

ISSUE 8
START!
QUICK GUIDE



Benefits of the *START!* programme

Adoption of the programme leads to a number of benefits to food businesses.

- 1** Is aligned with the GFSI Global Markets programme (the full Standard is GFSI-benchmarked)
- 2** Provides a clearly defined audit and certification process operated in accordance with the requirements of accreditation
- 3** Uses auditors that meet the demanding competency requirements of BRCGS
- 4** Enables companies achieving basic and intermediate levels to appear in the publicly available part of the BRCGS Directory, thereby recognising their achievements
- 5** Uses requirements based on the Standard, enabling the basic and intermediate levels to provide effective stepping stones towards full certification (if required by customers)
- 6** Requires completion of corrective actions on any non-conformities before certification at the basic or intermediate level is awarded, thus reducing the need for customers to follow up audit reports.

Steps to certification

- 1** | **LEARN** Visit the BRCGS online bookshop brcgsbookshop.com or BRCGS Participate brcgsparticipate.com. Obtain a copy of the Standard, its FREE to download from the BRCGS Bookshop and study it.
- 2** | **REVIEW** Perform a self-assessment gap analysis to find out what is missing or inadequate, a gap-analysis tool is available on our website. Assemble and train a team. Obtain consultancy if needed.
- 3** | **PREPARE** Carry out risk assessments. Establish necessary control points. Prepare procedures. Confirm site is capable of meeting BRCGS requirements. Undertake internal audits.
- 4** | **PLAN** Select and contact a suitable certification body. Arrange a pre-assessment visit (optional). Implement any identified corrective actions.
- 5** | **AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION** Arrange an audit visit. Make sure staff are available and preparations are made. Audit is conducted. Carry out corrective action, root cause analysis and plan preventive action. Certification body presents audit report and determines whether the site can achieve certification.labels.
- 6** | **PREPARE** Continue to meet requirements. Arrange new audit before expiry. Continual development.

Why choose the BRCGS?

Achievable

Takes a common sense, risk-based approach, providing companies with a clear path towards achieving certification. Over 28,000 sites in more than 138 different countries have risen to the challenge.

Appropriate

The Standard is HACCP based and incorporates food safety management systems and internationally accepted best manufacturing practices to ensure product safety and quality.

Supported by customers

Many retailers, food service companies and major food manufacturers around the world support the use of the Standard and accept it as part of their supplier approval process.

Cost effective

Widely accepted certification reduces the need and expense of duplicate audits. Audits are completed by local BRCGS trained and approved auditors to enable an internationally accepted Standard to be audited at local rates.

Additional modules

In addition to the core Standard, BRCGS will develop a range of modules which may apply only to particular types of operation (e.g. sites producing gluten free products) or may look in greater depth at a particular market concern (e.g. chain of custody). These modules are optional additions to the Standard and are designed to reduce multiple audits or to meet specific geographic or customer requirements.

Auditing

The factory audits are carried out by independent companies known as certification bodies. These companies have to meet stringent requirements to be approved by BRCGS and a full list can be found on the BRCGS Directory.

Every auditor carrying out BRCGS audits also has to demonstrate competence in terms of education, training and practical experience. BRCGS operates an ongoing monitoring and calibration process for auditors and certification bodies and publishes performance ratings every 6 months. This drives consistency and confidence in the audit and certification process.

Requirements

1. SENIOR MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The site's senior management shall demonstrate they are fully committed to the implementation of the requirements of the **START!** programme and to processes which facilitate continual improvement of food safety and quality management.

2. THE FOOD SAFETY PLAN – HACCP

The company shall have a fully implemented and effective food safety plan incorporating the Codex Alimentarius HACCP principles.

3. FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The company's processes and procedures to meet the requirements of the **START!** programme shall be documented to allow consistent application, facilitate training, and support due diligence in the production of a safe product.

4. SITE STANDARDS

The production site shall be of suitable size, location and construction, and be maintained to reduce the risk of contamination and facilitate the production of safe and legal finished products.

5. PRODUCT CONTROL

Product design and development procedures shall be in place for new products or processes and any changes to product, packaging or manufacturing processes to ensure that safe and legal products are produced.

6. PROCESS CONTROL

The site shall operate to documented procedures and/or work instructions that ensure the production of consistently safe and legal product with the desired quality characteristics, in full compliance with the HACCP food safety plan.

7. PERSONNEL

Training, protective clothing and hygiene practices are covered in this section.

8. HIGH RISK, HIGH CARE AND AMBIENT HIGH CARE PRODUCTION RISK ZONES

Where a site produces products that require handling in high-risk, high-care and/or ambient high-care production facilities (see Appendix 1 for the definition of products that require these facilities), all the relevant requirements from sections 1–7 of the **START!** programme must be fulfilled in addition to the requirements in this section.

Support

Access the Standard, Interpretation Guideline, supporting publications and additional resources quickly and easily via our online information management platform, BRCGS Participate: brcgsparticipate.com. Printed copies can be purchased from the BRCGS Bookshop, with the Standard available to download FREE of charge: brcgsbookshop.com

Training

The BRCGS Academy provides a wide range of courses in the UK, as well as training around the world in local languages through its network of qualified trainers. Available courses include, understanding and implementing the Standard, as well as specific food safety topics such as HACCP, root cause analysis and vulnerability assessment (assessment of food fraud risks). For more information or to book a course, please visit brcgs.com/training/

Contact us

For more information, call the BRCGS Technical Services Helpline +44 (0)20 3931 8148 or email enquiries@brcgs.com

To learn more about the BRCGS certification programme please visit brcgs.com