



# **GFSI's Global Markets Programme & Capability Building Work**

## ***Stakeholder Consultation Summary***

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# Introduction

It is becoming increasingly clear that local and well-informed food systems are critical in driving progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to the overall food security of future generations. Yet there is a lack of coordinated global support for businesses to build food safety capabilities, meet customer and regulatory requirements and supply safe food to local and global markets.

As the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), our ambition is to create and enhance food safety capability in food business operators (FBOs) no matter their size or location in the world by ensuring GFSI's Global Markets Programme evolves to meet the demands of a changing food safety ecosystem.

Since its launch, GFSI's step-by-step capability building programme, the Global Markets Programme (GMAP), has benefited countless stakeholders around the globe. We cannot, however, be complacent, particularly at a time when food systems are arguably under more stress than ever before. In the fall of 2020, we began consulting with all stakeholder groups, including current and previous users of the programme (food business operators spanning manufacturing, retail and food service), regulators, certification programme owners, certification bodies, training providers, NGOs, IGOs, trade associations, GFSI Steering Committee members and previous award winners.

It is a rare thing to see agreement when consulting such broad stakeholder groups, but what we saw was overwhelming consensus that:

- GFSI has a role to play in capacity building for food safety and serving the SDGs,
- the Global Markets Programme has more potential than it is currently delivering on and merits a full review, and
- stakeholders expect GFSI to step into a bigger role, expanding its oversight of the programme, including delivery and implementation, brand and IP ownership, monitoring and scaling up.

We were pleased to see the commitment and enthusiasm from respondents in shaping their ideas and offering their support, as well as providing numerous suggestions on ways to expand, scale up and strengthen the programme, along with GFSI's capability building work more broadly.

This report provides a summary of the responses we received, what we learned throughout this consultative process, and what we propose to do next. We believe this provides a transparent and robust basis upon which to shape our capability building activities going forward in consultation with our stakeholders.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who took the time to respond to the consultations and share with us their ideas, views and professional insights. We are confident that the consultation process has illustrated a firm commitment by all to capability building work at pace as a community dedicated to delivering improved food safety outcomes.

Kind regards,

**Erica Sheward**

Director, The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

**The Consumer Goods Forum**

# Why this strategic review is part of GFSI's 'Race to the Top'

## Phase I: rebuilding trust and confidence in GFSI certificates with explicit oversight of the GFSI ecosystem

Over the past few years, trust and confidence in third-party certification to deliver food safety assurance has been challenged. The quality of some audit outputs audits leading to certification to a GFSI-recognised Certification Programme has been questioned. There has been an understandable concern about the efficacy of audits and, more specifically, the competence of some food safety auditors themselves.

Consulting with strategic stakeholders in 2019, GFSI recognised that the issues lie not just with the auditors but with the entire mechanism leading to certifications to a GFSI-recognised Certification Programme, which is overseen by Certification Programme Owners (CPOs), Certification Bodies (CBs) and Accreditation Bodies (Abs).

The GFSI Steering Committee convened to discuss the ongoing challenges they felt were inherent in the quality of GFSI-recognised certificates. They shared industry data which highlighted contrasts between the quality of GFSI third-party audits and their own second-party food safety audits. The Steering Committee concluded that despite best efforts to improve aspects of the GFSI ecosystem, trust and confidence in GFSI certificates was at an all-time low and something radical had to be done – at pace – to address the inherent audit outputs.

GFSI committed to developing and delivering a bold new vision termed the 'Race to the Top' (RTTT), which was approved unanimously in Seattle in February 2020 as an initial suite of measures specifically designed to improve the sphere of influence that GFSI has over the entire food safety certification and assurance system.

The RTTT is the sum of multiple work streams and projects designed to ensure that there is a fundamental shift in culture from 'compliance being enough' to a new era in which 'continuous improvement' is required at all touch points within the GFSI sphere of influence – CPOs, CBs, auditors and the food business operators (FBOs) themselves, thus building trust and confidence in GFSI-recognised certificates across the stakeholder spectrum.

The conceptual framework of the Race to the Top delivers a bold vision of GFSI's modernisation and acceleration. In broad terms, GFSI is moving to assume **explicit oversight for what good looks like in all aspects of the GFSI ecosystem.**



The conceptual framework includes two phases with Phase I made up of four fundamental features. These were shaped with the support of stakeholders, comprising representatives from Accreditation Bodies, Certification Bodies, Certification Programme Owners, members of The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) and the broader industry, all of whom provided significant input between the GFSI Steering Committee meetings of October 2019 and February 2020.

## Phase II: building an ecosystem to boost capabilities and deliver safe food for people everywhere

Phase II of the Race to the Top began its implementation in February 2021 with a strategic review of the Global Markets Programme. The RTTT framework proposes to enhance oversight across the GFSI ecosystem with the aim of improving trust, transparency and confidence in GFSI-recognised certification and audit outcomes. As GFSI is seeking to stay true to its core purpose as a benchmarking and harmonisation organisation, responsible for the ‘what’ – not the ‘how’ – of food safety, it became apparent that a complete reshaping of this programme is necessary.

## GFSI's Race to the Top Framework



# Why a strategic review of the Global Markets Programme

With the development and evolution of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements came the need to create a dynamic and systematic route to third-party certification for small and developing businesses who, while they aspired to become certified, lacked the internal resource and food safety management system expertise to achieve it. GFSI developed its Global Markets Programme (GMaP) capability building tool in 2008, to support small or less developed FBOs in achieving certification to a GFSI-recognised food safety programme, thus improving market access and food safety assurance.

The aim was to help target companies develop effective food safety management systems through a systematic continuous improvement process, guided by the following objectives:

- to provide a route for small and less developed businesses to achieve accredited certification,
- to support capability building efforts and improve market access opportunities for small suppliers operating locally.

The Global Markets Programme contains a food safety checklist as well as a protocol to drive continuous improvement. Companies may choose to use the GMaP or they may decide to implement the programme as part of business development activities in manufacturing sites and/or primary production. It is a free, open-access, voluntary programme that businesses can use to implement according to their needs and strategic objectives. The documents provide guidance for food businesses, service providers and stakeholders in the form of a toolkit. The GMaP was originally designed as an introductory three-step programme towards full GFSI-recognised certification. For the last 12 years, various pilot programmes have used the GMaP checklists to introduce food safety management systems into smaller and less developed businesses around the world. Pioneer countries include the Ukraine, China, Japan, Russia, Chile, Malaysia, USA and Zambia amongst many others. Participating businesses include retailers and brand manufacturers in partnership with international organisations and universities who have funded training and mentoring programmes to raise awareness and build capability.

The Global Markets Programme has never been intended as a fully stand-alone programme, which could unintentionally devalue full certification. The end destination has always been full certification after a three-year process. As this programme has been deployed without proper

oversight from GFSI, it has lost its initial objective and purpose<sup>1</sup>, has become an additional cost for some food business operators and has proven to be a risk in jeopardising GFSI-recognised certification. Despite GFSI's success in driving improvements in food safety capabilities through the GMaP, there is no room for complacency. At the end of 2020, the GFSI Steering Committee identified the following risks of continuing to run the existing Global Markets Programme.

### Identified Risks

1. Risk for the Race to the Top – the programme could be a vector of diminishing trust and confidence in GFSI-recognised audits and certificates due to:
  - a. The programme's decline in integrity (less than 50% of current users are using the official GFSI protocol)
  - b. The adaptation of the programme by some regions and public organisations for their own purposes without GFSI oversight
2. Risk of the programme as a reputational risk or brand issue for GFSI
3. Risk of the programme to act as a barrier to trade due to fees added by commercial stakeholders and associated with the programme
4. Risk of not delivering on capability building poor use of the programme by small- and medium-sized enterprises in emerging countries because of:
  - a. The lack of clarity around the purpose of the programme and its positioning
  - b. The lack of quality training materials
  - c. The lack of relevance for emerging markets in Africa because it is not fit for purpose
  - d. The lack of measuring or monitoring of the programme's efficacy

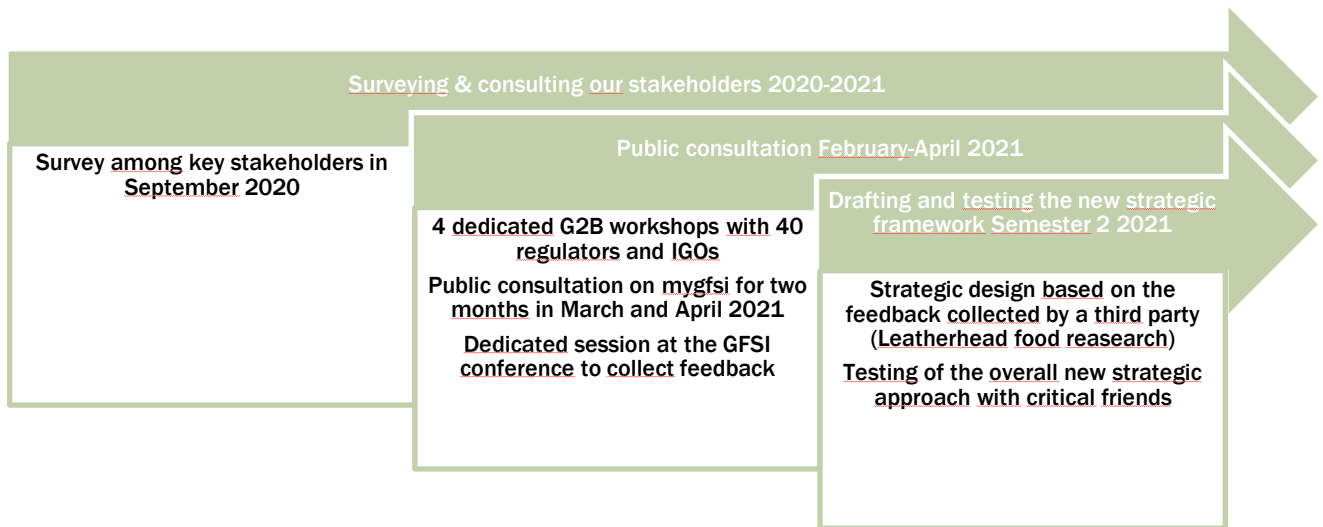
When responses to the RTTT consultation were reviewed, GFSI noted a significant number of concerns from stakeholders specifically relating to the efficacy and integrity of the GMaP. Given the fact that no strategic review of the GMaP programme had been undertaken since its launch in 2010, it seemed timely to consider a review of the GMaP during the second phase of the RTTT. In September 2020 GFSI launched a threefold strategic review of the GMaP:

- A preliminary survey among key users of the programme in September 2020
- A public consultation on its GFSI website from February to April 2021,
- A dialogue on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 within the broader framework of the Government-to-Business (G2B) meetings and linked to the UN Food Systems Summit. This multi-stakeholder global dialogue sought to collect stakeholders' views on how to strategically review the capability building tool. It brought together businesses, international

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<sup>1</sup> In September 2020, a survey was sent to 100 GFSI key users of the global markets programme (buyers, food business operators using the GMaP – mostly Global Markets awards winners, CPOs, CBs, NGOs), half of them responded that they were very dissatisfied with the programme.

organisations, academics, and governments from UN member states responsible for, or with an interest in, food safety. It gathered 120 participants from 45 governments and 35 companies. This dialogue was the culmination of three preparatory discussions that took place with participants from Asia, Africa and Central and South America from January to March 2021 and included 186 participants from more than 25 countries from those three continents.



## Outcomes of the public consultation phase

Key findings of the public consultation made by an independent organisation

- GMaP stakeholders would like to see changes to the current programme. Those from South America and Asia believe that the current GMaP is failing to meet its capability building target outcomes
- Alternative ways to provide evidence of capability against the GMaP checklist are preferred, rather than it being solely a self-assessment tool
- GMaP scopes should be aligned with the scopes of the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements and be incrementally expanded, prioritising areas where benchmarking activity is most prevalent and/or the need for capability building is identified



- GFSI should develop a framework to monitor how GMaP training and assessment is delivered and should revise the programme to provide additional oversight on the harmonisation of the checklist and conformity with the protocol
- GFSI should more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of delivery partners
- GFSI should revise the governance of the GMaP to regain ownership and control of the GMaP brand and intellectual property
- Confusion on whether the GMaP results in certification is evident from multiple sources, aggravated by misleading and unauthorised use of the GMaP brand.

The detailed report from Leatherhead is available and [can be accessed here](#).

## Summary of the G2B Discussion on the Strategic Review of the Global Markets Programme

CATEGORY	SENTIMENT
Topics covered	The new capability building programme should support regulators and the food safety organisations of national governments to easily design and finance capability building programmes in emerging markets so as to strengthen supply chains and facilitate trade
Serve all scopes and sectors	The new programme should ensure safe food for people everywhere, including food banks, informal markets, the customers of micro-enterprises, humanitarian beneficiaries and consumers everywhere, with no distinction on the safety of the food for export and domestic consumption (to avoid a two-speed system)
Empowerment with appropriate food safety management systems	<p>The new programme should help develop leaders and champions in micro, small and medium enterprises by empowering them with appropriate food safety management system (FSMS) tools and supporting them to strengthen food safety culture in their companies, cities, regions, countries by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• empowering women as key contributors to healthier lifestyles and more sustainable food systems</li> <li>• finding innovative and non-literacy-based ways to educate and spread awareness about good hygiene practices, such as ancestral communication techniques, internet-based solutions</li> </ul> <p>People who are lacking literacy need to be targeted with fit-for-purpose solutions to empower them via education and training programmes.</p>

Serve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	The new programme needs to encourage sustainable and nutritious food systems production and equitable livelihoods, rural communities at very small scale and should ensure that it develops harmonised food safety management systems aligned with the SDGs linked to trade, food safety and food security (especially 2, 3, 12, 17).
Small, informal and less sophisticated food business operators should be addressed in priority	Small is the answer to make the change with the Global Markets Programme. A renewed focus should be applied to involve MSMEs, informal markets, new small disruptive players of the food industry, small restaurants and others.
Training and education are paramount	The value of training was underscored repeatedly, and there was broad agreement that there is a genuine thirst for knowledge of food safety. GFSI must be engaged in training not only for businesses but also food inspectors, where regulators wish to collaborate. Some regulators also noted that some regulators in developing countries at the local level could also benefit from training. Regulators would also benefit from the creation of a Global Markets checklist for inspectors in jurisdictions where public resources are scarce.
Need to build a community	The development of a community of food business operators focused on food safety via a new programme can provide mutual support and encourage the sharing of best practices while understanding shared local challenges and culture. A mentorship programme may also be of value.

The primary conclusion from all participants was that efforts towards capability building for small and very small food business operators is fundamental to providing access to safe food for people everywhere while increasing access to markets. Stakeholders agreed that given the size and complexity of the task, GFSI public-private partnerships offer the most promising opportunities to make a difference, and increased collaboration could help to avoid duplication and better leverage efforts of business and governments. It was clear that if the objective was to ensure that “no one is left behind” and that safe food should be for everyone, then the scope of capability building programmes and tools should extend to all food businesses and agents. The responses showed an all-encompassing sense that GFSI could make a great impact here. Regulators noted that investments in capability building can also contribute to greater regulatory compliance.

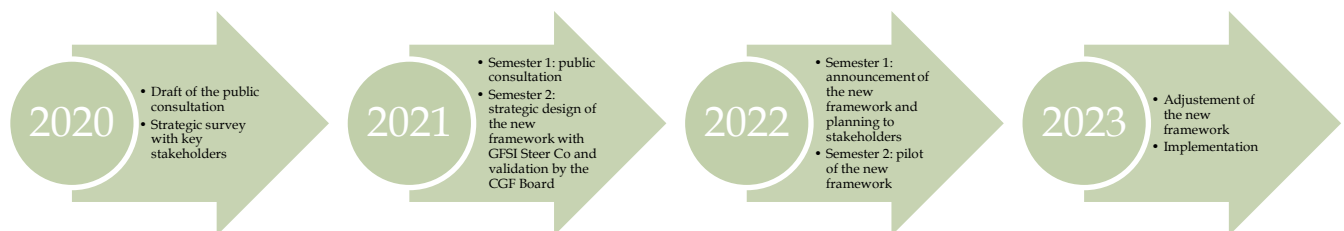
# What are the next steps?

## The outlines of the new framework

Acknowledging that smaller and better-informed food systems are the future, GFSI is designing a new bold food safety capability building approach that conveys all the elements from the public consultation. The new capability building framework will consist of a holistic approach which will be barrier free but managed. The objective is for the framework to become a fully operational capability building programme within two to three years, creating a full architecture to support capability building, linking players of good will and encompassing all aspects of food safety systems. The overall value proposition is to facilitate market access for all food business operators by developing food safety capabilities.

With this new capability building strategic framework, GFSI's objective is to support every stakeholder building or supporting food safety capability building in more decentralised food systems by providing better access to knowledge and education on food safety management in a digital environment while integrating various components of the SDGs impacting safe food.

## Schedule for Phase II of the Race to the Top | GFSI's New Capability Building Framework





A photograph of a wooden pier extending into a body of water at sunset. The pier is made of dark wooden planks and has several vertical wooden posts along its length. The water is calm, reflecting the warm colors of the sunset. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. A dark blue rectangle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text "THANK YOU" in white, italicized, sans-serif capital letters.

***THANK YOU***