



SQF Food Safety Certification Edition 10

Public Stakeholder Consultation

Where to provide feedback:

GFSIBM@theconsumergoodsforum.com

Before: 29 October 2026 at midnight CET



SQF Food Safety Certification Edition 10

GFSI Benchmark Assessment Report

Final Version: 17 . 04. 2026

Application information

Assessment team and date

Certification programme Name(s)	SQF Food Safety Certification Edition 10
Certification programme owner name and address	251 18th Street S., Suite 1200, Arlington, VA 22202
Certification programme owner name, email, contact number	FMI Lchuboff@sqfi.com +1 202-262-6697
Date of previous application if applicable	
Benchmark Leader name and contact details	Emma Skouse
GFSI Senior Technical Manager name	Karla Mijatovic
Observers name	NA
Interpreter's name (if applicable)	NA
Date of this office assessment	24th and 25th June 2026
Language (e.g. English or other)	English

Scopes included in this application

GFSI Scopes		Scopes applied for
AI	Farming of Animals for Meat/ Milk/ Eggs/ Honey	
AIL	Farming of Fish and Seafood	
BI	Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	
BII	Farming of Grains and Pulses	
BIII	Pre-process Handling of plant products	
C0	Animal Conversion	
CI	Processing of perishable animal products	
CII	Processing of Plant Perishable Products	
CIII	Processing of Animal and Plant Perishable Products (Mixed Products)	
CIV	Processing of Ambient Stable Products	
D	Production of Feed	
E	Catering	
FI	Retail / Wholesale	
FII	Food Broker / Agent	
H	Provision of Food Safety Services	
G	Provision of Storage and Distribution Services	
I	Production of Food Packaging	
JI	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building constructors and equipment manufacturers)	
JII	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building and equipment users)	
K	Production of (Bio) Chemicals (Additives, Vitamins, Minerals, Bio-cultures, Flavourings, Enzymes and Processing aids)	

Executive summary and recommendation to the GFSI Steering Committee

Executive summary

Overview of the Assessment Process

SQFI applied for recognition against the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements (BMR) Version 2024 for scopes AI, AII, BI, BII, BIII, C0, CI, CII, CIII, CIV, D, G, I & K. The benchmarking process was conducted as an integrated assessment to ensure a seamless transition from v2020.1 to v2024.

The purpose of the GFSI assessment was to evaluate the SQFI programme (SQFI Ed. 10), issued by the CPO (owned by FMI), in compliance with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements 2024 version.

Desktop Review & Technical Verification

The benchmarking cycle commenced with a comprehensive preliminary Desktop Review of the SQFI Scheme (Edition 10) and associated documentation, completed remotely by the BML (Benchmark Leader) Emma Skouse (ES), with the support from Karen Betts, in June 2026, and was based on the review of the evidence provided by the Certification Programme Owner in the self-assessment excel files for GFSI part II and III to cover the scopes of recognition applied (AI, AII, BI, BII, BIII, C0, CI, CII, CIII, CIV, D, G, I & K), ensuring that it contained sufficient objective evidence to proceed to the onsite assessment phase.

All findings raised, concerning the request for additional information, have been communicated in writing with the CPO. The assessment identified five (5) non-conformities related to Ownership, development and Maintenance (Clause 1.6), Accreditation (Clauses 2.8 and 2.19), Certification Bodies Personnel (Clause 4.8), and multi-site certification, Internal audits (Clause 6.16). The CPO was offered a call to discuss the findings, which was held on the 17th June 2026. The findings raised were discussed during the Office Visit on 24th & 25th June 2026 and subsequently, some were closed out during the office visit.

Office Visit and Findings

An Office Visit (OV) was conducted on the 24th & 25th June by Benchmark Leader (ES).

No critical findings or other impeding factors were raised at this step, and the office assessment

followed a predefined by a specific agenda (Office Assessment Plan). The office assessment was carried out in person and achieved the main purpose to verify the implementation and alignment of the new requirements and the Certification Programme Owner's Integrity Programme through sampled record reviews.

Validation of Corrective Actions (17th August 2026)

Following the Office Visit, there were 5 miss alignments identified which were closed out by the BML on the 17th August; therefore, the CPO will be recommended for Public Stakeholder consultation. The GFSI Senior Technical Manager Karla Mijatovic (KM) conducted a final technical validation of the information presented including the corrective actions closed for the desktop review and acknowledgement of the 5 findings raised at the office visit on Aug 20th 2026. This validation included:

- Verification of Root Cause Analysis (RCA): Provided by the CPO in which the CPO described the origins of the gaps.
- Validation of Evidence: Reviewed and closed by the BML on the 7th August and Technical Manager (T.M) on the 19th August 2026.
- Final Approval: The Senior Technical Manager officially accepted the closure of all findings from the Self assessments and all documented review with 5 findings for the office visit, confirming that the SQFI Ed. 10 is now in full conformity with BMR v2024.

Conclusion

The benchmarking process encountered no significant complexities that would impede recognition. The Senior Technical Manager concludes that the assessment was transparent, evidence-based, and compliant with GFSI protocols. The report is now deemed validated for the 4-week public stakeholder consultation.

Recommendation to the GFSI Steering Committee

Results of assessment and office visit

Time and location details

	Location	People present GFSI, consultant, CPO. Names and roles	Date and time
Self-assessment review	remote	Karen Betts (BML) / Emma Skouse (BML)	4 days completed 24/06/2026
Review calls	Online conference	LeAnn Chuboff, Tammie Van Buren	17 th June 2026 – 1 hour
Office visit	51 18th Street S., Suite 1200, Arlington, VA 22202, USA	LeAnn Chuboff, Tammie Van Buren, Elizabeth Tierno	24-25/06/2026

Overview of Certification Programme

FMI purchased the SQF program September 1, 2003, from the Western Australia Department of Agriculture and established the SQF Institute (SQFI). The SQF program is a farm to fork certification solution. Our mission is to be the trusted source for food safety and certification. SQF has 12,870 accredited certificates issued to Edition 9 and has accredited certificates in 49 countries.

General compliance, strengths and weaknesses

The SQFI Scheme is reviewed at least every 4 years, or sooner if changes occur in industry, normative documents, legislation, etc. by technically competent internal and external representatives. The Scheme is governed by an independent Board of Stakeholders, who approves all changes or updates to the Scheme, supported by a technical Advisory Committee.

The programme generally has good oversight of Certification Body activities through Certification Body office visits, comprehensive desktop reviews and discussion of Certification Body performance against specified Key Performance Indicators and witness audits of auditors.

The review of the self-assessment documents and corresponding submitted evidence was carried out by the Benchmark Leader during the office visit on 24th – 25th June 2026.

During the office visit, carried out in person, the Benchmark Leader interviewed the Certification Programme managers, reviewed documents, performance data and sampled certification records. The Integrity programme process was discussed and evaluated.

The main points of strength in the management of the Certification Programme are that the team is small and communicates very well and have a lot of experience between them. They are collaborative and listen to discussions about best practice and when implementing changes, they try to apply holistically. There are no points of weakness which stand out – the CPO manages the CBs well and monitors any sub-standard CBs closely when needed.

Changes made to the certification programme following the GFSI assessment

The CPO SQFI, following the GFSI assessment, has supplied the corrective action plan containing the revised requirements.

The first corrective action plan was received on 24th June 2026 with evidence. The final Corrective action plan was received with evidence, and closed by the BML on the 17th August 2026.

The new version is not yet live for audits; however, as it is published, notification to stakeholders for amends will be necessary. Audits against SQFI Ed. 10 will commence on January 2nd, 2027.

List of findings

Note; These are findings raised at the desktop review. No Findings were raised at the Office Visit.

Element reference	Non-conformity	Partly / no	Corrective action	Recommendation from Benchmark Leader	Decision from GFSI Senior Technical Manager
Part II 1.6	SQF Logo Rules of Use Edition 10 seen - however can't see where this is specifically mentioned / detailed. Logo rules of use to be amended to include an additional clause 3.5 which will meet the clause requirements. Discussed during OV 24/06.	Partly	SQFI does not allow products produced under the conforming scheme to be labeled, marked or described in a manner that implies they meet specific food safety criteria. SQFI has an SQF logo for use by SQF stakeholders on brochures, flyers, advertisements, press releases, company websites and email addresses. However, its use on products is prohibited. 2.1.1.5: A primary and substitute SQF Practitioner shall be designated with responsibility and authority to:	SQF Logo Rules of Use - Ed. 10 has been amended and now includes clause 3.5 which states "The use of the logo, or any marks, wording, phrases, or descriptions that imply food safety criteria have been met, is not permitted on product packaging." CLOSED. ES 29/07/2026.	Accepted. The CPO provided objective evidence by amending the SQF Logo Rules of Use (Edition 10) to include Clause 3.5, the evidence fully resolves the finding identified during the office visit, and this miss alignment is fully aligned with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v2024.

			iv. Ensure the proper use of the SQF logo, according to the requirements in the SQF Logo Rules of Use.		Validated by KM 07/09/2026.
2.8	License agreement between ANSI and SQFI (as an example) provided. Section 4, Licensees undertakings, acknowledgments and warranties, point c), details the requirements however this point refers to BMR v2020 - as this is a SA for BMRs v2024, an updated agreement needs to be seen to ensure this is covered. New License agreements are in process of being written so it applies to the current BMR version. Won't be sent out until October 2026 for application in Jan 2027. Amended contract template and comms to CBs to be sent. ES 24/06/2026	Partly	The current statement includes the phrase, "or any subsequent requirements documents released during the term of this agreement," which would apply to BMR version 2024. License agreements are currently pending for renewal in 2027. New license agreements are in draft and will be in place prior to the commencement of Edition 10 audits. The draft license agreement uses the following generic language to address the GFSI BMR document: "..... the then-current version of the GFSI Requirements Document."	New License agreements are in process of being written so it applies to the current BMR version. Won't be sent out until October 2026 for application in Jan 2027. Amended contract template and comms to CBs to be sent. Amended contract template seen and wording changed to refer to the applicable version of the GFSI requirements. CLOSED. ES 06/08/2026.	Accepted. The CPO effectively demonstrated by the amending of their contract template to state "the applicable version of the GFSI Requirements Document," ensuring ongoing compliance with the 2024 framework and any future iterations. This evidence fully resolves the finding, and is accepted for closure as aligned with with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v2024.

					Validated by KM 07/09/2026.
2.19	Certification Body License agreement, section 4, obligations and covenants, point 4.1 (aa) states "Provide written notification to Licensor if Licensee desires to initiate an extension of scope for the license granted to it hereunder, such as by adding new Territory(ies), Field(s) of Use or critical sites with its Accreditation body." Evidence that this is to be acknowledged and written notification from the CB of such a circumstance is to be held by the CPO is not defined, however. Process to be added to the new License agreement for clarity. ES 24/06/2027.	Partly	The Certification Body License agreement, 4.1 aa requires that the licensee shall: Provide written notification to Licensor if Licensee desires to initiate an extension of scope for the license granted to it hereunder, such as by adding new Territory(ies), Field(s) of Use or critical sites with its Accreditation body. SQF Response July26: Form: Added the following language to 4.1.2.2 iii. "Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies" Any extension of scope under the Certification Body License Agreement, including the addition of new territories, fields of use, or critical sites with the Accreditation Body, shall be communicated in writing to SQFI using the CB License Agreement Change Authorization Form and	Form to be completed by the CB in such a case - CB License agreement change authorisation form - CB to complete to apply to amends for current in-force license agreement, sent to SQFI. SQFI then saved it in the CB license agreement file. "Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies" has two clauses numbered 4.1.2.2 - 4.1.2.2 iii in the attached document doesn't seem to relate to this finding and extension of scope of license does not appear to be clearly defined. ES 29/07/2026. General Requirements	Accepted. The CPO provided sufficient objective evidence by introducing the "CB License Agreement Change Authorization Form," Additionally, SQFI updated the "Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies" under the Clause 4.1.2.3 iii to officially mandate this approval process prior to the initiation of any scope extension activities. The review of the objective evidence by the BML demonstrates

			approved prior to initiating activities related to the requested change. SQF Response 29JULY26: The Criteria for SQF Certification Bodies has been reformatted to eliminate the duplicate section 4.1.2.2. The correct reference for this finding is 4.1.2.3 iii. Please reference the revised "Attachment 14_ Criteria-for-SQF-Certification-Bodies-Nov_2026" to note that this change has been made.	for CBs seen with amendments. Duplicate clause 4.1.2.2 has been removed and clause 4.1.2.3 (iii) makes the reference to scope extension. CLOSED. ES 06/08/2026.	alignment with the BMR 2024 requirements. Validated by KM 07/09/2026.
4.8	CPO uses Exemplar Global for auditor qualification. Auditor criteria defined and is available on the CPO website: - Industry experience (min 5 years) - previous assessments raised this as a finding due to the GFSI requirement being min 2 years and the close out from this was that it would be	Partly	The Auditor industry experience requirements are listed in 2.1 of the Criteria for SQF Auditors and Technical Reviewers, edition 9.4: Demonstrate at least five (5) years' work experience, as defined in 1.2 above, in a food- related technical, professional or supervisory position involving food safety accountability and the exercise of judgment;	When will this be provided to the TAC? Need to see evidence that this has been amended or discussed as it needs to be included in the new version. Cannot close this out until it has been finalised and agreed upon. ES 29/07/2026.	Accepted. The CPO provided sufficient objective evidence by implementing a waiver process and updating the "Requirements for SQF Auditors" to explicitly require two

	amended from 5 years to 2 years. This has not yet been done. SQFI TAC team currently considering this and the wording needs to be agreed upon - 2 years of FS experience and additional 3 years of additional experience. ES 26/06/2026		1.2 "Operational experience with food hygiene and food safety-based programs involving HACCP or other appropriate risk management systems. Alternatively, demonstrated experience involving equivalent practices, such as consulting or regulatory experience, that are deemed to provide experience relevant to the system being developed and the competencies described in this document may be considered." The application process is administered by Exemplar Global SQF Response July26: SQF plans to update the criteria document once the interpretation document is complete, so that any new information can be included in a single publication. Once complete, SQF will provide the	Reviewing 2.1 - there seems to be some text missing as 2 years is not included? Please review. ES 06/08/2026. Corrected version of Requirements for SQF Auditors seen and 2.1 now states at least 2 years relevant experience. CLOSED. ES 07/08/2026	years of relevant experience, officially closing this miss alignment under the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements 2024. Validated by KM 07/09/2026.
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			TAC with the wording to include 2 years food safety experience for review. SQF Response 29July26 SQF is requesting that the criteria document be updated once the interpretation document is finalized, so the revised criteria can be incorporated into a single publication. Upon completion, SQF will provide the TAC with proposed wording to include the requirement for two years of food safety experience. In the meantime, to satisfy this requirement and close the corrective action, SQF will approve candidates with two years of relevant industry experience through the waiver process, as 2 years of food safety experience meets GFSI requirements.		
6.16	Requirements for SQF Multi-site	Partly	SQFI Multi-site certification	SQF multi-site	Accepted.

	Certification, Edition 10, March 2026 specifies the conditions for certification of multi-site organisations. Section 5 Internal Audit Personnel covers this requirement and defines the requirements for internal auditors, however the requirements for technical reviewers do not seem to have been defined, other than if the TR is an external consultant. To be added to the requirements / make clearer. ES 24/06/2026		requirements have been revised to identify the technical reviewer's requirements. 5.2 Technical reviewers and personnel managing the internal audits of the multi-site organization shall: i. Be separate from personnel conducting the internal audits; ii. Complete internal auditing training; iii. Meet the criteria of an SQF practitioner; and iv. Technically review and evaluate the results of internal audits, including addressing non-conformities. Personnel managing the internal audit shall ensure internal auditors are evaluated, calibrated, monitored and assigned to remain impartial.	certification Ed 10 amended. Clause 5.2 now covers the requirement. CLOSED. ES 29/07/2026.	The CPO provided sufficient objective evidence by amending Clause 5.2 to explicitly mandate that technical reviewers must operate separately from internal auditors, complete internal audit training, meet SQF practitioner criteria, and formally evaluate audit results. The review of the objective evidence by the BML demonstrates alignment with the BMR 2024 requirements. Validated by KM 07/09/2026.
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Root Cause Analysis (RCA) Summary

Finding 1

SQF listed examples for how the logo was to be used rather than how it should not be used.

Finding 2

Contracts expire at the end of the year. The wording on the current contract includes the phrase, 'or any subsequent requirements documents released during the term of this agreement.' This applies to the GFSI BMRs for 2020 and 2024.

Finding 3

Numbering error made in draft.

Finding 4

The reduction of the 5 years of industry experience was not well received with the SQF Technical Advisory Council (TAC). Additional meetings to be conducted with the final meeting to be held by August 21.

Finding 3

The technical requirements were included with personnel managing internal audits and it was understood that the technical reviewer was to meet the requirements outlined for the SQF Practitioner.

RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

List of findings – public stakeholder consultation

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