower than 85% or if the audit results in an automatic failure for critical finding, a re-audit is required.

**Q: What happens if I fail my audit?**

A: If you do not pass your first audit you are required to undergo a re-audit within 90 days of the failed audit.

**Q: What happens after I pass my audit?**

A: You will need to address any non-conformances identified during the audit to officially pass your audit – your audit company will explain this process (this is standard practice for all audits). After this, you begin the continuous improvement phase of your food safety journey, this is an ongoing commitment. Suppliers are required to pass an audit every 12 months.

# Relevant Resources

## FDA Resources

[FDA Guidance for Small Suppliers](https://www.fda.gov/media/100921/download) – Guidance of FDA regulatory requirements (GMP, Hazard Analysis, Ris-Based Preventive Controls for Human Food)

[Food Safety Plan Worksheets](https://www.ifsh.iit.edu/sites/ifsh/files/departments/fspca/pdfs/FSPCA_Ap2_Worksheets__V1.1_Fillable.pdf) – Fillable forms to support develop a Food Safety Plan

[FDA Food Safety Plan Builder](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm539791.htm) – Tool designed to assist owners and operators of a food facility with the development of a food safety plan specific to their facilities

[FSMA Final Rule for Preventive Controls of Human Food](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334115.htm) - Primary requirements and updates of GMP’s, Food Safety Plan, Guidelines for Hazard Analysis, Control of Listeria M, and FSMA Training.

[FDA Food Code](https://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-protection/fda-food-code) – Information of legal basis for regulating the retail and food service section of the industry (Restaurants, grocery)

[Food Safety and Preventive Controls Alliance](https://www.ifsh.iit.edu/fspca) – The website provides a list of links for training, technical assistance, FSMA (Rules & Standards), webinars, presentations and conferences

[FDA Juice HACCP Guidance](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/HACCP/ucm2006803.htm) – The website assists producers with information regarding HACCP Regulations, Rules and Implementation

[Guidance Documents for Industry (Acidified & Low -Acid Canned Foods Guidance Documents & regulatory Information)](https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-documents-regulatory-information-topic-food-and-dietary-supplements/acidified-low-acid-canned-foods-guidance-documents-regulatory-information) – Instructions for establishment registration and process filing along with other information useful to Acidified Foods and Low-Acid Canned Foods’ Manufacturers.

[Bad Bug Book](https://www.fda.gov/files/food/published/Bad-Bug-Book-2nd-Edition-%28PDF%29.pdf) – Handbook of Foodborne Pathogenic Microorganisms and Natural Toxins

[Food Allergens/ Gluten- Free](https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-documents-regulatory-information-topic-food-and-dietary-supplements/food-allergensgluten-free-guidance-documents-regulatory-information) – Guidance Documents & Regulatory Information FDA

[FDA Safety Alerts & Advisories](https://www.fda.gov/food/recalls-outbreaks-emergencies/alerts-advisories-safety-information) – The link provides information about safety alerts, consumer advisories, and other safety information

[Dairy Grade Voluntary HACCP](https://www.fda.gov/food/hazard-analysis-critical-control-point-haccp/dairy-grade-voluntary-haccp) – Voluntary dairy HACCP pilot program for dairy plants

[Chemical, Metals, Natural Toxins & Pesticides](https://www.fda.gov/food/guidance-documents-regulatory-information-topic-food-and-dietary-supplements/chemical-metals-natural-toxins-pesticides-guidance-documents-regulations) – Guidance Document and regulations

[FSMA Final Rule on Produce Safety](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm334114.htm) – A list of standards for Farmer’s Operations

[Produce Safety Alliance Training Courses](https://producesafetyalliance.cornell.edu/training) – A list of Produce Safety Training Courses for fresh growers to meet the regulatory standards in the FDA, FSMA and Produce Safety Rule

[Guide to minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazard of Fresh-cut Fruits and Vegetables](https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-guide-minimize-microbial-food-safety-hazards-fresh-cut-fruits-and-vegetables) – Overview about the GMP’s (Good Manufacturing Practices) for the Primary Production and Harvesting of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

[On Farm Food Safety Project](http://onfarmfoodsafety.org/) – A website with information about food safety (Plans and Training)

[FDA Seafood HACCP Compliance](https://www.fda.gov/food/seafood-guidance-documents-regulatory-information/fish-and-fishery-products-hazards-and-controls)– A protocol for the Sea Food industry about HACCP (Videos, Series, Labeling, etc)

[AFDOSeafood HACCP Resources](http://www.afdo.org/seafoodhaccp) – Provides courses and training sessions for the Seafood Industry about HACCP

[Training for Carriers covered by the Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Food Rule](https://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm576097.htm) – Free one hour training to assist carriers meet the FDA requirements (Sanitary Transportation Rules)

## ****USDA HACCP Resources****

[Small & Very Small Plants](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/svsp) – Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) policies, technical assistance and answer to common questions from small plants across US

[USDA Pathogen Reduction/HACCP Guidance Documents](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/regulatory-compliance/haccp/pr-and-haccp-guidance-documents/pathogen-reduction-haccp-guidance) – Compliance guides and Performance Standards

## CFIA Resources

[Toolkit for Food Business](https://www.inspection.gc.ca/food-safety-for-industry/toolkit-for-food-businesses/eng/1427299500843/1427299800380) – tools and resource to comply with Canadian food regulations

## Other Resources

[FARRP](https://farrp.unl.edu/) – Food Allergy Research and Resource Program

[3M Environmental Monitoring Guide](https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/food-safety-us/resources/education/environmental-monitoring/) – A digital copy of the Handbook Hygiene Monitoring, Allergens, Indicator Organisms, Spoilage Organisms, Pathogens, Environmental Sampling Guidance