SQF THE SAFE QUALITY FOOD PROGRAM

Independent certification to assure buyers & customers your food has been produced, processed, & handled according to the highest possible standards.

Everybody eats… Everybody cares about food safety

PJR FSI Food Safety, Inc.
Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc.

PJRFSI, Your Certification Partner...

- PJRFSI knows certification. We operate on multiple continents as a full-service certification body certifying clients to a wide range of standards.

- Our dedicated Project Managers welcome the opportunity to answer as many questions as you may have as they create a customized certification service plan and pricing for you - all free of charge.

- Once you have selected us as your certification partner, we continue to make the experience easier for you by providing a single point of contact for scheduling and assistance to any customer service concerns throughout the certification process.

- We offer webinars, in-person training classes, and informational newsletters on a variety of topics to our wide base of clients.

PJRFSI operates with the client's best interests in mind. Certification serves as objective proof that a business has implemented an effective food safety management system and is fulfilling the applicable requirements. It takes commitment, cooperation, and teamwork to achieve certification and PJRFSI wants to team up with your organization!

For more information on our Food Safety Programs, contact us at 1-877-663-1160 or email us at pjrfsi@pjrfsi.com and/or speak to a Project Manager near you!!!

GFSI: Safe Food for Consumers Everywhere...

The increasing severity and frequency of food safety incidents across the globe has certainly tested consumer confidence in the food supply chain. GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative) represents over 70% of food retail revenue worldwide and is committed to benchmarking food safety management schemes in order to enhance food safety and consumer confidence. GFSI also encourages common retailer acceptance of GFSI recognized standards in order to reduce excessive audit costs for suppliers.

SQF: Protecting Consumers, Protecting Brands...

Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI) is a third party certification program that was first developed in Australia in 1994. The SQF program has been owned and managed by the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) since 2003, and was recognized (at level 2) in 2004 by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) as a standard that meets its benchmark requirements. The SQF Code level 3 exceeds the requirements of the GFSI benchmark documents.

Why are more suppliers and their buyers requesting SQF Certifications?

- The SQF Program is a complete food safety and quality management system.
- The only GFSI globally recognized standard based in the United States.
- SQF Independent Certification provides assurance that food has been produced, processed, and handled according to the highest possible standards and that it has met domestic and international food safety regulations.

SQF Certification: Levels and Food Sector Categories...

The SQF Code, Ed. 7.1 is based on the food safety principles and methods of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). It is designed for use by all sectors of the food industry from primary production and manufacturing to distribution and retail. Suppliers may seek certification for one of three levels, all of which incorporate continuous improvement:

- *Level 1: Food Safety Fundamentals*

  An entry level for new and developing businesses covering only GAP/GMP/GDP requirements and basic food safety elements (Module 2)

- *Level 2: Certified HACCP Food Safety Plans*

  Designed as the minimum level for suppliers of high risk products, Level 2 incorporates all Level 1 requirements and also requires a comprehensive HACCP-based food safety risk assessment of products and associated processes.

- *Level 3: Comprehensive Quality Management Systems Development*

  In addition to Level 1 and 2 requirements, suppliers must document a food quality risk assessment of products and associated processes and identify the controls and actions required for ensuring consistent product quality.

If a supplier is seeking SQF certification due to a customer mandate, the customer will typically specify which level is required. Those forward-thinking suppliers who don't currently have a customer mandate, but want to be prepared or to have a competitive edge, typically choose Level 2 which is the minimum level recognized by GFSI.

Food Sector Categories: SQF has divided the food supply chain into a series of Food Sector Category (FSC) Codes in order to provide a uniform approach to managing the program. All SQF auditors must be qualified by the SQF Institute for each FSC in which they audit. SQF Auditors are also required to demonstrate more extensive training and work experience to be qualified for high risk categories than general or low risk categories.

Scope of Certification: SQF certification is site and product specific. This means that each site requires its own certificate and you, as the supplier, must identify all products produced at a particular site which needs to be covered in the certification. The scope of certification for a particular site includes the applicable certification level, and a complete list of product lines with their corresponding Food Sector Category Codes.

A site can include different premises within close proximity to each other; as long as all activities are overseen by the same senior management (see SQF Guidance for multi-sites, which are defined differently and uniquely by SQF).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IMPLEMENTING SQF?

After becoming informed about SQF Program requirements, you should designate an employee to serve as your SQF Practitioner, essentially becoming your internal expert on the SQF System. SQF requirements indicate your SQF Practitioner must be:

1. A permanent, full-time employee responsible for the overall management of the SQF System;
2. HACCP trained and competent to implement and maintain your company's HACCP plans; and
3. SQF knowledgeable and competent to implement and maintain your SQF System.

After you have conducted a preliminary gap analysis of your current system, you must now "say what you do" and "do what you say." The time and resources required to develop and implement an SQF Program vary depending on the current state of your program and your intended scope of certification.

Perry Johnson Registrars Food Safety, Inc. (PJRFSI) understands that this time can be very stressful and challenging, especially when a customer or parent company drives the certification requirement. We highly recommend that you initiate a relationship with our certification body prior to completing the implementation process. It will be beneficial as you continue to manage the project, especially in terms of budgeting and scheduling.

IS A PRE-ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Pre-assessments are optional and SQF does not require them. However, PJRFSI does offer pre-assessments and the benefits are extremely beneficial, particularly in the initial certification cycle, such as:

1. Focusing attention on your weaknesses currently in your system;
2. Allowing you to gain familiarity with an auditor and the audit process; and
3. Increasing your overall chances of passing the certification audit the first time.

The length of time required for a pre-assessment is discretionary. PJRFSI typically recommends at least two days to properly conduct the pre-assessment.

HOW MUCH WILL THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS COST?

PJRFSI follows the certification body audit duration guide provided by the SQF Institute. The Stage 1 Document Audit averages one day, while the Stage 2 Facility Audit typically ranges from one and a half to three days, with additional time planned for report writing and corrective action management.

The total number of days required for your audit will be determined based on the following primary factors:

1. Your desired SQF certification level (Level 1, 2, or 3);
2. Your total number of HACCP plans;
3. The complexity of your processes;
4. Your total number of employees; and
5. The size of your facility.

Additional fees include:

- Audit time calculated at a daily rate;
- Annual certification and file maintenance fee;
- Auditor travel expenses;
- An SQF facility download fee.
- Annual supplier registration fee based on the supplier's gross sales in the previous year.

For the most accurate apples to apples comparison when seeking quotes, PJRFSI recommends that you ask each certification body for an upfront and thorough accounting of all the fees expected.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS?

The SQF certification audit consists of two stages; the desk audit and the facility audit. When you contact PJRFSI, we will ask you to fill out an application. Based on the information you supply about your company and program, a Project Manager will assist you with:

1. Identifying the Scope of Certification

    - PJRFSI can provide assistance on identifying the scope to ensure it covers all processes, since certification is site and product specific.

2. Planning the Certification Audit

    - PJRFSI will select and SQF Certified auditor, who is qualified in the same categories as your company, to conduct the certification audit.
    - You will then receive an estimate of the time it will take to complete the certification audit as well as the cost.
    - PJRFSI will also discuss the dates for the audit, based on the availability of you and the auditor.

3. Conducting the Desk Audit

    This can be conducted on or offsite to ensure that:

    - An appropriately qualified SQF Practitioner is designated
    - The documented system is relevant to the scope of certification and the products processed there
    - Level 2 food safety plan and the associated Critical Control Point determinations, validations and verifications are appropriately documented and endorsed by the SQF Practitioner
    - Level 3 food quality plan and the associated Critical Quality Point determinations, validations and verifications are appropriately documented and endorsed by the SQF Practitioner

4. Conducting the Facility Audit

This is conducted onsite, when the main processes are operating, to ensure:

- The effectiveness of the SQF System in its entirety
- The effective interaction between all elements of the SQF System
- The level of commitment demonstrated by your company to maintaining an effective SQF System and to meeting their food safety regulatory and customer requirements
- The Level 2 food safety hazards and Level 3 food quality hazards are effectively identified and controlled

5. The Audit Report

SQF provides auditors with an electronic checklist customized for SQF levels and industry sectors to ensure the uniform application of SQF of requirements.

- Auditors use the checklist to record their findings and determine the compliance rating with stated requirements.
- The auditor then submits the audit report to PJRFSI for technical review.
- After technical review, PJRFSI releases the audit report to you within 10 days of the audit completion.

6. Nonconformities

These are deviations the auditor found and will accurately be described in the audit report as well as the reason for the nonconformity. Nonconformities against the SQF Code shall be graded as follows:

- A Minor Nonconformity: is a deficiency in the SQF System that produces unsatisfactory conditions that if not addressed may lead to a risk to food safety and quality but not likely to cause a system element break down. These shall be corrected, verified and closed out within thirty (30) calendar days of the audit completion.

- A Major Nonconformity: is a deficiency in the SQF System producing unsatisfactory conditions that carry a food safety or quality risk and likely to result in a system element breakdown. These shall be corrected, verified and closed out within fourteen (14) calendar days of the audit completion.

- A Critical Nonconformity: is a breakdown of control at a critical control point, a pre-requisite program or other process step and judged to likely cause a significant health risk and/or where product is contaminated. It is also if there is systemic falsification of records relating to food safety controls and the SQF System. These result in automatic failure and require re-applying for certification.

7. Certification Process

- A certificate is granted if you achieve a "C" rating or greater with no outstanding nonconformities.
- This decision must be made within 45 days of the facility audit completion.
- This certificate will be valid for 12 months from the day the certification decision is made.
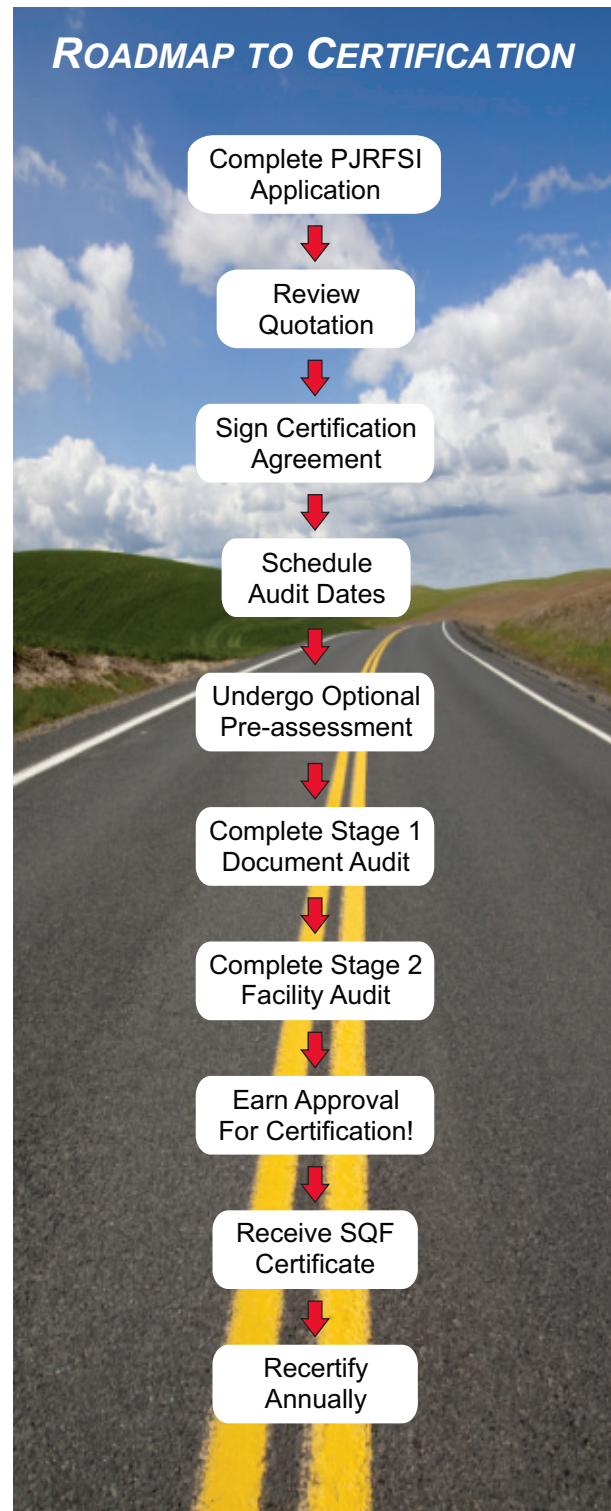
HOW OFTEN WILL WE BE AUDITED?

SQF requires annual recertification to be conducted within 30 days of your certification anniversary. The Stage 1 Document Audit is typically omitted and only the Stage 2 Facility Audit is conducted, unless there have been significant changes in your personnel, your operations or SQF System. Six-month surveillance audits are reserved only for multi-site suppliers and those suppliers who achieve a "C-compliance rating" at their last certification or recertification audit.

Narrowing the Choice to SQF...

- **Accessibility:** Of all the GFSI benchmarked food safety standards, SQF is the only program based in the United States.

- **An easy fit:** The SQF Food Safety and Quality Management System is risk-based rather than prescriptive, can be applied to all product risk levels as well as all suppliers, small and large. Unique to SQF, a quality component is incorporated at the highest level of certification.

- **Value-added options:** Increasingly in demand by consumers as food supply chains go global; SQF offers additional guidance for particular food sector categories as well as innovative optional modules for responsible social and environmental practices.

- **Trust and consistency:** SQF registered auditors and certification bodies undergo a rigorous qualification process as well as utilizing SQF standardized procedures and reporting formats. Consistency and quality of audits foster confidence for you and your buyers.

- **Convenient communication:** Through the SQF online database, you may provide your buyers with password-protected permission to access four different levels of information about your certification status.

- **Time and money savings:** The continuous improvement and food safety management principles of SQF can improve efficiency and reduce product loss and waste. Widespread retailer acceptance can lead to a reduction in costly and inconsistent or redundant audits.

- **Protection:** Implementing the SQF standard and achieving certification helps protect your consumers, your brands, and your business.

- **Business growth potential:** Certification to a GFSI internationally recognized standard provides a competitive advantage over non-certified competitors, enhances public image, and allows greater market access to retailers and buyers domestically and globally.

ROADMAP TO CERTIFICATION

Complete PJRFSI Application
↓
Review Quotation
↓
Sign Certification Agreement
↓
Schedule Audit Dates
↓
Undergo Optional Pre-assessment
↓
Complete Stage 1 Document Audit
↓
Complete Stage 2 Facility Audit
↓
Earn Approval For Certification!
↓
Receive SQF Certificate
↓
Recertify Annually

PJR FSI Food Safety, Inc.

SQF

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Everybody eats… Everybody cares about food safety

Is SQF right for your business? Let us answer your questions or tell you about our other food safety certification programs.

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