

BRCS | Agents and
Brokers

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Agents and Brokers

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Part I

Introduction

Welcome to Issue 3 of the Global Standard for Agents and Brokers (henceforward referred to as the Standard). Originally developed and published in 2014, the Standard has been updated to reflect the current thinking in product safety, including the introduction of product safety culture, and to encourage adoption of the Standard worldwide. The Standard provides a framework to manage product safety, authenticity, quality and legality for businesses in the food, packaging and consumer products industries that buy, sell or facilitate the trade of products, but do not manufacture, process or store the products in their own facilities or on their own sites. These companies play an essential role in the movement and trade of products, providing a critical link in their chain of custody. They can influence their suppliers' product safety and quality standards and are responsible for maintaining an effective chain of traceability. Where the activities include importation, there are often specific legal obligations regarding the products they import. There are also requirements to maintain records, which may be requested later by authorities or customers.

Certification to the BRCS Standards is recognised by many retailers, food service companies and manufacturers around the world when assessing the capabilities of their suppliers. This Standard has been developed to specify the safety, quality and operational criteria required to fulfil obligations with regard to legal compliance and protection of the consumer or end user of the product. The format and content of the Standard is designed to allow an assessment of a company's product safety management systems and procedures by a competent third party – the certification body – against the requirements of the Standard.

What's new for Issue 3?

Issue 3 of the Standard has been developed and reviewed by working groups composed of stakeholders representing different sectors of the industry, agents and brokers, retailers, food service companies, and certification bodies. Their remit was to consider emerging issues and stakeholders' requirements, and the focus of attention for this issue has been on:

- ensuring global applicability and benchmarking to the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) benchmark
- encouraging the development of a product safety culture
- encouraging sites to further develop systems for product security (food defence) and product authenticity in the supply chain
- expanding the audit options to include the use of information technology (IT)
- updating requirements associated with core product safety activities such as internal audits, root cause analysis, preventive actions and incident management
- introducing an audit protocol for remote workers and virtual companies (i.e. where individual employees or the whole company work using an online environment rather than a traditional office location).

The requirements in Issue 3 represent an evolution from previous issues, with a continued emphasis on management commitment, a product safety programme based on risk and hazard analysis, and a supporting quality management system. The continuing objective has been to direct the focus of the audit towards the implementation of good practice.

Product safety culture

A proactive, positive culture within a company can make all the difference in the effectiveness of the product safety and quality plan, and its consistent implementation throughout the site. It relies not just on measurables and procedures, but on the ethos and values felt by people at all levels of the site.