



**Perry Johnson Registrars
Food Safety, Inc.**

Improving Food Safety through GFSI Third Party Certification



**Everybody Eats...
Everybody Cares About Food Safety**





Food trade is constantly expanding, striving to meet consumer demand for a wider variety of products year-round. Likewise, the myriad food safety regulations and standards (which often vary country to country or region to region) has also come into the limelight. While each individual food safety scheme undoubtedly has its advantages, finding a common ground for regulation through public and private initiatives is key to improve food safety worldwide.

In the last two decades, multilateral rules have become far stricter – and differences in food safety standards between countries involved in importing and exporting can cause impediments in trade. As governments work together to reach agreement on mutually accepted standards, private initiatives including voluntary standards are playing their own role in the resolution of conflicts.

Among the most prominent of the efforts to establish common ground for international food safety regulations is the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). Including input from collaborators such as retailers, food supply chain service providers, manufacturers, and food service companies, GFSI's primary goal is to ensure consumer safety throughout the global supply chain.

“Safe Food for Consumers Everywhere” may seem like a broad mission statement, but GFSI's four primary objectives further lay out exactly what goals are to be accomplished:

- ✔ Reduce food safety risks through equivalence and convergence between effective food safety management systems.
- ✔ Minimize redundancy and improve operational efficiency to manage cost globally.
- ✔ Create consistent, effective food systems by developing competencies and building food safety capacity worldwide.
- ✔ Provide an international platform for collaboration, exchange of knowledge, and networking.

While there were a number of attempts at national or regionally harmonized schemes prior to the inception of GFSI (such as British Retail Consortium's Technical Standards or the International Food Safety Standard in Europe), GFSI proposed a far more straightforward method: benchmarking.



Through a process of independent, unbiased, and fully transparent recognition, benchmarked schemes are recognized to have a common foundation of requirements that should offer consistent results. (Benchmarking does not render schemes “identical,” however, as scopes and levels of prescription can differ.) Schemes recognized by GFSI range from those originating in the 1980s and others that have been more recently developed. Despite differing styles, all the benchmarked schemes describe in detail the requirements described in the Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene Code of Practice. Further, the schemes go past these requirements to guarantee continuing compliance. This includes practices such as product specifications and analysis, purchasing procedures, internal auditing, or full product and ingredient traceability. By their nature, these additional requirements inherently add confidence and further verification of processes.

Throughout the supply chain, certification is a reliable means of demonstrating compliance to legal and industry requirements for food safety. Increasingly, consumers are actively seeking out certified products and additional information regarding the credibility of the certifications in question. In addition to showing dedication and reliability to consumers, a company's certification may facilitate ease of international trade by demonstrating consistency of processes across state and country lines.

A clear benefit of using GFSI benchmarked schemes is the well-established independence and impartiality of scheme owners and certification bodies auditing against GFSI standards. Third-party or independent status helps ensure that there is no conflict of interest during audits or elsewhere in the certification process.

As consumers' diverse tastes and the risks surrounding the food supply chain further develop, local ideas and food products will continue to garner international recognition. Cooperation and coordination through third-party certification will almost certainly be crucial in ensuring a secure and effective global food chain as the industry looks toward the future.

For further information on the benefits of third-party certification or to learn about the GFSI benchmarked standards PJRFSI offers, visit www.pjrfsi.com or call (248) 359-2523.





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