

Case study

“The BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers has enabled us to upgrade our quality management system from ISO 9001. It helped us add value to a quality system which requires us to have demonstrated controls of particular significance to our industry, therefore making it much more relevant to us, our suppliers and customers.”

**Sarah Marsden, Technical Director,
Arden's Fine Foods**



Assured quality, assured brand reputation

How Arden Fine Foods improved product quality and brand reputation throughout their supply chain

Overview

Arden Fine Foods Ltd is a UK-based food company, specialising in the supply of a variety of bakery products. Established in 1991, the company quickly grew to become a trusted brand, with an estimated annual turnover of £20 million.

Arden Fine Foods' range of products include sweet and savoury snacks, biscuits and cakes, with a minimum shelf life of three months. The company employs around 30 staff, and works with approximately 20 suppliers based across 30 sites in Europe. Ensuring quality has always been at the forefront of the company's manufacturing strategy.

Joining hands with BRCGS

In 2014, Arden Fine Foods was successfully certificated against the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers. Prior to the certification by BRCGS, the company was certificated against ISO 9001. Sarah Marsden, Technical Director at Arden Fine Foods, says, “We understood that within a growing business it's vital to have defined and controlled quality processes in place. These processes include internal auditing, document control, quality policy, manual and documented working practises. Working

towards establishing these processes in compliance with ISO 9001 helped us to establish the disciplines of a Quality Management System, also intrinsic to the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers. This meant that the lion's share of the preparation for us to meet the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers was already in place.”

When the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers was published, the leap from the ISO 9001 to the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers was quite seamless. As Arden Fine Foods already had a Quality Management System in place, only minor tweaks were needed to incorporate the food safety requirements within the framework. Sarah explains, “The only process we hadn't at the time got in place was a HACCP study of our own part of the operation. All other processes such as supplier control, service provider control and testing were well-established and needed to be refined, rather than starting from scratch.”

Effective quality management

The quality management processes established at Arden Fine Foods, in compliance with the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers, have several benefits. “We now have an effective, multi-dimensional approach to manage

Annual
Turnover 20m

Established
1991



issues related to quality, food safety and suppliers. We can make decisions based on an objective framework and evidence, rather than a more subjective rationale,” says Sarah. “Managing crisis situations have become so much more efficient, as our team is thoroughly trained to maintain certification standards, and everyone understands the quality management processes. This also ensures that new starters have clearly structured quality management processes to work within, ensuring that very few mistakes occur. I’ve been a campaigner amongst the retailers about getting this rolled out across the supplier base, it’s taken some time, and is starting to get traction.” Arden Fine Foods also ensures that its suppliers are certificated against the BRCGS. Sarah states, “We have access to the BRCGS Directory to validate certificates we have been sent by our suppliers.”

Five-point mantra to successfully achieve certification

Arden Fine Foods shares some important advice for sites who aim to implement, or are approaching an audit for the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers. The top five tips they offer are:

Keep it simple: Don’t overcomplicate the process. At Arden Fine Foods, we have re-structured our department folders so that all topics are filed according to the different Standard sections. This makes looking for information during audits extremely easy. Everyone automatically files relevant information into the correct folder in line with the Standard.

Commitment: Ensure you have commitment from the top; if members of the senior management team are not entirely convinced about the advantages of implementing quality management processes, it will be a difficult challenge to achieve certification.

Read the Standard: Read the relevant BRCGS Standard. It’s well written and will guide you through the requirements to achieve certification.

Create support teams: Create your own internal audit and HACCP teams from right across the business, so that it includes as many different disciplines and personnel as possible. This broadens employees’ experience, and adds different points of view to the audit and HACCP teams.

Culture of excellence: Create an organisational culture that encourages continuous improvement and ownership. Mistakes create opportunities to learn and improve.

Boost business growth with the BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers

Agents and Brokers (non-manufacturing traders) who buy, sell or facilitate the trade of products, provide a critical link in the movement and trade of products, and influence supplier product safety and quality standards, as well as being responsible for maintaining an effective chain of traceability. The BRCGS Standard for Agents and Brokers has been developed to provide a framework for managing product safety, quality and legality for these non-manufacturing businesses in the food and packaging industries.

As we have seen in the case of Arden Fine Foods, certification against the Standard can help strengthen quality management in the manufacturing process. It can also aid in tackling a crisis during production, helping to significantly reduce the number of product recalls. Additionally, being listed as a certificated site in the BRCGS Standards Directory helps validate brand reputation, and increases the company’s visibility as a trusted manufacturer.