

Free Guide

IFS: International Featured Standards



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What is an International Featured Standards (IFS) certification?

IFS sets an internationally recognized standard for auditing and tracking the safety and quality of food and consumer goods. There are several IFS certifications, each of which focuses on a specific area of food and consumer good production and distribution. These include:

- **IFS Food** – for organizations involved in food processing or production
- **IFS Logistics** – for organizations involved with food transport, storage, distribution, loading, and unloading
- **IFS Broker** – for organizations that do not produce, process, or pack food products, but are involved in their trade or export
- **IFS PACsecure** – focuses on the safety and quality of food and consumer good packaging materials
- **IFS Wholesale/Cash & Carry** – for wholesale and cash-and-carry businesses that sell to commercial buyers
- **IFS HPC (Household and Personal Care)** – for organizations in the household and personal care sector

Who needs an IFS certification?

IFS certifications are not mandatory, but because they are globally recognized, they are often valuable for organizations involved in the food and consumer good supply chain, as they prove a commitment to safety, quality, and reliability of their products and processes.

How to earn an IFS certification

To earn an IFS certification, organizations must first choose an IFS-accredited certification body, then undergo an audit.

While the requirements of this audit will vary depending on the type of IFS certification sought, the auditor will typically examine criteria related to:

- The suppliers used by the organization
- Records regarding the date of product production
- The organization's [HACCP](#) plan
- Sanitary and structural conditions of the organization's production facility
- Production processes, hygiene status, and foreign body management
- Cleaning products used
- Proper documentation
- On-site security and storage

If the organization meets IFS standards, the auditor will recommend that the certification body issue an IFS certification, which the organization will receive after approximately eight weeks.

Renewal requirements for IFS certifications

IFS certifications are typically valid for 12 months. During that time, your organization must undergo a surveillance audit. If the audit is successful, your organization's IFS certification will be renewed for another 12 months.

The benefits of IFS certification

An IFS certification offers several benefits to organizations. Some key advantages include the following.



Wider market access

Many retailers and buyers require their vendors to possess IFS certification as proof of the company's commitment to food safety and quality. This means that earning an IFS certification can potentially open doors to a broader customer base.



Improved operational efficiency

The IFS certification process involves a thorough review of operational processes and procedures. This can result in increased efficiency, reduced waste, better resource management, and lower production costs.



Enhanced reputation

An IFS certification demonstrates an organization's dedication to producing safe and high-quality food and consumer goods products. This can boost confidence among consumers, retailers, and business partners.

Challenges in earning an IFS certification

Earning an IFS certification may pose several challenges to organizations. They include the following.



Quality Management System (QMS) implementation

To earn an IFS certification, an organization typically must have already implemented a QMS such as HACCP or ISO 22000. This is a related but different process than IFS certification, potentially requiring the organization to pursue both at once.



Supply chain coordination

Organizations must communicate and coordinate with suppliers throughout the supply chain to guarantee that raw materials and ingredients meet IFS standards. This coordination can be labor-intensive and time-consuming.



Documentation management

IFS standards demand that organizations possess accurate and current documentation of processes, procedures, and records to ensure traceability, quality and safety. Creating, implementing, and maintaining a system for managing this documentation is often a challenge for organizations seeking IFS certification.

Tips and strategies for preparing for an IFS certification

Here are a few tips for preparing for an IFS certification:

- Review the fact sheet for your desired IFS certification on the [IFS website](#)
- Watch the [“IFS Audit Explained” video on the IFS YouTube channel](#)
- Familiarize yourself with the full IFS standard document for your desired IFS certification, which are located on the IFS website

Resources for IFS certification

For more information and guidance on IFS certification, you can refer to the following resources:

- **International Featured Standards (IFS).** The [IFS official website](#) should be the first stop for those seeking IFS certification. There, you will find fact sheets and standards guides for each IFS certification, contact information for accredited certification bodies, and more.
- **Industry skills matrices.** AG5 offers [free, industry-specific skills matrices](#) dedicated to food and beverage, good manufacturing practices (GMP), consumer goods, packaging, and many other areas. You can use them to identify, track, and manage skills related to IFS certifications in your organization.
- **Certification guides.** AG5 offers free [certification guides for HACCP](#) and [ISO 22000](#), both of which may prove valuable for organizations seeking IFS certification.
- **Regulatory agencies.** Governmental agencies related to food safety will also provide a wealth of resources related to both food safety and IFS certifications. These include the [US Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) and the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#).

Skills management for IFS certification

AG5 stores all certifications in the cloud, providing all authorized personnel with access to the right version of approved certifications. This helps you easily keep track of all data and documentation related to IFS certifications across your organization.

Using [AG5's skills management software](#), you can monitor the status of any type of certification that is relevant to your workforce, leveraging intuitive dashboards that provide you with a clear understanding of exactly what is needed to keep your employees skilled and safe.

Frequently asked questions

What is the scope of an IFS certification?

An IFS certification covers the entire food and consumer supply chain, with specific certifications focusing on specific areas.

Is an IFS certification mandatory?

IFS certifications are not mandatory, but are globally recognized and as such often prove valuable for organizations in the F&B and consumer goods industries.

How long does it take to obtain an IFS certification?

This varies depending on the preparedness of the organization, however after passing an audit an organization typically receives certification within eight weeks.

What are the cost considerations for IFS certification?

Pre-audit and audit costs, the costs of implementing a quality management system (QMS), and potential costs for corrective actions or improvement.

What is the validity period of an IFS certification?

IFS certifications are typically valid for 12 months.

Can an IFS certification be integrated with any management systems?

Yes, IFS certifications can be integrated with management systems such as ISO 9001 (Quality Management) and ISO 22000 (Food Safety Management).

How can you learn more about IFS certification?

Visit the [International Featured Standards \(IFS\)](#) website.

Sources

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- APA

#	Source title	Description	Publication Retrieved	Source URL
<u>1</u>	International Featured Standards	IFS	-	April 12, 2024 https://www.ifs-certification...
<u>2</u>	International Organization for Standardization	ISO	-	April 12, 2024 https://www.iso.org/iso-22000-..
<u>3</u>	European Food Safety Authority	EFSA	-	April 12, 2024 https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en..
<u>4</u>	US Food and Drug Administration	FDA	-	April 12, 2024 https://www.fda.gov/..

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