



**GFSI** BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS VERSION 2021

# PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION BODIES

## PART I

The GFSI Benchmarking Process

# 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 I, The Benchmarking Process is a GFSI internal process developed and maintained by the GFSI Coalition Team with support from relevant subject matter experts. It will not form part of the formal review process employed for all other Benchmarking Requirements documents that are managed through the appointed Working Group. In a spirit of openness and widespread stakeholder engagement however, this document and any revisions will be published with all other Benchmarking Requirements documents and any reviews conducted by the GFSI Coalition Team that result in changes to it will be subject to stakeholder consultation in accordance with processes employed to consult on other Benchmarking Requirements documents.

The steps and procedures detailed in this document ensure that the GFSI assessment is:

- carried out in an impartial and transparent manner by a technically competent Benchmarking Leader under the supervision of the GFSI Technical Manager,
- transparent and open to stakeholder scrutiny,
- reviewed, maintained and updated to ensure consistency and integrity.

A Professional Recognition Programme may have a major focus or a historical focus other than food safety auditing. Only those specified requirements in the Professional Recognition Programme relating to food safety auditors shall be assessed for the purpose of GFSI recognition.

**For further information and support:**  
[gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com](mailto:gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com).

## 1. THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### The Applicant is required to satisfy the below eligibility criteria:

- The Professional Recognition Body is a legal entity,
- The Professional Recognition Body can demonstrate impartiality from any food safety certification, conformity assessment, training and / or Certification Programme Owner activities,
- There is endorsement from a minimum of three organisations committing to the Professional Recognition Body, demonstrating the market need for their Professional Recognition Programme,
- The Professional Recognition Body shall be accredited against ISO/ IEC 17024 by an Accreditation Body member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and signatory to the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) (see <https://iaf.nu/en/recognised-abs/>),
- The Professional Recognition Body can demonstrate experience in establishing and running a successful Professional Recognition Programme for at least 100 registrants (but not necessarily dedicated to auditors or food safety),
- The Professional Recognition Programme is established and is not undergoing any significant changes,
- The Professional Recognition Body does not have any practices deemed as restricting access to or choice within the market they operate in,
- The Professional Recognition Body has completed the GFSI self-assessment form to demonstrate that it is in alignment with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

### As part of the ISO/ IEC 17024 norm requirements, it's assumed that the Professional Recognition Body fulfils the applicable requirements related to the following accreditation criteria:

- Legal matters (e.g., legal entity, etc.)
- Management of impartiality
- Finance and liability (e.g., enough resources, etc.)
- Structure of the certification body in relation to training (e.g., impartiality, no self-promotion, etc.)
- Records of applicants, candidates and certified/ registered persons (e.g., type, retention time, etc.)
- Public information (e.g., type of information which shall be publicly available, etc.)
- Certification schemes (e.g., requirements, code of conduct, etc.)
- Application process (e.g., requirements that the auditor needs to fulfil, etc.)
- Assessment process (e.g., assessment criteria, methods, etc.)
- Decision on certification/ registration (e.g., certificate authenticity, etc.)
- Use of certificates, logos and marks (e.g., agreement between the Professional Recognition Body and the auditor)
- Complaints (e.g., procedure, management, feedback loop to the auditor, etc.)
- Management system requirements (e.g., quality management system, documentation, etc.)

## 2. APPLICATION OPTIONS

A Professional Recognition Body may apply for full benchmarking if they have:

- not previously undergone benchmarking by GFSI,
- been assessed previously, but the benchmarking process was not completed (re-submission),
- successfully undergone benchmarking against a previous version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements (re-benchmarking),
- been previously recognised by GFSI but had their recognition withdrawn (see Sanctioning).

They may do so by completing an application form (available on [mygfsi.com](http://mygfsi.com)). The complete GFSI Benchmarking Process will be followed, including assessment against the complete Benchmarking Requirements.

NB: If they wish to maintain their recognition status, GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Programmes shall apply for re-benchmarking within 12 months of the date of publication of the new version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. The GFSI Steering Committee has the authority to extend this period under special circumstances.

The Professional Recognition Body shall apply for continued recognition if they are:

- recognised by GFSI against the current version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements but will be subjected to changes which could compromise its GFSI Recognition, such as changes to its governance or ownership, its management system, or normative documents,

- subject to suspension of their GFSI recognition (see Sanctioning).

They may do so by confirming in writing to the GFSI Technical Manager:

- their application for continued recognition,
- a list of the significant changes introduced to the Professional Recognition Programme, including those changes that would address the cause of suspension of the GFSI recognition if applicable.

This information shall be provided to GFSI no less than 28 days before any changes to the Professional Recognition Programme are intended to become effective. The GFSI Technical Manager and GFSI Director shall decide within 28 days on the type of actions required to maintain recognition based on the details of the changes introduced to the Professional Recognition Programme. They will range from full benchmarking, to a gap analysis as part of the Monitoring of Continued Alignment (see “the Key Procedural Steps”).

### 3. THE GFSI BENCHMARKING METHODOLOGY

PRB	PBR NEED TO APPLY FOR	THE STANDARD SHALL REQUIRE THAT
Did not previously undergo benchmarking by GFSI,	Full Benchmarking	Sending a completed online application form to GFSI
was assessed previously, but did not complete the benchmarking process		
Had your recognition withdrawn by GFSI		Sending a completed online application form to GFSI within 12 months of the publication of the new GFSI Benchmarking Requirements
is recognised against a previous version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements		
Will make changes to your currently recognised Professional Recognition Programme	Continued recognition	Sending their request for continued recognition and a list of the significant changes introduced to the Professional Recognition Programme
Had their recognition suspended by GFSI		

#### Demonstrating alignment and Objective Evidence

The GFSI Benchmarking Process is a pass / fail benchmark: A key element is either met or not met. In order to achieve GFSI-recognition, a Professional Recognition Programme shall demonstrate alignment with each key element of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

#### Who is involved in the GFSI Benchmarking Process?

##### GFSI Technical Manager

The GFSI Technical Manager is responsible for safeguarding the GFSI Benchmarking Process. The GFSI Technical Manager appoints the Benchmark Leader to a Professional Recognition Programme and supervises all the benchmarking activities and communication with the Professional Recognition Body.

The GFSI Technical Manager ensures training and calibration of the Benchmark Leaders.

##### Benchmark Leader

The Benchmark Leader is selected and approved by the GFSI Technical Manager, based on competence required for the role as defined by GFSI, in order to ascertain whether a Professional Recognition Programme conforms with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The Benchmark Leader reports to the GFSI Technical Manager; they perform the assessment of the Professional Recognition Programme against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements and give their recommendation whether to recognise a Professional Recognition Programme based on the result of their assessment.

All Benchmarking Leaders undergo the same initial training and annual calibration activities to maintain alignment of their evaluation approaches. A list of all GFSI-approved Benchmark Leaders is available from

#### GFSI upon request

A Benchmark Leader may perform the benchmarking assessment of a given Professional Recognition Programme for a maximum period of three years.

The Benchmark Leader profile and current activities outside their contract with GFSI is reviewed to ensure competence and that there is no potential conflict of interest or risk to impartiality.

NB: A Conflict of Interest, or the appearance of a conflict, can arise whenever a transaction, or an action, undertaken in the framework of the Benchmark Leader's services to GFSI, conflicts with the personal interests, financial or otherwise, of that of the Benchmark Leader.

##### GFSI Director

The GFSI Director is accountable for the compliance to the GFSI Benchmarking Process. In particular, they oversee any necessary sanctioning activities. They may reassign the Benchmark Leader at any time, at their discretion, if it is deemed necessary to do so.

##### GFSI Steering Committee

The GFSI Steering Committee makes a final decision on GFSI recognition of the Professional Recognition Programme, based on the recommendation of the Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager. The GFSI Steering Committee also makes final decisions on any suspensions or withdrawals of GFSI recognition.

##### GFSI CoA signatories

The GFSI CoA signatories may be selected by the GFSI Director to take part in Appeals Committees.

## 4. THE KEY PROCEDURAL STEPS

The GFSI Benchmarking Process shall be carried out in accordance with seven key procedural steps to achieve recognition. These seven steps must be completed in a maximum of 12 months from the date GFSI accepts an application. The GFSI Steering Committee has the authority to extend this time.

An eighth step shall be carried out every year throughout the period of recognition of the Professional Recognition Programme to maintain that recognition.

**Table 2: the GFSI Benchmarking Process**

<b>A – Application</b> Application form Terms and Conditions Workplan	<b>B – Desktop Assessment</b> Self-Assessment BL Review Call to Review findings Final Review
<b>C – Office Visit Assessment</b> Office visit List of Findings	<b>D – Corrective action plan</b> CAP proposal CAP review
<b>E – Public Stakeholder Consultation</b> Final Assessment Report Public Consultation Amendment of CAP as required	<b>F – Completion of Corrective Actions Consultation</b> Submission of evidence of implementation Validation of evidence
<b>G – Final decision</b> Final report and recommendation GFSI steering committee vote Public Announcement	<b>H – Monitoring of Continuous Alignment</b> 6-monthly random records review Annual office visit Gap analysis to sub-versions

### A - APPLICATION

The application confirms that the applicant Professional Recognition Body aligned to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, to the best of their knowledge, and satisfies the GFSI eligibility criteria, ensures Terms and Conditions and a workplan are agreed.

#### The Professional Recognition Body Fills out the Self-Assessment forms.

The objective of the self-assessment is to allow the Professional Recognition Body to demonstrate that the Professional Recognition Programme fulfils all the key elements listed in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

GFSI provides the self-assessment forms. The Professional Recognition Body completes those forms with their own assessment of their alignment to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements as well as clear and precise justification against each key element, including the exact reference to the document, page and clause addressing each key element. The Professional Recognition Body sends the completed self-assessment forms as well as the referenced documents sent to the Benchmark Leader for review, and to the GFSI Technical Manager for information.

#### The Professional Recognition Body Fills out an application form.

The Professional Recognition Body will find an Application Form including detailed guidance for its completion on the GFSI website. Any Professional Recognition Bodies wishing to apply for GFSI Benchmarking may complete this form and send it to GFSI with all required supporting evidence that the Professional Recognition Body satisfies the GFSI Eligibility Criteria, and their completed self-assessment forms.

The GFSI Technical Manager reviews the application. Any incomplete or poor-quality application will be rejected and reasons for rejection will be provided to the applicant; the GFSI Technical Manager also reserves the right to reject or refer an application back if it is deemed that the applicant Professional Recognition Body provides insufficient evidence

that they have taken sufficient steps to ensure their Professional Recognition Programme is ready for GFSI Recognition.

A Professional Recognition Body is permitted to lodge multiple benchmarking applications with GFSI but is only permitted to submit one application for the same Professional Recognition Programme within a 12-month period, if the initial application is deemed unsuccessful.

The GFSI Technical Manager informs the Professional Recognition Body within 2 weeks of receiving the application if it is accepted or rejected.

If the application is rejected, reasons for this decision are clearly detailed.

If the application is accepted, the GFSI Technical Manager appoints a Benchmark Leader for the Professional Recognition Programme assessment; the GFSI Technical Manager may assign additional Benchmarking Leaders to ensure that the assessment takes place within the desired timeframe; this is done with the written consent of the Professional Recognition Body.

The GFSI Technical Manager informs the Professional Recognition Body of this appointment in writing. Upon request from the Professional Recognition Body, additional impartiality or confidentiality agreements may be signed between GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.

The Professional Recognition Body agrees the work plan (appendix 1) of activities and key dates with the Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager.

No applications for full benchmarking are accepted in the year prior to the publication of a new version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements; no applications for continued recognition are accepted in the 6 months prior to the publication of a new version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. A notice is displayed on the GFSI website to indicate the starting date of this one-year period.

## B - DESKTOP REVIEW

The desktop review focuses on an assessment of the content of a Professional Recognition Programme's normative documents and governance rules against Part II of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

### The Benchmark Leader performs a preliminary desktop review.

The Benchmark Leader reviews the evidence provided by the Professional Recognition Body for each GFSI key element, to confirm if it satisfies the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The Benchmark Leader takes note of any key elements where additional information is needed and / or where they do not agree with the self-assessment from the Professional Recognition Body. These notes must include comprehensive explanations. The Benchmark Leader sends all these findings to the Professional Recognition Body in writing for consideration, and to the GFSI Technical Manager for review.

### In a conference call, the Benchmark Leader exchanges their detailed findings with the Professional Recognition Body.

This gives the Professional Recognition Body an opportunity to further clarify and complete their evidence. It also gives greater insight into what additional information and amendment to the self-assessment forms the Benchmark Leader requires. During the conference call, a timeframe is agreed to complete any corrections of the self-assessment forms and the workplan is reviewed accordingly.

### The Professional Recognition Body Updates (where applicable) and Resends Final Self-Assessment Forms

Within the agreed timeframe, the Professional Recognition Body sends updated self-assessment forms with any necessary additional information. In order to limit a possible back-and-forth exchange of information, the Professional Recognition Body will be required to provide the requested information and / or adjustments in the final self-assessment. The final version of the self-assessment forms must be complete and validated by the Benchmark Leader before progressing to the next step of the GFSI Benchmarking Process.

The Benchmark Leader may recommend at this point that the process moves to step G of the Benchmarking Process – final decision:

- If the desktop review highlights that the Professional Recognition Programme requires significant changes to align to the Benchmarking Requirements,
- if the deadline of the process does not allow for completion of the Benchmarking Process.

## C - THE OFFICE VISIT

The office visit focuses on assessing the Professional Recognition Body's compliance to their governance rules through a record review at their office. It focuses on confirming alignment to Part II of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body will organise a visit to the nominated office of the Professional Recognition Body. The purpose of the visit is to check the implementation of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Part II by the Professional Recognition Body through a sample record review.

The Professional Recognition Body shall ensure that all resources including expert employees, documentation and records are available to support the visit.

The Benchmark Leader confirms an agenda and required documentation for review at least two weeks before the office visit. The GFSI Technical Manager may join the office visit as an observer and adviser to the Benchmark Leader, who will lead the visit.

At the end of the office visit, the Benchmark Leader sums up all findings from the desktop review and the office visit on a report that is signed between the Professional Recognition Body and the Benchmark Leader before leaving the Professional Recognition Body's premises. A copy of this signed report is given to the Professional Recognition Body, while the Benchmark Leader and GFSI Technical Manager retain one for GFSI records.

## D - THE CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

The Professional Recognition Body shall respond to the Benchmark Leader's report with a corrective action plan within two weeks of the office visit.

The Benchmark Leader reviews the corrective action plan and confirm whether it addresses the findings. Once the Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body agree a full corrective action plan addressing all findings, the Benchmark Leader sends their draft assessment report, including the proposed corrective action plan, to the GFSI Technical Manager for validation.

The GFSI Technical Manager reviews the assessment report and include their assessment of the Corrective Action plan to this report.

## E - THE PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The Public Stakeholder Consultation ensures that the GFSI Benchmarking Assessment is transparent and submitted to the scrutiny of GFSI's and the Professional Recognition Body's stakeholders.

The GFSI Technical Manager makes the self-assessment forms and the Benchmark Leader's assessment report available on the GFSI website for a stakeholder consultation of four weeks. The Professional Recognition Body is given the opportunity to approve the content of the published documents before it is made available in the public domain. The report is only put to consultation once agreed by all above parties. Throughout the consultation, the GFSI Technical Manager collects any comments, observations or objections made by stakeholders and shares them with the Benchmark Leader and Professional Recognition Body, who shall address them. The Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager evaluates every response from the Professional Recognition Body.

The GFSI Technical Manager ensures that those stakeholders who submitted comments during the stakeholder consultation receive feedback.

## F - THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The Professional Recognition Body shall complete all required corrective actions and provide evidence of implementation to the Benchmark Leader.

The Benchmark Leader validates the answers from the Professional Recognition Body to all comments and findings gathered during the assessment process, and the implementation of the corrective actions. Once the corrective actions are fully implemented, the Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report including the completed corrective action plan and a recommendation for recognition to the GFSI Technical Manager for validation.

## G - GFSI FINAL RECOGNITION DECISION AND COMMUNICATION

This step concludes the initial assessment of the Professional Recognition Programme and ensures communication of the result of this assessment to GFSI and the Professional Recognition Body's stakeholders.

The GFSI Technical Manager informs the GFSI Steering Committee of the results of the Benchmark Leader's assessment and the recommendation for recognition in the form of a final summary report previously agreed upon with the Professional Recognition Body.

The GFSI Steering Committee comes to a decision based on the decision-making requirements laid in the GFSI Governance rules. Records shall be kept of the numbers of votes for, against and abstaining. The GFSI Technical Manager communicates the GFSI Steering Committee's decision in writing to the Professional Recognition Body, as soon as is practicable after the GFSI Steering Committee's decision.

In the event that the final decision of the GFSI Steering Committee is non-recognition, the reasons for the Steering Committee's decision shall be clearly documented and the GFSI Technical Manager shall make the Professional Recognition Body aware of the decision and those reasons. The Professional Recognition Body has the right to appeal against the GFSI Steering Committee's decision; the appeal shall



be undertaken in accordance with the procedures specified in this document (see section “sanctioning”).

In the event of recognition by the GFSI Steering Committee, the GFSI Technical Manager and the Professional Recognition body agree on a joint news release confirming this decision. The timing of these announcements is agreed on by the GFSI Technical Manager and the Professional Recognition body.

The GFSI Technical Manager will ensure that the GFSI website is updated with the new recognition status of the Professional Recognition body.

The GFSI Technical Manager will issue a statement of conformity to the Professional Recognition body.

## H - ANNUAL MONITORING OF CONTINUED ALIGNMENT

This step ensures that the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body is monitored regularly and continues to comply with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The Global Food Safety Initiative has the responsibility to create a transparent and level playing field for all Professional Recognition Bodies undergoing benchmarking against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. In order to ensure that recognised Professional Recognition Bodies have implemented all the necessary controls, GFSI shall carry out an annual monitoring of continued alignment.

The execution of this monitoring is managed by the Benchmark Leader under the supervision of the GFSI Technical Manager in order to ensure that the appropriate confidentiality is in place throughout the process.

The annual monitoring of continued alignment consists of four types of activities:

1. Random record review — frequency depending on the sample size,
2. Professional Recognition Body office audit — once a year,

3. Gap analysis against any additions introduced to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements with the publication of sub-versions,

4. Complaint and incident investigation.

### Content of the Random Record Reviews

The Benchmark Leader remotely selects registered auditors at random and sends the Professional Recognition Body a list of objective evidence and files related to these auditors required to verify alignment to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The number of samples is at least the square root of the total number of auditors registered with the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Programme. The Benchmark Leader may increase this number if authenticated complaints (see complaint investigation) or results of previous assessments raise concerns over the continued alignment of the Professional Recognition Programme to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.

The Professional Recognition Body must submit the requested records within two weeks of the Benchmark Leader's request. The Professional Recognition Body and the Benchmark Leader agree on the most convenient manner to allow the Benchmark Leader to access and verify those records.

The Benchmark Leader reports back any findings to the Professional Recognition Body and the GFSI Technical Manager. These GFSI Technical Manager reports those findings to the GFSI Director as per the Sanctioning section of this document.

### Content of the Office Audit

The purpose of the visit is to check the implementation of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements by the Professional Recognition body through a sample record review.

The Benchmark Leader reports back any findings of this office audit to the Professional Recognition Body and the GFSI Technical Manager. The GFSI Technical Manager reports those findings to the GFSI Director as per the Sanctioning section of this document.

### Gap analysis

Once a year, typically in conjunction with the first random record review, the Benchmark Leader will review the alignment of the Professional Recognition Body to any new or amended key elements included in the Benchmarking Requirements since the last assessment of the Professional Recognition body.

### Complaint Investigation

Any parties may raise a complaint to GFSI by following the procedure described in the GFSI Governance Model and Rules of Procedures.

If the complaint provides evidence that a GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body may not satisfy any of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, the GFSI Technical Manager and the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body shall investigate it following the timelines defined in the GFSI Governance Model and Rules of Procedures. This can be done by a desktop investigation or an office visit. The GFSI Technical Manager is responsible for the investigation of any complaints or suspected non-alignment of a GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Programme with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements; the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body is responsible to provide evidence to support the investigation, help identify the root cause of any verified complaint, and take actions to address it.

The GFSI Technical Manager shall ensure that the details of the complaint are clearly identified, authenticated and documented. This authentication may be verified as being accurate and correct by independent sources, in addition to the complainant. It is the responsibility of the complainant to provide information that appropriately authenticates the complaint and can be confirmed as genuine.

Upon that verification, the GFSI Technical Manager forwards the details of the complaint to the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body for investigation into the root cause of the complaint. The GFSI Technical Manager may appoint the Benchmark Leader or an independent assessor at any stage during the investigation process to support it.

The GFSI Technical Manager, or the appointed Benchmark Leader or assessor if applicable, and the GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body carry out a thorough investigation of the complaint and, where possible, provide a resolution for the issues. The GFSI Technical Manager, or the appointed Benchmark Leader or assessor if applicable, fully document the complaint process, and reports back any findings to the Professional Recognition Body and the GFSI Technical Manager when applicable. The GFSI Technical Manager reports those findings to the GFSI Director as per the Sanctioning section of this document.

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
A. Application	1 – The Professional Recognition Body completes the Self-Assessment form(s)	<p>The Professional Recognition Body evaluates their Professional Recognition Programme against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. For each requirement, the following must be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether and how the GFSI requirement is covered in the Professional Recognition Programme,</li> <li>The name of the Professional Recognition Programme's document covering the requirement with reference to the exact page and clause,</li> <li>The relevant documents as objective evidence.</li> </ul> <p>Files have to be numbered and a list of submitted documents provided together with the completed Self-Assessment forms.</p> <p>All documents may be submitted by email or a secured document sharing platform agreed with GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.</p>
	2 – The Professional Recognition Body downloads the application form from mygfsi.com, completes it and sends it with any required supporting documents and their completed self-assessment forms to gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com.	<a href="https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/">https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/</a>
	3 – GFSI sends an invoice for the application fee; process progresses when the invoice is paid.	The application fee is non-refundable

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
A. Application	4 –GFSI reviews the application and confirm within 2 weeks of receipts if the application is accepted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the case of an application for continued recognition, GFSI confirms the steps and documents of the process to complete</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the information is complete and complies with the eligibility criteria defined in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Part I, the application is accepted, move to step 4.</li> <li>If the information is incomplete or does not satisfy the eligibility criteria defined in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Part I, the application is rejected, feedback is sent to the Professional Recognition Body, back to step 1.</li> </ul> <p>NB: The Professional Recognition Body may address concerns regarding the eligibility criteria and re-apply. Application fee would be invoiced for this new application.</p>
	5 – GFSI appoints a Benchmark Leader	The appointment of the Benchmark Leader must ensure the absence of conflict of interest between the Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body.
	6 – A workplan is agreed upon between the Professional Recognition Body and the appointed Benchmark Leader.	<p>The Professional Recognition Body is accountable for their workplan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The workplan should allow the completion of the assessment and recognition process within 12 months from the date the application was accepted,</li> <li>The workplan must be agreed upon with the Benchmark Leader.</li> </ul>



GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>B. Desktop Review</b>	<p>1 – the Benchmark Leader reviews the completed self-assessment and supporting documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information is complete and allows a comprehensive review by the Benchmark Leader – the Benchmark Leader sends the self-assessment with their assessment and comments, move to step 4, </li></ul> <p>The information is incomplete, and / or the evidence provided is insufficient – the benchmark leader sends feedback to the Professional Recognition Body, back to step 2.</p>	<p>Sending their request for continued recognition and a list of the significant changes introduced to the Professional Recognition Programme</p>
	<p>2 – The findings of the self-assessment review are discussed and clarified through a call with the Benchmark Leader, GFSI, and Professional Recognition Body</p>	<p>GFSI will facilitate the scheduling and IT tools necessary for the execution of the call. The following points will be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review of Benchmark Leader's assessment and clarification of any findings,</li> <li>agreement on a timeframe for the completion of the self-assessment,</li> <li>review of the workplan in light of the results of the self-assessment.</li> </ul> <p>The Professional Recognition Body ensures that relevant and competent representatives are present during the call.</p>
	<p>3 – The Professional Recognition Body updates (where applicable) and sends the final Self-Assessment forms and additional supporting documents to the Benchmark Leader.</p>	<p>Within the agreed timeframe the Professional Recognition Body will send the final version of the Self-Assessment forms to the Benchmark Leader.</p>

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>B. Desktop Review</b>	<p>4 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the additional information provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information is complete and addressing the findings would not require a significant re-write of the programme – the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body and GFSI, move to “office visit”;</li> <li>addressing the findings would require a significant re-write of the Professional Recognition Programme - the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed report including the list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body and GFSI, move to G;</li> <li>information is incomplete or unclear – back to step 5.</li> </ul>	<p>The Benchmark Leader may recommend at this point that the process moves to gate G:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if the self-assessment review highlights that the Professional Recognition Programme requires significant changes to align to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements</li> <li>if the deadline of the process does not allow for an office visit and a public consultation.</li> </ul>

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>C. Office Visit</b>	1 - The Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body plan a visit to the nominated offices of the Professional Recognition Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the date is agreed based on availability</li> <li>the Benchmark Leader sends a proposed agenda at least 2 weeks before the visit.</li> </ul>	The office visit focuses on record reviews as evidence of the implementation of the governance reviewed during the previous gates. The Professional Recognition Body must ensure that all resources needed to support the office visit process are available during the visit, including expert staff members, documentation, and records.
	2 – The office visit happens at the Professional Recognition Body's main office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader completes the final list of findings and presents it to the Professional Recognition Body,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body representative signs the list of findings.</li> </ul> A copy of the signed list of findings is left with the Professional Recognition Body, another copy is sent to GFSI.	
<b>D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting</b>	1 – The Professional Recognition Body sends the Benchmark Leader a corrective action plan to address any findings raised during the assessment.	
	2 - The Benchmark Leader reviews the corrective action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The corrective actions address the findings – the Benchmark Leader accepts the corrective action plan, move to step 3,</li> <li>Some of the corrective actions do not address the findings – the corrective action plan is rejected, back to step 1.</li> </ul>	

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting</b>	3 – The Benchmark Leader completes the assessment report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader sends the assessment report including the list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body confirms that the content of the report is accurate.</li> </ul>	The assessment report includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Professional Recognition Programme information (name(s), contact details),</li> <li>the assessment details (scope of recognition, benchmark leader etc),</li> <li>an executive summary (summary of findings from Self-Assessment, office visit, any particular complexities), any findings from the self-assessment review and the office visit.</li> </ul>
	4 – GFSI validates the finally agreed report and action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader sends the final report agreed with the Professional Recognition Body to GFSI,</li> <li>GFSI reviews the report and validates its content.</li> </ul>	
<b>E. Public Stakeholder Consultation</b>	1 – GFSI prepares the documentation for public consultation, this includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An announcement statement,</li> <li>The assessment report with the corrective action plan,</li> <li>The completed and reviewed self-assessments.</li> </ul>	The Professional Recognition Body is asked to approve the documents for public stakeholder consultation.
	2 – The Professional Recognition Body reviews the proposed documentation for the public consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Professional Recognition Body approves the documentation: move to step 3,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body has concerns over the content of the report, they submit their suggested changes to GFSI, back to step 1.</li> </ul>	

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>E. Public Stakeholder Consultation</b>	3 – GFSI makes the approved documentation available for stakeholder consultation on mygfsi.com for four weeks.	The assessment report and the completed self-assessment forms are made available from mygfsi.com. Comments are sent to gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com.
	4 – GFSI closes the public consultation and sends the list of received comments to the Professional Recognition Body and the benchmark leader.	
<b>F. Completion of corrective actions</b>	1 – The Professional Recognition Body completes all required corrective actions and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>answers to any comments from the public consultation requiring an action or comment,</li> <li>provides evidence of implementation for all corrective actions for the findings of the assessment,</li> <li>the Professional Recognition Body sends the final report with their above addition, and any required supportive documents, to the Benchmark Leader.</li> </ul>	
	2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the answers from the Professional Recognition Body to the comments and findings of the assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader accepts the comments and completion of the corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – move to gate G,</li> <li>The Benchmark Leader rejects the comments and evidence of completion of corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – back to step 1.</li> </ul>	All findings must be addressed with the corrective action plan completed before the process can progress to gate G.

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>F. Completion of corrective actions</b>	3 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report with the completed corrective actions to GFSI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GFSI accepts the completed corrective actions: move to G,</li> <li>GFSI rejects the completed actions and/or asks for more information: back to step 1.</li> </ul>	
<b>G. GFSI Final Recognition Decision and Communication</b>	1 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report, including the executive summary with their recommendation for recognition, to GFSI.	
	2 – GFSI reviews the final assessment report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GFSI accepts the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: move to step 3,</li> <li>GFSI challenges the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: feedback is sent to the Benchmark Leader for consideration, back to step 1.</li> </ul>	
	3– GFSI submits the recommendation to the GFSI Steering Committee who votes for or against this recommendation.	Vote may be organised during a face-to-face meeting of the GFSI Steering Committee where the quorum is present, or by email. In the latter case, GFSI must gather enough written answers back from GFSI Steering Committee members to respect the GFSI governance rules.

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>G. GFSI Final Recognition Decision and Communication</b>	4 – GFSI informs the Professional Recognition Body of the final decision and confirms next step: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Professional Recognition Body agrees to communicate publicly the result of their assessment – move to step 5,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body does not want the result of their assessment publicly communicated – move to step 6.</li> <li>In either case, GFSI posts a signed statement of alignment to the Professional Recognition Body.</li> </ul>	GFSI informs the Professional Recognition Body of the reasons for the decision. The Professional Recognition Body has the right to appeal the GFSI Steering Committee decision (see Part I of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements)
	5– GFSI and the Professional Recognition Body agree on a common news release text and publish this jointly on their respective media. Move to step 6	GFSI and the Professional Recognition Body both publish a news release.
	6 – GFSI updates mygfsi.com and ensures the Professional Recognition Body updates their own website when applicable.	
<b>H. Monitoring of continued alignment</b>	1 – Once a year, the Professional Recognition Body completes a monitoring record and sends this to GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.	<p>The monitoring record is issued by GFSI and asks for a declaration of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any significant changes in the Professional Recognition Body governance, including changes in procedures, ownership, organisation etc.</li> <li>Any planned or published new programme version</li> </ul>

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>H. Monitoring of continued alignment</b>	2 – The Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body schedule the required activities of the monitoring of continued alignment.	<p>The GFSI monitoring of continuous alignment includes the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gap analysis: against a potential new sub-version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements,</li> <li>Random record review: desktop audit based on sampling exercise,</li> <li>Office Audit: review of Professional Recognition Body's records based at their main office.</li> </ul>
	3 – The Benchmark Leader carries out a first random record review and the gap analysis with the Professional Recognition Body.	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gap analysis against a potential new sub-version of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements,</li> <li>A review of records associated with randomly selected auditors.</li> </ul>
	4 – The Benchmark Leader carries out an office visit	The office visit focuses on record reviews as evidence of the implementation of the programme governance. All resources needed to support the office visit process must be available during the visit, including expert staff members, documentation, and records.
	5– The Benchmark Leader carries out a second random record review if necessary	<p>A second random record review may be necessary if the required number of samples cannot be reasonably checked in one sampling exercise. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of records associated with randomly selected audits</li> </ul>

GATE	STEP	DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS/FOLLOW-UP
<b>H. Monitoring of continued alignment</b>	6 – The Professional Recognition Body and Benchmark Leader ensure that an acceptable corrective action plan is completed for any findings from the monitoring activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings are submitted to the GFSI Director for review,</li> <li>If any findings raise concerns on the recognition status of the Professional Recognition Programme, the sanctioning process may be initiated.</li> </ul>	At each stage of the monitoring of continuous alignment, the Benchmark Leader documents and agrees on a list of findings with the Professional Recognition Body and communicates this to GFSI. The recognition of the Professional Recognition Programme may be maintained, suspended or withdrawn based on the results of the assessment (see “sanctioning”).
	7 – GFSI validates that the results justify maintaining the Professional Recognition Programme recognition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If any findings raise concerns GFSI recommends next steps to the GFSI Board.</li> </ul>	The recognition of the Professional Recognition Programme may be maintained, suspended or withdrawn based on the results of the assessment (see “sanctioning”).

## Sanctioning

Whenever the Benchmark Leader or the GFSI Technical Manager establishes evidence of non-alignment of a GFSI-recognised Professional Recognition Body against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, or of a breach of the GFSI Terms and Conditions, the GFSI Director shall be informed.

The Professional Recognition Body shall submit a corrective action plan for each finding within 2 weeks of receiving the findings. The GFSI Technical Manager and the GFSI Director review the corrective action plan and any relevant evidence from the assessment and agree on one of the following next steps:

1. take no action against the Professional Recognition Body, or
2. maintain recognition and require evidence of re-alignment, or

3. recommend the GFSI Steering Committee to suspend recognition, or

4. recommend the GFSI Steering Committee to withdraw recognition.

### Evidence of re-alignment required

In the event that the GFSI Technical Manager and the GFSI Director consider that evidence of re-alignment is required but recognition may be maintained, the GFSI Technical Manager follows up on any required actions and the implementation of a Corrective Action Plan with the Professional Recognition Body; the GFSI Technical Manager may ask for the support of the Benchmark Leader.

In the event that the Professional Recognition Body does not implement the corrective actions within an agreed timeline, the GFSI Technical Manager and the GFSI Director review the situation and may recommend to the GFSI Steering Committee that the recognition of the Professional Recognition Body be suspended.

### GFSI Suspension of Recognition

If the GFSI Steering Committee considers that a period of suspension of recognition shall be imposed, the GFSI website shall clearly specify the details and conditions of the suspension.

The GFSI Director shall formally inform the Professional Recognition Body of the decision and period of the suspension, and any remediation conditions imposed by the GFSI Steering Committee to regain recognition status.

The Professional Recognition Body shall confirm to the GFSI Technical Manager that these remediation conditions can be achieved within the timescales set out by the GFSI Steering Committee, when evidence of the implementation of the corrective actions will be expected, and alignment to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements can be re-established.

The GFSI Technical Manager will follow up the implementation of the corrective actions with the Professional Recognition Body; the GFSI Technical Manager may ask for the support of the Benchmark Leader.

Once the re-alignment is confirmed, the GFSI Technical Manager will inform the GFSI Director and the GFSI Steering Committee. The GFSI website is updated accordingly.

In the event that the GFSI Steering Committee is not satisfied with the progress made by the Professional Recognition Body or their commitment to re-align to the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, they may;

- Extend the suspension period to a maximum of 12 months from the date the initial suspension occurred,
- withdraw recognition of the Professional Recognition Programme.

### GFSI Withdrawal of Recognition

If the GFSI Steering Committee considers that a withdrawal of recognition is required, the GFSI Director shall formally inform the Professional Recognition Body of this decision.

In the event that GFSI recognition is withdrawn, GFSI shall issue a news release and the GFSI website shall clearly specify the details and conditions of the withdrawal.

A Professional Recognition Body may choose to voluntarily withdraw from GFSI recognition when unforeseen circumstances put the Professional Recognition Programme into contravention of GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. In this instance, the Professional Recognition Body will make a request to withdraw voluntarily and make a full dossier of the circumstances available to the GFSI Director.

The GFSI Director will inform the GFSI Steering Committee of the circumstances and convene a meeting to discuss the issue as soon as possible. The GFSI Steering Committee may grant voluntary withdrawal or initiate a suspension process. The GFSI Director will inform the Professional Recognition Body of this decision.



## APPENDIX 1 — GFSI WORKPLAN

### GFSI Appeals Procedure

The Professional Recognition Body has the right to appeal against any decisions made by the GFSI Steering Committee, the GFSI Director or any person contracted to GFSI in relation to the Benchmarking Process.

The Professional Recognition Body shall submit an appeal to the GFSI Director within 30 days of the decision in dispute occurring. The appeal shall be submitted in writing to the GFSI Director and shall clearly describe the reason and provide a full explanation together with substantive evidence to support a thorough investigation of the appeal.

When the appeal procedure is initiated, the status of the Professional Recognition Programme is amended on the GFSI website to reflect that the Professional Recognition Programme's recognition status is subject to an appeal.

The GFSI Director ensures that the investigation into the appeal is conducted in an impartial and professional manner, and without any actual or perceived conflict of interest. Within 7 working days of receiving the Appeal, the GFSI Director appoints an Appeal Committee made of signatories of the GFSI Coalition of Action and assessed for any potential conflict of interest with the object of the Appeal.

The Appeal Committee considers the appeal evidence. They present the outcome of their investigation and their final decision to the GFSI Steering Committee within 30 days of their appointment; this decision made by the Appeal Committee shall be upheld by the GFSI Steering Committee.

The GFSI Director formally informs the Professional Recognition Body of the GFSI Steering Committee decision.

The decision of the Appeal Committee is final. Once the final decision is given, the appeal process will be closed and the GFSI website updated accordingly.

GATE	STEP	TYPICAL TIMELINE	AGREED DEADLINE	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
A. Application	1 – The Professional Recognition Body completes the Self-Assessment form(s)			GFSI self-assessment forms, Application form and terms and conditions
	2 – The Professional Recognition Body downloads the application form from <a href="https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/professional-recognition-bodies/">mygfsi.com</a> , completes it and sends it with any required supporting documents and their completed self-assessment forms to <a href="mailto:gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com">gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com</a> .			<a href="https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/professional-recognition-bodies/">https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/professional-recognition-bodies/</a>
	3 – GFSI sends an invoice for the application fee; process progresses when the invoice is paid.	1 week		
	4 – GFSI reviews the application and confirm within 2 weeks of receipts if the application is accepted. In the case of an application for continued recognition, GFSI confirms the steps and documents of the process to complete	2 weeks		
	5 – GFSI appoints a Benchmark Leader	2 weeks		
	6 – A workplan is agreed upon between the Professional Recognition Body and the appointed Benchmark Leader.	1 week		

B. Desktop Review	1 – the Benchmark Leader reviews the completed self-assessment and supporting documents:	4 weeks	GFSI Self-assessment forms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information is complete and allows a comprehensive review by the Benchmark Leader – the Benchmark Leader sends the self-assessment with their assessment and comments, move to step 4, The information is incomplete, and / or the evidence provided is insufficient – the benchmark leader sends feedback to the Professional</li> </ul>		
	2 – The findings of the self-assessment review are discussed and clarified through a call with the Benchmark Leader, GFSI, and Professional Recognition Body	2 hours	GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	3 – The Professional Recognition Body updates (where applicable) and sends the final Self-Assessment forms and additional supporting documents to the Benchmark Leader.	2 weeks	GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	4 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the additional information provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information is complete and addressing the findings would not require a significant re-write of the programme – the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body and GFSI, move to “office visit”;</li> <li>addressing the findings would require a significant re-write of the Professional Recognition Programme - the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed report including the list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body and GFSI, move to G; information is incomplete or unclear – back to step 5.</li> </ul>		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.

C. Office Visit	1 - The Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body plan a visit to the nominated offices of the Professional Recognition Body:	2 weeks before the visit	GFSI office visit agenda
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the date is agreed based on availability</li> <li>the Benchmark Leader sends a proposed agenda at least 2 weeks before the visit.</li> </ul>		
	2 – The office visit happens at the Professional Recognition Body's main office:	1-2 days	GFSI office visit checklist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader completes the final list of findings and presents it to the Professional Recognition Body,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body representative signs the list of findings.</li> <li>A copy of the signed list of findings is left with the Professional Recognition Body, another copy is sent to GFSI.</li> </ul>		
D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting	1 – The Professional Recognition Body sends the Benchmark Leader a corrective action plan to address any findings raised during the assessment.	2 weeks	GFSI List of findings
	2 - The Benchmark Leader reviews the corrective action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The corrective actions address the findings – the Benchmark Leader accepts the corrective action plan, move to step 3,</li> <li>Some of the corrective actions do not address the findings – the corrective action plan is rejected, back to step 1.</li> </ul>	4 weeks after the office visit maximum	GFSI List of findings

D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting	3 – The Benchmark Leader completes the assessment report:		GFSI Assessment Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader sends the assessment report including the list of findings to the Professional Recognition Body,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body confirms that the content</li> </ul>		
	4 – GFSI validates the finally agreed report and action plan:	1 week	GFSI List of findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader sends the final report agreed with the Professional Recognition Body to GFSI,</li> <li>GFSI reviews the report and validates its content.</li> </ul>		
E. Public Stakeholder Consultation	1 – GFSI prepares the documentation for public consultation, this includes	1 week	Assessment Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An announcement statement,</li> <li>The assessment report with the corrective action plan,</li> <li>The completed and reviewed self-assessments.</li> </ul>		
E. Public Stakeholder Consultation	2 – The Professional Recognition Body reviews the proposed documentation for the public consultation:	1 week	GFSI Assessment Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Professional Recognition Body approves the documentation: move to step 3,</li> <li>The Professional Recognition Body has concerns over the content of the report, they submit their suggested changes to GFSI, back to step 1.</li> </ul>		

E. Public Stakeholder Consultation	3 – GFSI makes the approved documentation available for stakeholder consultation on mygfsi.com for four weeks.	4 weeks	GFSI Public Consultation comment form
	4 – GFSI closes the public consultation and sends the list of received comments to the Professional Recognition Body and the benchmark leader.	1 week	
F. Completion of corrective actions	1 – The Professional Recognition Body completes all required corrective actions and:	Depending on corrective actions	GFSI Assessment Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>answers to any comments from the public consultation requiring an action or comment,</li> <li>provides evidence of implementation for all corrective actions for the findings of the assessment,</li> <li>the Professional Recognition Body sends the final report with their above addition, and any required supportive documents, to the Benchmark Leader.</li> </ul>		
	2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the answers from the Professional Recognition Body to the comments and findings of the assessments:	2 weeks	GFSI Assessment Report
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Benchmark Leader accepts the comments and completion of the corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – move to gate G,</li> <li>The Benchmark Leader rejects the comments and evidence of completion of corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – back to step 1.</li> </ul>		

F. Completion of corrective actions	<p>3 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report with the completed corrective actions to GFSI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GFSI accepts the completed corrective actions: move to G,</li> <li>• GFSI rejects the completed actions and/or asks for more information: back to step 1.</li> </ul>	1 week	GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the answers from the Professional Recognition Body to the comments and findings of the assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Benchmark Leader accepts the comments and completion of the corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – move to gate G,</li> <li>• The Benchmark Leader rejects the comments and evidence of completion of corrective actions from the Professional Recognition Body – back to step 1.</li> </ul>	2 weeks	GFSI Assessment Report
G. GFSI Final recognition Decision and Communication	<p>1 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report, including the executive summary with their recommendation for recognition, to GFSI.</p>	3 months after the public consultation maximum	GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>2 – GFSI reviews the final assessment report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GFSI accepts the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: move to step 3,</li> <li>• GFSI challenges the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: feedback is sent to the Benchmark Leader for consideration, back to step 1.</li> </ul>	1 week	GFSI Assessment Report

G. GFSI Final recognition Decision and Communication	<p>3– GFSI submits the recommendation to the GFSI Steering Committee who votes for or against this recommendation.</p>	2 weeks	GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>4 – GFSI informs the Professional Recognition Body of the final decision and confirms next step:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Professional Recognition Body agrees to communicate publicly the result of their assessment – move to step 5,</li> <li>• The Professional Recognition Body does not want the result of their assessment publicly communicated – move to step 6.</li> </ul> <p>In either case, GFSI posts a signed statement of alignment to the Professional Recognition Body.</p>	1 week	GFSI Statement of Alignment
	<p>5– GFSI and the Professional Recognition Body agree on a common news release text and publish this jointly on their respective media.</p> <p>Move to step 6</p>	2 weeks	GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>6 – GFSI updates mygfsi.com and ensures the Professional Recognition Body updates their own website when applicable.</p>		

H. Monitoring of continuous alignment	1 – Once a year, the Professional Recognition Body completes a monitoring record and sends this to GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.		GFSI Monitoring Record
	2 – The Benchmark Leader and the Professional Recognition Body schedule the required activities of the monitoring of continued alignment.		
	3 – The Benchmark Leader carries out the first random record review and the gap analysis with the Professional Recognition Body.	Within 6 months of the last office visit	GFSI Monitoring Checklist
	4 – The Benchmark Leader carries out an office visit	Within 12 months of the previous office visit	GFSI Monitoring Checklist
	5– The Benchmark Leader carries out a second random record review.	Within 6 months of the first random record review	GFSI Monitoring Checklist
	6 – The Professional Recognition Body and Benchmark Leader ensure that an acceptable corrective action plan is completed for any findings from the monitoring activities.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings are submitted to the GFSI Director for review,</li> <li>If any findings raise concerns on the recognition status of the Professional Recognition Programme, the sanctioning process may be initiated.</li> </ul>	CAP submitted within 2 weeks of office visit	GFSI Monitoring Checklist
	7 – GFSI validates that the results justify maintaining the Professional Recognition Programme recognition.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If any findings raise concerns GFSI recommends next steps to the GFSI Steering Committee.</li> </ul>		GFSI Monitoring Checklist