

# Merit Functional Foods achieves AA Food Safety rating status with BRCGS and includes as part of Company Culture

Established in 2019, Merit Functional Foods is a Canadian-based company, providing high quality protein ingredients that offer purity, exceptional taste and excellent solubility. Their accelerated Greenfield Construction Project allowed for a 94,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art production facility to commercialize their high purity pea and canola proteins for use in food and beverage applications - becoming the first commercial facility in the world to produce food-grade canola protein.

Founded by proud Manitobans, Merit Functional Foods prides themselves on supporting the local community, employing over 115 industry professionals in the Winnipeg area. The choice to build in Winnipeg allowed for close proximity to raw material sourcing from the Canadian prairies - seeing production of only the highest quality of plant protein ingredients.

Now commercial and fully scaled to supply leading brands with highly functional ingredients, Merit Functional Foods owns being the first commercial facility in the world with the capability to produce food-grade non-GMO canola protein, a new and exciting entrant to the plant-based space.

**Merit**<sup>™</sup>  
Functional Foods

*"Merit highly recommends the BRCGS Certification to any company looking to build credibility and trust with customers, improve their food safety culture, drive continuous improvement, and encourage accountability."*

## Case study

## Getting Ahead of Certification

Food safety being of the utmost importance to Merit Functional Foods, they quickly acknowledged the importance of GFSI certification behind becoming recognized as a leader in the plant-based protein industry giving them the ability to work with top food and beverage brands.

As part of their company strategy to set the stage for a robust internal food safety practice program, they began work on compliance and certification one-year prior to completion of their production facility.

Their Senior Management team worked positively with BRCGS at previous companies using the Food Safety Standard. With global recognition for the more stringent requirements, but as an easy to interpret Standard, in addition to their ability to stay ahead of industry trends by implementing programs such as Food Safety Culture, Merit Functional Foods made the clear choice with BRCGS.

The company enlisted the help of Goranka and Rajko Platisa from PCR Corporation to provide the comprehensive training required by the Standard. PCR Corporation guided them through and helped customize all of the required documentation.

Prior to the completion of their facility, Merit Functional Foods was able to tackle a large list of requirements, including selecting the right suppliers for their company, conducting audits and completing questionnaires; partner selection for their Certification Bodies; drafting their HACCP plans; setting up in-house laboratory for specification and performance testing; amongst other pre-requirements that could be completed.

While facing challenges with the validation process in an unfinished facility, they were able to lay out program schedules and parameters for outlining success. Having to go through numerous rounds of the validation process, they implemented several team regroupings to focus on what was crucial. Now fully in place, they have dedicated team members to writing and executing the SOP process. The BRCGS certification process ultimately changed their management structure for the better and led to more transparent communication to drive overall success of the team.

PCR Corporation delivered the top-level training, providing the practical and necessary tools of Root Cause Analysis, Validation & Verification and Risk Assessment, helping Merit Functional Foods to excel in their BRCGS certification and gave added value to their employees.



## The Benefits of BRCGS Certification

Achieving BRCGS certification just six months after starting production gave Merit Functional Foods instant credibility within the industry. The certification also helped facilitate the approval as an ingredient supplier, speeding up the customer audit process. Proudly receiving the hard to achieve AA score under the Food Safety Standard, the certification gives credibility to their clients and customers.

Being BRCGS certified has significantly reduced customer complaints through root cause analysis and preventive actions. The Standard forces them to investigate their weaknesses and has helped them improve as a company, because it drives continuous improvement.

Additionally, BRCGS laid out the Standard for their culture. New team members are introduced to Merit Functional Foods through a BRCGS overview – learning the company food safety rules from the start.

## Merit's Best Advice?

Merit Functional Foods found the benefit of working on BRCGS requirements early on, especially when building a new facility. By being able to reference the Standard during the construction phase to ensure compliance with materials and equipment, they easily saved time (and money!) in the long run.

They also advise performing internal audits, so that when the next BRCGS audit comes around, you know what to expect and are not surprised at the outcomes. It's also important to know your strengths and weaknesses to demonstrate to the auditor that you are working on corrections. The audit isn't about being perfect, but showing that you are following the Standard and taking the appropriate corrective actions. If something is logged as non-compliant, but you are working towards correcting it, you shouldn't fail your audit.

Merit highly recommends the BRCGS Certification to any company looking to build credibility and trust with customers, improve their food safety culture, reduce complaints, drive continuous improvement, and encourage accountability – as they witness every day the positive impact The Food Safety Standard has on their business.