



For Primary Producers



For Food Manufacturers

The SQF Program

Safe Quality Food

HOW TO ACHIEVE SQF CERTIFICATION?

- Determine the level of certification to be achieved (generally requested by the customer).
- Hire an SQF consultant or designate a staff member as an SQF practitioner, who must then attend an SQF Systems training course.
- Conduct a Gap Analysis of your current food safety system.
- Develop, validate, verify and implement your SQF System.
- Select an SQF-licensed certification body to perform a certification audit.
- If the auditor recommends certification, an SQF certificate, valid for 12 months, is issued after review by the Certification Body Review Council.
- If certification is not recommended, corrective action must be taken before requesting a second audit.
- Re-certification audits are conducted annually and within 30 days of the scheduled audit date. Audit frequency can be either annual or every 6 months depending on the type of certificate issued.

HOW MUCH DOES THE PROGRAM COST?

The cost for implementing and maintaining an SQF program varies by the type of products grown, produced or manufactured, the complexity of the process and the level of certification requested. Most food manufacturers already undergo some type of food safety auditing either internally or by third parties. As a result, many companies may need only to have their current policies and practices validated by an SQF expert and updated as needed.

HOW TO GET STARTED?

Log on to www.sqfi.com and download information documents such as:

- “Getting Started – A Guide for Suppliers” and “Frequently Asked Questions.”
- Contact others who have implemented SQF for valuable case study information.
- Choose your level of certification (if not already chosen by your customer).
- Select and train an SQF practitioner or contact an SQF consultant.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION?

Visit www.sqfi.com to find detailed information on:

- How to implement an SQF system.
- Registered auditors, consultants, licensed training centers and certification bodies.
- Training courses.
- SQF program news and events.
- Guidance documents and codes.
- For more information about the SQF Program, please email info@sqfi.com or call **202.220.0635**

SQF CONSULTANT:

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QUALIFICATIONS:

Thomas J. Hoffman, President, TJH Consulting, LLC is an internationally recognized Food Safety Consultant with over 42-years of experience. The firm provides technical and managerial assistance for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the SQF system. Please visit our web site to learn more about our SQF qualifications.



WHAT IS THE SQF PROGRAM?

SQF means **Safe Quality Food**. The SQF Program is a complete food safety and quality management certification system. It is designed specifically for the food industry and can be applied at all levels of the food supply chain. SQF provides independent certification that a product, process or service complies with international, regulatory and other specified standard(s), and enables a food supplier to give assurances that food has been produced, prepared and handled according to the highest possible standards.

While SQF is first and foremost a food safety program, the audit also covers product quality. Assuring consistent quality and meeting buyer specifications are important aspects of the buyer-supplier relationship. Additionally, SQF offers optional modules to certify that a supplier is engaging in responsible environmental and social practices. The SQF Program is the culmination of more than 14 years of development. To date, more than 9,000 SQF certificates have been issued to companies operating in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, Middle East and North and South America.

WHY SQF?

Consumers today want to know that the food they buy is safe no matter where it was grown, raised or processed. Retailers want the same assurances and are requiring their suppliers to demonstrate that they are providing safe, quality food. Numerous factors, including an increase in public concerns about the safety of the food supply, changes in regulatory approaches, and the globalization and industrialization of the food supply, have amplified the need for a more consistent, credible and internationally accepted food safety and quality management system.



WHAT IS THE SQF INSTITUTE?

The SQF Institute is a division of the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), established to manage the Safe Quality Food (SQF) Program. In 2003, at the request of its retail and wholesale members, FMI secured the SQF Program to meet their need for a cost-effective, consistent and credible food safety management system.

WHO RECOGNIZES THE SQF PROGRAM?

The SQF Program is endorsed by the Food Marketing Institute, the world's leading association representing the food retail and wholesale industry, and by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), an international consortium of retailer CEOs, represents more than 70 percent of retail food sales worldwide. SQF certification is supported by an increasing number of U.S. and international retailers and foodservice providers, many of whom are expressing a preference for SQF-certified suppliers. The SQF Program is part of a recent landmark agreement on mutual acceptance of global food safety systems, in which seven global retailers:

Ahold, Carrefour, Delhaize, Metro, Migros, Tesco and Wal-Mart — will recognize SQF-certified suppliers as meeting their safety and quality requirements.

THE SQF PROGRAM ELEMENTS:

The SQF Program consists of:

- Food safety standards called Codes: SQF 1000 for primary production and SQF 2000 for food manufacturing and distribution.
- Additional guidance documents for general food processing and for specific commodities such as salmon and different fresh fruits and vegetables, including a program for spinach and other leafy greens introduced in the fall of 2007.
- A Food Safety and Food Quality Plan developed by the supplier to control those aspects of its operations that are critical to maintaining food safety and quality.
- Three levels of certification: food safety fundamentals, certified food safety plans based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system and a comprehensive food safety and quality management system.
- A third-party audit that verifies the supplier is adhering to SQF's rigorous food safety standards.
- Annual SQF certification issued by an accredited certification company.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES SQF OFFER SUPPLIERS?

- Reduces the need for inconsistent, costly and multiple audits.
- Is accepted and endorsed by major U.S. and international retailers.
- Creates greater confidence and trust between buyers and sellers.
- Complies with regulatory and product traceability requirements.
- Is an internationally recognized standard endorsed by the Global Food Safety Initiative.
- Is suitable for all types of food suppliers operating in both domestic and global markets.
- Provides a comprehensive farm-to-retail food safety and quality assurance system.
- Reduces product loss and waste.
- Gives competitive advantages over non-certified producers and enhanced market access.
- Is manageable to implement, offering three levels of certification.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES SQF OFFER BUYERS?

- Provides cost and time savings by eliminating the need for retailer audits.
- Protects brands, businesses and, ultimately, the consumer by providing the buyer with assurance that the foods they purchase meet the strictest guidelines for food safety and quality.
- Assures consistency in the audit results through established SQF checklists.
- Bestows confidence in an audit system that requires a certification body to be accredited and a strict approval process for auditors.
- Provides instant access to a world-class certification system with a database that provides detailed supplier audit results and certification status. Allows comparison of audit results among suppliers of similar products in other countries.
- Enables retailers to meet consumer demands for responsible social, environmental and food defense practices through voluntary program modules and guidance documents.
- Encourages enhanced communications leading to stronger relationships between buyers and sellers.