

GFSI has worked for 20 years to harmonise food safety certification programmes, through its Benchmarking Requirements and recognition process. GFSI’s “once certified, recognised everywhere” embodies this objective that organisations should only need certification against one of the GFSI-recognised certification programmes to demonstrate their food safety capability.

On the other hand, customer / 2nd party audits are common between customers and suppliers, and a key part of building B2B relationships. However, those customer / 2nd party audits have been criticised for repeating aspects of audits encompassed in GFSI-recognised programmes.

Over time, “once certified, recognised everywhere” has been mis-interpreted as an ambition to replace customer / 2nd party audits with third party certification from GFSI-recognised certification programmes. GFSI however believe that both customer / 2nd party audit and third-party certifications serve different objectives and should be complementary:

- Third party audits verify the alignment to common and internationally recognised standards,
- Customer / 2nd party audits should focus on key customer / brand differentiators.

Certification to any of the GFSI recognised Certification Programmes guarantees a robust food safety system which provides the essential elements for the production of safe food, thanks to two core practices of GFSI:

- The GFSI Benchmarking Requirements aligns with / refers to internationally recognised food safety standards (Codex Alimentarius Committee on Food Hygiene, OIE), in consultation with experts from industry and academia on food safety,
- The GFSI Benchmarking Process robustly verifies continued alignment of certification programmes to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

It provides a means by which food safety elements should be unnecessary in standards from customers when their suppliers are certified to a GFSI-recognised certification programme, and the customer / 2nd party audit is justified by its link to a brand / company differentiator.

This does not prevent customers from raising concerns on food safety practices when visiting a certified organisation or site, referring to the aforementioned international standards, and / or the 3rd party standard this organisation is certified against.

**GFSI-recognised Third Party Audit**

Verification at a point in time of an organisation’s food safety management system and Good Industry Practice (GMP, GAP), and their compliance to it

- HACCP (Codex Alimentarius)
- GMP, GAP (Codex Alimentarius, OIE)
- FSMS: food fraud, food defence, incident management, resource



**Complementary of**  
● **Outcomes**  
● **standards**

**Customer 2nd party audit**

Verification at a point in time of a supplier’s compliance to customer expectations:

- Compliance to specification
- Quality management
- Product development
- Compliance to codes of conducts, corporate responsibility
- B2B relationship

**Table 1:** complementary roles of GFSI-recognised certification and 2nd party audit