



**GFSI** BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS VERSION 2021

# PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION BODIES

## PART II

Requirements for the  
management of professional  
recognition programmes

# Introduction

The Global Food Safety Initiative is a Coalition of Action from the CEO-led Consumer Goods Forum, bringing together retailers and manufacturers and an extended food safety community to help oversee food safety standards for businesses and help provide access to safe food for people everywhere. Its ambition is to strengthen and harmonise food safety systems so they are able to feed the growing, global population and develop markets that can deliver food safely, no matter where in the world the consumer is.

GFSI's benchmarking and harmonisation of Professional Recognition Programmes for food safety auditors fosters mutual acceptance of those auditors across the Certification and Food industries, reducing the need for duplicated verification of auditor competences including in the scopes of those Benchmarking Requirements, and facilitating access to the profession through a professional framework.

The GFSI Benchmarking Requirements are composed of the following documents:

- Part I: specifies the GFSI Benchmarking Process, the method for the recognition and ongoing oversight of food safety Professional Recognition Programmes. The objective of this document is to clearly lay out this process. Further details may be provided upon request and during the application process.
- Part II (Requirements for the Management of Professional Recognition Programmes) and Part III (Requirements for the competence criteria of the Professional Recognition Programmes): specify the requirements that the Professional Recognition Body needs to fulfil to achieve GFSI recognition.

- Part IV (Glossary of terms): defines the terms used in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. It is an integrated part of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements and definitions shall be applied accordingly in GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Programmes.

The GFSI Benchmarking Requirements for Professional Recognition Programmes are built through consensus of experts; they form a shared and widely accepted understanding of what constitutes a robust food safety Professional Recognition Programme.

The GFSI Benchmarking Requirements are furthermore submitted to extensive public consultation during their development; this ensures a wide review of the proposed approach and fosters the aforementioned mutual acceptance.

Part II of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, this document, defines the key elements required in a Professional Recognition Programme in relation to:

- Ownership, development and maintenance
- Accreditation
- Relationship with auditors
- Registration of auditors
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Evaluation of training and testing Evidence

These requirements complement requirements defined in ISO/ IEC 17024 norm.

It applies to any Professional Recognition Programmes being submitted for GFSI benchmarking.

GFSI requires Professional Recognition Bodies (or PRBs) to address each key element outlined in this document in their recognised Professional Recognition Programmes (or PRPs).

The detailed content of each individual Professional Recognition Programme shall however be independently developed and is not expected to be a direct copy of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

GFSI has defined in a glossary terms used in key elements. The glossary is an integrated part of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements and definitions shall be applied accordingly in Professional Recognition Programmes.

**For further information and support:**  
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## SECTION 1: OWNERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
1.1	Ownership	The Professional Recognition Body shall have the authority to establish and amend the Professional Recognition Programme.
1.2	Ownership	The Professional Recognition Body shall demonstrate impartiality from certification and/ or conformity assessment and/ or Certification Programme Owner activities related to the activities of the auditors they assess and certify, to avoid any collusion and/ or conflict of interest.
1.3	PRP development and maintenance	The Professional Recognition Programme shall be subjected to extensive stakeholder consultation during its development.
1.4	PRP development and maintenance	The consultation period shall allow time for stakeholders to review the Professional Recognition Programme under development and send their comments to the Professional Recognition Body.
1.5	Normative documents approval	The professional recognition normative documents shall be established by consensus and issued using a formalised and documented technical and administrative approval process.
1.6	Normative documents control	The Professional Recognition Programme's normative documents shall be controlled. The documents submitted to GFSI shall be translated into English and their translation appropriately controlled for accuracy.
1.7	Professional recognition criteria	The Professional Recognition Body shall define objective professional recognition criteria based on Part III; these shall be made publicly available.
1.8	Quality of service	The Professional Recognition Body shall have a documented process to evaluate whether auditors are satisfied with the Professional Recognition Programme. Records shall be maintained and considered within the PRB internal review.

1.9	Disciplinary/ sanctioning process	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a process to implement relevant actions in case an auditor is deemed to fail to comply with the Code of Professional Conduct.
1.10	Disciplinary/ sanctioning process	The Professional Recognition Body shall conclude its investigations and actions regardless of whether the auditor resigns from the Professional Recognition Programme.
1.11	Whistleblowing	The Professional Recognition Body shall have a policy to enable anonymous complaints/ concerns about auditors and/ or Professional Recognition Body's employees to ensure that unprofessional practices and potential non conformities to the Benchmarking Requirements of the PRP's Requirements are addressed quickly.
1.12	Crisis management/ business continuity	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a crisis management procedure.  The procedure shall include, among others, auditors' notification and provisions on auditor status in case of Professional Recognition Body's cessation of activities, suspension and / or withdrawal of GFSI recognition, or suspension and / or withdrawal of accreditation.
1.13	Auditors 'transfer	The Professional Recognition Body shall define requirements when auditors switch between GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Programmes proving up-to-date registration. This should include but not be limited to evidence of the auditors' evaluation history, last assessment, etc.
1.14	Communication	The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that any stakeholder can make effective contacts with the Professional Recognition Body to clarify any question related to its Professional Recognition Programme. The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that queries are answered to in a satisfactory timeline for the stakeholder.
1.15	Communication with GFSI	The Professional Recognition Body shall inform GFSI of any proposed changes to the Professional Recognition Programme which may impact and are relevant to their GFSI recognition status, no later than 28 days before implementation of the change.

1.16	Communication with GFSI	The Professional Recognition Body shall communicate to the Certification Bodies identified by the auditors in their agreement with the Professional Recognition Body, any information which may impact the ability of the auditors to maintain their compliance with the professional recognition criteria. This shall include, as a minimum, any actions from the disciplinary/sanctioning process. The auditors shall be informed of that communication.
1.17	Communication with Certification Bodies	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a procedure to enable Certification Bodies employing registered auditors to access auditor records, with the authorisation and knowledge of the auditors, and in compliance with any applicable regulation.
1.18	Communication with Certification Bodies	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain assessment procedures of the Professional Recognition Programme (PRP), with the aim of delivering consistent results. The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that their assessment procedures are secure consistent and comprehensive.
1.19	PRP review	The Professional Recognition Programme's normative documents shall be reviewed and re-issued as appropriate to remain current, address stakeholders' expectations and be up to date with applicable legislation. This shall include revision in accordance with the issuing of new versions and sub-versions of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements applicable to the Professional Recognition Body.
1.20	PRP review	The operations of the Professional Recognition Body shall be subject to formal annual internal review of its relevance and compliance to internal processes and, where appropriate, revised. It shall assess the overall management of the Professional Recognition Programme and address risks, problems or concerns raised by the review. The review and any arising actions shall be fully documented.
1.21	Internal review	The Professional Recognition Body shall have in place a clearly defined data management system holding and maintaining data for the effective management and operation of the Professional Recognition Programme.
1.22	Data management	The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that the data management system incorporates data in relation to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements and GFSI Terms and Conditions.

1.23	Data management	The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that any stakeholder can make effective contacts with the Professional Recognition Body to clarify any question related to its Professional Recognition Programme. The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that queries are answered to in a satisfactory timeline for the stakeholder.
1.24	Auditors' Register	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall have a Register for all auditors achieving professional recognition, which shall fulfil applicable legislation and GFSI requirements. As a minimum, the Professional Recognition Body's Register shall include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auditor's unique identifier issued by the Professional Recognition Body</li> <li>• Auditor's first name, surname, and date of birth</li> <li>• Auditor's country(ies) the auditor offers services in</li> <li>• Auditor competence for the GFSI industry scopes as defined in Part I of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements for Certification Programme Owners,</li> <li>• Date of validity of the registration.</li> </ul>
1.25	Auditors' public Register	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall make the following information available in a publicly available Register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auditor's unique identifier issued by the Professional Recognition Body,</li> <li>• Auditor's first name and surname,</li> <li>• Auditor competence for the GFSI industry scopes as defined in Part I of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements for Certification Programme Owners</li> <li>• Date of validity of the registration.</li> </ul>

## SECTION 2: ACCREDITATION

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
2.1	Accreditation	The Professional Recognition Body shall be accredited to ISO/ IEC 17024 for the Professional Recognition Programme, and for the relevant scope of GFSI recognition, by one or several Accreditation Bodies that are members of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and signatories of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).
2.2	Accreditation	When the Professional Recognition Programme is updated, the Professional Recognition Body shall be accredited within 12 months from the date of application to an Accreditation Body.
2.3	Accreditation	In the event that accreditation is not granted within 12 months, or is suspended or withdrawn, the Professional Recognition Body shall inform GFSI. The Professional Recognition Body shall provide a plan to GFSI for approval to re-gain accreditation.
2.4	Accreditation	The Professional Recognition Body shall make their scope of accreditation publicly available and precisely defined in terms of the exact name of the Professional Recognition Programme in scope, including where applicable, its revision number and/ or date and its sector of application.
2.5	Accreditation	The Professional Recognition Body shall notify GFSI in the event that their accreditation related to the GFSI scope of recognition is withdrawn or suspended.
2.6	Accreditation	If the range of professional recognition offered by the Professional Recognition Body is wider than the range of those accredited, the Professional Recognition Body shall make clearly and publicly available the limits and scope of their accreditation, to ensure transparency and avoid any confusion.

## SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIP WITH AUDITORS

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
		<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall have an agreement in place with all auditors applying for professional recognition/ CPD services, which shall include, as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data privacy and confidentiality requirements</li> <li>• Rights to share defined information in the Professional Recognition Body's public Register</li> <li>• Obligations to share defined information to comply with the Professional Recognition Programme for registration (certification), surveillance, CPD and renewal of registration (recertification) (the auditors may delegate this to the Certification Bodies they are working with)</li> <li>• Obligations to make the following information available at all times to the Professional Recognition Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification Bodies they work with, including any changes and when they occur</li> <li>• Complaints related to the auditors' performance against one of the Professional Recognition Body's criteria</li> <li>• Outcome of witness audits</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Commitment that all information provided to the Professional Recognition Body is authentic</li> <li>• Commitment that the information displayed in the Register is kept current.</li> <li>• Authorisation from the auditors for the Professional Recognition Body to contact the Certification Body(ies) they work with, and/ or organisations they have audited, as part of the ongoing assessment of auditors' competence</li> <li>• Authorisation from the auditors for the Professional Recognition Body to contact the Certification Body(ies) they work with, to inform them of any changes to the auditors' registration status.</li> </ul>
3.1	Agreement	

3.2	Auditor notifications to the Professional Recognition Body	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall require auditors to notify them if their qualification is withdrawn/ suspended by a Certification Body and/ or a Certification Programme Owner for one or several GFSI scope(s) (product categories), for reasons related to their scope of registration to the Professional Recognition Programme.</p> <p>Auditors shall provide the reason of such withdrawal/ suspension, for the Professional Recognition Body to investigate and review auditors' registration accordingly.</p>
3.3	Professional Recognition Body notification to auditors	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall notify auditors in due time about any change to the Professional Recognition Program that may affect the auditor's continued registration.</p> <p>In case of Professional Recognition Program change, the Professional Recognition Body shall define and communicate an achievable transition period.</p>
3.4	Auditors' declaration to audited organisations and Certification Bodies	The Professional Recognition Body shall require auditors to proactively declare their registration to Certification Body(ies) they're working with and to audited organisations, to confirm commitment to the Code of Professional Conduct and inform them of an escalation process in case of issues.

## SECTION 4: REGISTRATION (CERTIFICATION), ASSESSMENT AND RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION (RECERTIFICATION) OF AUDITORS

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
4.1	Assessment of auditors	The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that the auditors are assessed against all professional recognition criteria defined in the Professional Recognition Programme.
	Validation of evidence	The Professional Recognition Body shall list the criteria any training and testing organisations shall need to satisfy for their training/ testing records to be accepted as evidence against recognition criteria defined in the Professional Recognition Programme.
4.2	Scope of registration	The Professional Recognition Body shall define clear industry scopes of auditors' registration, which are aligned with GFSI scopes of recognition defined in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements for Food Safety Certification Programme Owners.
4.3	Duration of the registration process	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall define an expected timeline for completing the registration process from application to registration to ensure their assessment is performed in a timely manner. The defined timeline shall take into consideration challenges to demonstrate fulfilment of all criteria (e.g., audit availability).</p> <p>The duration from submission of all materials to registration shall be defined.</p>
4.4	Support to the auditors/ feedback loop	If any professional recognition criteria are not met for initial or renewal of registration, the Professional Recognition Body shall provide a gap assessment and support to the auditors to explain the path for ongoing compliance.
4.5	Revalidation of registration	The Professional Recognition Body shall review every 5 years the registered auditors against all professional recognition criteria defined in Part III excluding the pre-requisites to confirm the auditors' registration revalidation.

4.6	Extension of scope of registration	The Professional Recognition Body shall have a clear process to allow auditors to extend their scope of registration. This shall ensure that the auditors are assessed against the relevant professional recognition criteria defined in Part III.
4.7	Revalidation of registration	The Professional Recognition Body shall conclude its revalidation assessment regardless of whether the auditors resign from the registration process, to give the auditor guidance as to their gaps to complete their registration.
4.8	Revalidation of registration failure	If an auditor does not fulfil the requirements defined by the Professional Recognition Body, the Professional Recognition Body shall implement actions and, where relevant, will rescind the auditor registration and the Professional Recognition Body will remove the auditor from the Professional Registration Body's public Register. This shall happen within a defined and reasonable timeline.

## SECTION 5: SURVEILLANCE AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
5.1	Surveillance	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a procedure for annual surveillance activities, to ensure that each auditor continuously complies with the professional recognition criteria and to identify CPD improvements for each auditor.
5.2	Surveillance	<p>Surveillance activities shall be performed, using random and risk-based samples of auditor files and information (both auditors' self-declarations and records) and shall include, as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of a selection of requirements defined in Part III, allowing the verification of activities performed to maintain auditors' knowledge, skills and behaviours,</li> <li>• Review of witness audit reports (to check behavioural skills around auditing techniques),</li> <li>• Review of complaints,</li> <li>• Review of proactive feedbacks from Certification Bodies, Certification Programme Owners and Certified Companies,</li> <li>• Continued compliance with the Code of Professional Conduct,</li> <li>• Completion of CPD which complies with the Professional Recognition Body's requirements.</li> </ul>
5.3	CPD design	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a procedure to ensure that registrants continue to maintain and develop their knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes through a CPD process.
5.4	CPD design	The Professional Recognition Body shall recognise CPD based on competence development needs identified by the registrants and verify the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and behaviours using appropriate learning methods.



## SECTION 6: SELECTION OF SUPPLIERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

REFERENCE	ELEMENT	REQUIREMENTS
6.1	Approval of suppliers/ service providers	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a procedure to identify, approve and control suppliers/ service providers having an impact on the ability of the Professional Recognition Body to deliver their registration services, through agreed specified requirements.
6.2	Approval of training/ testing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Professional Recognition Body approval procedure shall include a list of the criteria any training and testing organisations shall satisfy for their training/ testing records to be accepted as to verify compliance of auditors to the Professional Recognition Programme.</li> </ul>
6.3	List of accepted training/ testing organisations	The Professional Recognition Body shall establish, implement and maintain a list of training and testing organisations who satisfy those criteria. That list shall be publicly acceptable.
6.4	Verification of training and/ or testing effectiveness	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall require that training and/ or testing organisations demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learner assessments are completed to determine fulfilment of learning outcomes</li> <li>Learner assessments are evaluated impartially</li> <li>The pass and fail rates are monitored and acted upon</li> <li>Learning objectives are met.</li> </ul>
6.5	Training and/ or testing review	The Professional Recognition Body shall require that training and/ or testing organisations regularly review the training and/ or testing materials and methodology to remain current and takes actions should the results of the review indicate that improvement is necessary.
6.6	Training material	The Professional Recognition Body shall require that training organisation has documented training materials and resources.



6.7	Testing/ assessment design	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall require that Testing Organisations have defined the following when designing the testing/ assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Testing/ assessment objectives</li><li>• Applicable approach and method</li><li>• Appropriate competence of the people involved in the testing/ assessment design</li><li>• Pass criteria</li><li>• Testing/ assessment validation.</li></ul>
6.8	Testing/ assessment process	<p>The Professional Recognition Body shall require that any accepted Testing Organisations run the testing/ assessment by fulfilling the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective Information Technologies capabilities (if relevant)</li><li>• Appropriate invigilation (face-to-face or using a remote proctoring system).</li><li>• Impartial and repeatable testing/ assessment criteria.</li></ul>