

Global Food Safety Initiative

In April 2000, a group of international retailer CEOs identified the need to enhance food safety, ensure consumer protection, strengthen consumer confidence, to set requirements for food safety schemes and to improve cost efficiency throughout the food supply chain. Following their lead, the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) was launched in May 2000. The Initiative is facilitated by CIES – The Food Business Forum.

Objectives

The focus of GFSI is to monitor issues around food safety management standards (The Global Standards Project).

The Global Standards Project

GFSI has developed a Guidance Document, now in its fourth edition, against which food safety management standards can be benchmarked. The benchmark requirements in the Guidance Document are made up of three key elements: Food Safety Management Systems, Good Practices for Agriculture, Manufacturing or Distribution and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point). In addition, requirements for the delivery of auditing and certification based on these standards have been added to the document.

Once a food safety standard has been benchmarked successfully, the standard is “acknowledged”. The conforming benchmarked food safety management standards can be applied by food suppliers throughout the whole supply chain, upon agreement with retailers, when defining contracts for sourcing of products. The application of the benchmarked standards to particular products will be at the discretion of retailers and suppliers. This process will vary in different parts of the world, depending on:

- company policies;
- general regulatory requirements;
- product liability and due diligence regulations.

GFSI does not undertake any certification or accreditation activities. Instead, GFSI encourages the use of third party audits against benchmarked standards, with the goal of enabling suppliers to work more effectively through less audits and reducing travel costs for retailers so that resources can be redirected to continually ensure the quality of food produced and sold world-wide.

The five compliant benchmarked standards are:

- BRC Technical Standard
- Dutch HACCP Code
- EFSIS standard
- International Standard for Auditing Food Suppliers (International Food Standard)
- SQF 2000 Code

Benchmarking of farm assurance standards, for agricultural produce, has started this year.

Other food safety projects of CIES include:

Coordination of Good Retail Practices

An inventory of best practice on good retail practices around the world will be established and made available to all retailers as part of the GFSI knowledge resource centre.

The inventory will present a methodology to CIES and to industry partners that will support their initiative to ensure continuous improvement and development of in-store food safety. The purpose is not to develop a global procedures manual, but to present a road map for continuous improvement of in-store food safety practices.

Development of Traceability Guidelines

Implementation of traceability will become obligatory for all operators in the food chain in the EU from 1st January 2005. This means a business must be able to identify all of its food, food products and feed suppliers and all the businesses to which they have supplied food or feed to. The information needs to be systematically stored, and to be made available to inspection authorities upon request. A proposal to introduce a similar system has been adopted in the USA (Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Act of 2002).

Traceability Guidelines are have been developed by a cross-functional working group and contain specifications on processes, an explanation of how to align data and how to implement your system. It is available at www.ciesnet.com.

International Food Safety Conference

The International Food Safety Conference addresses key food safety issues and concepts within the food business, whilst providing a unique opportunity to learn about the latest developments of the Global Food Safety Initiative and practical solutions for managing food safety. The event is targeted at senior managers who influence food safety strategy within their businesses.

The Fourth International Food Safety Conference will be organised by CIES - The Food Business Forum on 3rd & 4th February 2005 in Rome.

For further details on GFSI or the International Food Safety Conference, please contact:

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