



GFSI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS

GFSI Guidance Document version 7





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THE GFSI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS

Version 7.0

A SUMMARY FOR STAKEHOLDERS

March 2016

Introduction

Purpose of this document

The GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7.0, published in March 2016, has been written for those actually involved in the benchmarking process.

There are many GFSI stakeholders who need to understand it but find it to be both long and complex.

- You may not have detailed knowledge of the processes associated with accreditation, certification and international normative references.
- Perhaps you work at a buying company and would like a simple description of a complex process.
- Perhaps you work at an Accreditation or Certification Body and need to understand the GFSI approach.
- Perhaps you work for a recognised scheme and need to learn how it works.

This summary has been written for you.

Origins of GFSI

During the 90s, there had been a series of high-profile international food safety crises including BSE, dioxin and listeria. Within the food industry there was a growing audit fatigue as retailers and brand manufacturers audited factories against their schemes, each developed in isolation. The results showed no consistency. Consumer and food industry confidence was low.

The CEOs of the world's food retailers and manufacturers took action and founded the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) working through their independent network the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF). GFSI is a part of four services provided to the global food industry by CGF: product safety, health and wellness, sustainability and end-to-end value chain. All of these work streams are based on the shared principles of building knowledge and sharing best practice.

The GFSI Proposal: equivalency through benchmarking

The vision was laid out at the very beginning and remains a compelling message: "Once certified, accepted everywhere." GFSI chose to build a benchmarking approach as there were existing foundations for harmonisation. The British Retail Consortium had already published their first BRC food safety standard in 1998. The German and French retailers were starting to work together on the International Food Standard (IFS). The North American retailers were developing their Safe Quality Food (SQF) Standard.

For 15 years, GFSI benchmarking would credibly determine equivalency between food safety schemes, whilst leaving flexibility and choice in the marketplace.

The GFSI objectives are to:

- Reduce food safety risks by delivering equivalence and convergence between effective food safety management systems
- Manage cost in the global food system by eliminating redundancy and improving operational efficiency
- Develop competencies and capacity building in food safety to create consistent and effective global food systems
- Provide a unique international stakeholder platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and networking

GFSI DOES:

- Collaboratively specify the requirements for the recognition of food safety schemes in its GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.
- Determine the equivalence of existing food safety standards for the full food supply chain through an objective comparison with GFSI defined requirements.
- Bring together food safety experts from all over the world

GFSI DOES NOT:

- Make policy for retailers, manufacturers or food safety standard owners
- Undertake any accreditation or certification activities
- Own any food safety schemes
- Undertake any training
- Have any involvement outside the scope of food safety, such as animal welfare, the environment or ethical sourcing

What is benchmarking?

The case for benchmarking

The GFSI model determines equivalency between existing food safety schemes, whilst leaving flexibility and choice in the marketplace.

"Scheme" is a term used to define a commercial food safety programme that includes an auditable and certifiable food safety standard with a governance and management system.

The benchmarking process, based on the good practice in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements, drives a convergence of approach through an objective and systematic measurement of the various schemes. It lists the key elements for the production of safe food to deliver a total supply chain approach across many scopes.

The integrity of the benchmarking process is achieved through oversight by the buying companies as laid out in the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements. Harmonising food safety standards increases transparency and efficiency in the supply chain, cuts costs and provides assurance of safe food for consumers worldwide. This means resources can be redirected to ensure the safety of food produced and sold worldwide.

GFSI encourages buying companies to accept certificates issued during third party audits against the GFSI recognised schemes, thus enabling their suppliers to work more effectively through less audits.

GFSI Today

GFSI has developed to become more than a benchmarking organisation. Its collaborative approach brings together international food safety experts from the entire supply chain at Technical Working Group and Stakeholder meetings, conferences and regional events. They share knowledge and promote a harmonised approach with a shared aim of "safe food for consumers everywhere."

The participants believe that food safety is a shared responsibility. They aim to create linkages with key organisations and regulators, build confidence in third party certification, build capacity and expand geographic engagement. Many members have committed to recognizing the equivalence of the rigorous GFSI benchmarking process which enables aspiring food safety schemes to work within the requirements of the Guidance Document.

The GFSI recognised schemes



CANADAGAP™



GLOBALG.A.P.



IFS
International
Featured Standards



global aquaculture
the alliance



The document

THE GFSI GUIDANCE DOCUMENT,
retitled in 2016 as THE GFSI BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS V7.0

What it is

- It is a tool which fulfils one of the main objectives of GFSI, that of determining equivalency between food safety management schemes.
 - It provides a formal process for benchmarking.
 - It is science-based, contemporary, and rigorous.
- What it is not
- It is not a food safety standard.
 - It does not dictate policy for food retailers, manufacturers or Scheme Owners, or prescribe requirements for food quality, animal welfare, environmental standards, or any other area outside the scope of food safety.
 - Food businesses cannot be audited or certified against it.

Continuous improvement

A full multi-stakeholder review of the document happens at least every four years, although updates may be added at any time with the approval of the GFSI Board. Each revision features many changes as the understanding of good practice is improved. The requirements remain firmly based on the food safety principles laid down by Codex and relevant ISO standards.

Whenever a new edition is released, participating schemes are invited to reapply for benchmarking against their relevant scopes to maintain their recognition status. At any point, new schemes can apply for benchmarking.

The document structure

GFSI Benchmarking Requirements Version 7.0

The new format provides a web-based, modular downloadable approach. This allows Scheme Owners to efficiently access the important technical documents. It is more concise and sets out requirements rather than providing guidance on how to meet them.

There are three parts:

I. The Benchmarking process: The requirements for the key steps, the various types of benchmarking, the criteria for the people doing the benchmark and the accompanying systems and procedures.

GFSI benchmarking in practice

Schemes that enter the GFSI benchmarking process will find they have entered a new and challenging way of working. There will be ongoing new requirements with a systematic revision process for how they manage their scheme and control their system. They can participate in the Technical Working Group that manages the revision so will be able to influence the process. They may find that their own innovations have become recognised as good practice and that other schemes will be required to have them as well.

The benchmarking fees, with the intention from the GFSI Board of straight cost recovery, are established in the contract between the Scheme Owners and GFSI.

There are important benefits for Scheme Owners. Recognition of their scheme provides international food industry credibility and an opportunity for marketing and communication. The GFSI network provides them with a technical insight into what is relevant to their own continuous improvement, whether implications for new legislation or a fresh approach to help their auditors.

In 2016, there are nine recognised schemes, many with recognition against multiple scopes from farming of animals, fish and plants through processing to catering and retail.

- II.** The Requirements for the Management Schemes: Eligibility to enter the process, Scheme Ownership and management and how to maintain recognition once benchmarked.
- III.** Scheme scope and Key Elements: The management system, good practice, HACCP and multi-site sampling requirements for each scope.

There is an accompanying Quality Manual which gives examples, instruction and information of particular relevance to new scheme applications and for any staff members unfamiliar with the benchmark process. It aims to ensure that applications are better and more likely to progress with efficiency. It includes sections such as 'frequently asked questions' and examples of interpretational language for equivalence assessment.

Part I - Section 1: The benchmarking process in detail.

This is written for the Scheme Owners and tells them what they must do and how to do it. It also tells them what GFSI will do.

There are 4 types of benchmarking and it starts with the prerequisites for benchmarking (see graphic #1) for a new scheme. If an aspiring scheme is unable to provide satisfactory evidence against each of these 10 requirements, their application would not be accepted.

There are a series of versions of these prerequisites for the other types of benchmarking, which are also defined: 'scope extension,' 'significant change' and re-benchmarking.

Depending on the type of benchmarking, there are up to 29 'key process steps.' These are defined here for new schemes and re-benchmarking (see graphic #2). The section concludes by describing procedures for suspension and appeals.

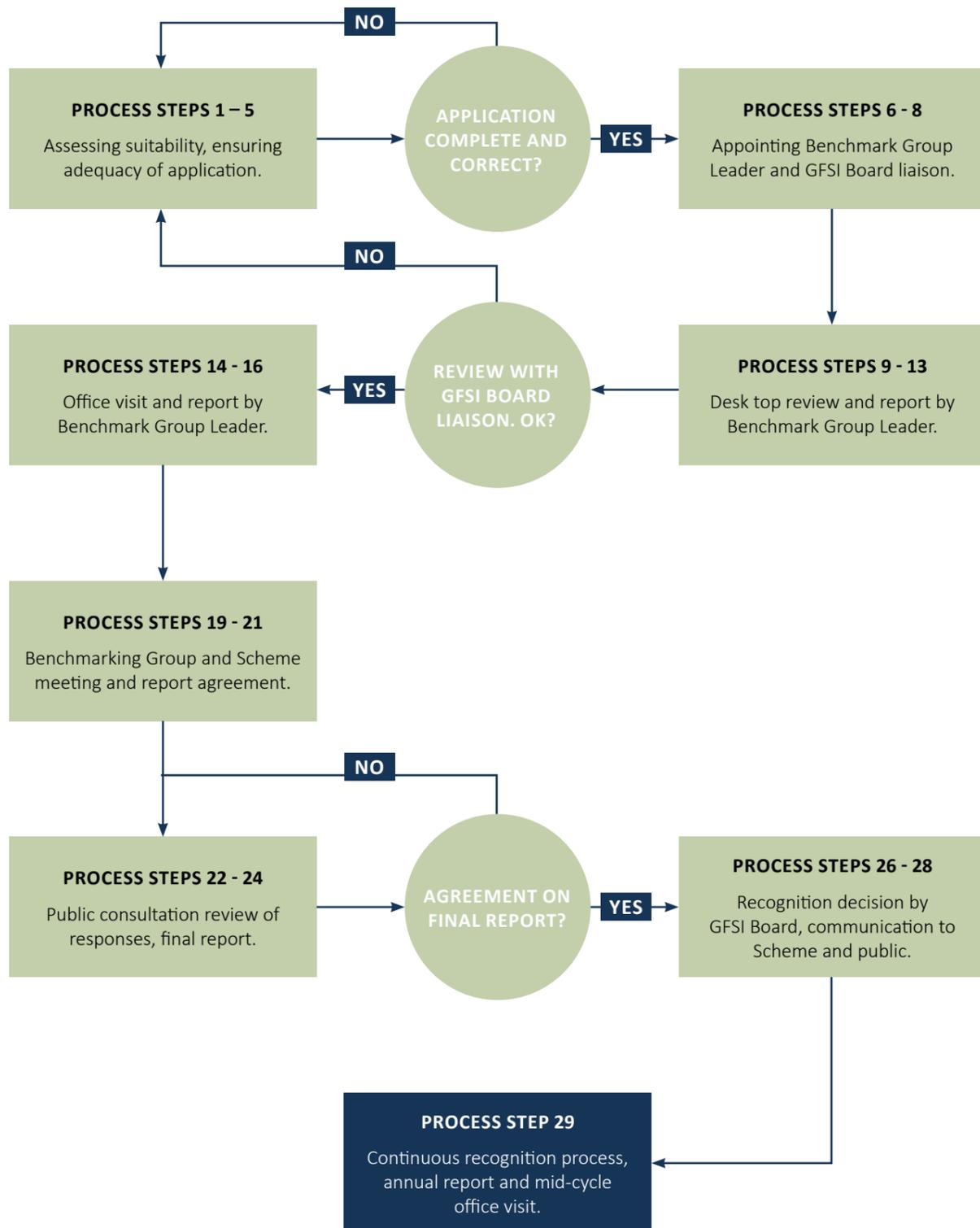
New schemes - The prerequisites

The scheme owner must provide evidence to support all ten conditions

- 1 The scheme owner is a legal entity.**
- 2 The scheme owner is not a Certification Body or a group of Certification Bodies.**
- 3 Three or more CGF Buying Companies commit to using the scheme.**
- 4 One or more Accreditation Bodies, members of the IAF and signatories to the MLA with GFSI, agree for Certification Bodies to operate to ISO/IEC 17065 or ISO /IEC 17021.**
- 5 There are contracts with two or more Certification Bodies that are accredited for the scope of the scheme.**
- 6 There are at least 10 accredited certificates, for the relevant scope on the application, including at least one for each contracted Certification Body during a 12 month period prior to application.**
- 7 The scheme has been operational during a 12 month period prior to application, during which time certificates shall have been issued to a variety of organisations.**
- 8 The scheme shall not be undergoing a significant change to its standard, management, governance or operation procedures at the time of application.**
- 9 The scheme shall not have any practices that may restrict access to markets.**
- 10 The scheme shall have undertaken self-assessment and validated its suitability and compliance with the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements.**



GFSI Benchmarking process:
New schemes and re-benchmarking



Part I - Section 2:
How GFSI builds and manages the teams who do the benchmarking.

This is written for the Scheme Owners and describes how GFSI appoints people to the Benchmark Group who are independent, impartial and technically competent. Their work follows the terms of reference that are described in Annex 1.

There are three people in each group: The Benchmark Group Leader, GFSI Technical Manager and GFSI Board Liaison, who provides advice and oversight.

GFSI maintains a public register of these Benchmark Group Leaders who are all bound by nondisclosure and non-conflict-of-interest statements before they start work on any benchmarking activity.

Part I - Annex 1:
Benchmarking Group Terms of Reference

This is written for the members of the Benchmarking Group. After a description of relevant GFSI governance, it describes their purpose and how they are appointed. The responsibilities of the leader are listed with a description of how they will operate and the confidentiality conditions. Their qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills and personal attributes are listed.

Part I - Annex 2:
The GFSI Appeals Procedure

This is written for the Scheme Owners and describes the procedures for appeals, including the formation and governance of an Appeals Committee, whose decision is final.

Part II:
Requirements for the Management of Schemes

- a. Section 1 describes the requirements for an application for any type of benchmarking.
- b. Section 2 describes the requirements for the Food Safety Management Scheme. It lists the prerequisite issues of ownership and management as well as how the recognised scheme is expected to be developed and maintained.
- c. Section 3 describes the requirements for its management system, including relationships with both of Accreditation and Certification Bodies.

Part II - Section 1:
Requirements for a GFSI Benchmarking Application

Part I has defined and described the benchmarking process. Part II describes the criteria against which the schemes will be assessed.

The first section is written for the Scheme Owners and the Benchmarking Group. It describes the types of scheme application against the four types of benchmarking: New scheme, Extension of scope recognition, Significant change and Re-benchmarking. In each case, the specific prerequisites are described.

Part II - Section 2:
Requirements for Food Safety Management Scheme – Ownership and Management

The second section is written for the Scheme Owners and the Benchmarking Group. The requirements are intended to provide confidence in the compliance of the food safety scheme, its standard and its related management system.

It describes how the scope of activity shall be specified within the application to the GFSI. It describes how GFSI benchmarking scope is limited to food safety issues though other requirements may be incorporated by the scheme.

It describes how the scheme shall have been developed and maintained for each scope with the participation of technically competent representatives of direct stakeholders. This includes document control and the need for systematic, formal internal review.

Part II - Section 3:
Requirements for Food Safety Schemes - System

The third section is written for the Scheme Owners and the Benchmarking Group. It describes the relationships with both Accreditation and Certification Bodies. The requirement for internationally recognised accreditation standards ISO/IEC 17065:2012: 1996, ISO /IEC 17021:2006 (supplemented by ISO/TS 22003) ensures that Certification Bodies operate to a consistently high standard.

There are requirements for the contracted Certification Bodies. These include a risk based system of auditor competence assessment, procedures for ensuring relevant communication and the required elements of their Quality Manual.

The requirements for Certification Body personnel are defined, including auditor competence and training. The auditor competence elements have been developed through a multi-stakeholder GFSI Technical Working Group.

Audit frequency and duration are defined including, for the first time, a requirement for unannounced audits, if specified by a particular customer group.

There are requirements for audit reporting and certification management involving a review system by impartial and technically capable people.



Part II - Annex 1:

GFSI Scope of Recognition

This is written for the Scheme Owners and describes the GFSI sector and sub-sector scopes for recognition. These include the entire supply chain. (see graphic 3)

GFSI SCOPE OF RECOGNITION (Benchmarking Category Code)	BENCHMARKING CATEGORY NAME
AI	Farming of Animals for Meat/ Milk/ Eggs/ Honey
AII	Farming of Fish and Seafood
BI	Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)
BII	Farming of Grains and Pulses
C	Animal Conversion
D	Pre-process handling of plant products, nuts and grain
E I	Processing of perishable animal products
E II	Processing of perishable plant products
E III	Processing of perishable animal and plant products (mixed products)
E IV	Processing of ambient stable products
FI	Production of feed
G	Catering
H	Retail / Wholesale
I	Provision of Food Safety Services
J	Provision of Storage and Distribution Services Food and Feed
K	Manufacture of Food Processing Equipment
L	Production of (Bio) Chemicals (Additives, Vitamins, Minerals, Bio-cultures, Flavourings , Enzymes and Processing aids)
M	Production of Food Packaging
N	Food Broker / Agent



Part II - Annex 2:

Auditor Competence- Qualifications, Training and Experience

This is written for the Scheme Owners and matches the GFSI scopes with requirements for sector specific auditor qualification and education. There are also examples of sector specific work experience relating to the product categories.

Part III: Scheme Scope and Key Elements

Section 1 lists the requirements against each GFSI scope of recognition.

Section 2 considers certification of multisite organisations based on sampling.

Part III - Section 1: Requirements for food safety management, good industry sector practice and HACCP

Section 1 contains a set of uniquely referenced GFSI scope specific clauses and requirements which define the requirements for food safety management, good industry sector practice and HACCP. They have been developed over many years by the multi-stakeholder GFSI Technical Working Groups.

What's new

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT V6, compared with BENCHMARKING REQUIREMENTS V7

Part I: The Benchmarking Process

There are both technical and format changes.

Technical changes are where operational requirements are clearly different to that previously published in version 6 through to 6.4.

Format changes are where material has been changed or in some cases moved to other documents to reduce repetition of the narrative or to separately provide more in-depth content.

Technical changes:

- a. The definition of what constitutes benchmarking, extension to scope, significant change and re-benchmarking.
- b. The need to define a clear timeline, with an expectation of cost and the need for both parties to honour the agreement by acting efficiently and proactively, has been a clear message from Scheme Owners. Accordingly, there are clear process steps, with rationale, time and cost for each benchmarking activity.

It is written for the Scheme Owners and the Benchmarking Group and is organised by the scope of recognition. This means that the user, when seeking recognition against a particular scope, will download a module that contains all the relevant clauses and requirements.

Part III - Section 2: Certification of multisite organisations based on sampling

This section is of importance to the food industry in situations where there are large numbers of similar small operations that are being managed through a single food safety management system. It is written for the Scheme Owners and the Benchmarking Group and aims to ensure that there is consistency

For each GFSI recognised scope, the requirements for certification on multisite organisations is either agreed by a sector specific Technical Working Group, or is in the process of finding an agreement. The Benchmarking Requirements v7 lists the progress of these agreements.

It is not compulsory for a scheme owner to choose to use this section and they may opt for single site certification only. In the event that they do choose this approach, for its scope where agreement has been reached, the requirements are listed and the sample size is defined.

c. The benchmark committees were previously formed of an independent benchmark leader and two volunteer representatives from GFSI company members. As the number of schemes and scopes has now exceeded 50, the ability to recruit suitable volunteer representatives to undertake benchmark activities within an acceptable timeframe has become unsustainable and has been discontinued. Accordingly, suitably qualified GFSI staff, who must be competent and impartial, may now undertake activities.

d. Benchmark committees will now be formed of an independent scheme assessor, the GFSI Technical Manager and a GFSI Board liaison to provide oversight.

e. The GFSI Technical Manager will undertake the new office assessment. This will happen as a part of the actual benchmarking process and also once during the four-year recognition cycle. This will increase efficiency and reduce costs while building stronger technical relationships between the Scheme Owners and the GFSI Team.

f. The adoption of the GFSI Multilateral agreement with the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) requires

that the Accreditation Bodies granting accreditation to the scope of the scheme shall be IAF members. This removes the need for the ISO 17011 (see FAQs) annex and its associated guiding paragraphs.

Format changes:

- a. Expectations relating to the quality of material provided, the communication and other matters associated with the benchmark process have been moved to the Quality Manual.
- b. Requirements relating to contractual obligations such as approval of annual inspections, payments and other similar governance aspects have been moved to a new Scheme Owner contract which provides a formal service based agreement that reflects the benchmarking activities and associated charges.
- c. The new, simpler Benchmark Committee combined with the definitions of benchmarking, extension to scope, significant change and re-benchmarking has allowed the removal of redundant and duplicative text.

**Part II:
Requirements for the Management of Schemes**

Technical changes:

- a. There are updated references to ISO 17065 and ISO 17021/22003.
- b. The requirement for inclusion of unannounced audits has been written into the scheme management requirements. Scheme owners shall include an optional element of unannounced audits for those eventual customers that require this approach.

Format changes:

References to scheme governance, scheme management and GFSI relationship have now been moved to the scheme owner contract. These requirements are a prerequisite for entering into an agreement with GFSI and do not vary from scheme to scheme.

Part III:

Technical changes:

- a. Food Defence and Food Fraud have been incorporated as appropriate into all scopes.
- b. There has been a comprehensive revision of language which has simplified and harmonised the requirements.

Format changes:

- c. References to contractual elements regarding the benchmarking and recognition process have been removed and can now be found in the GFSI and Scheme Owner contract. This means that Part III is focused on food safety elements and the accompanying management systems.
- d. Previously, the requirements were organised by type. This meant that there were multiple tables with a common format. Each contained uniquely referenced GFSI Scope specific requirements for food safety management, good industry sector practice and HACCP. The user had to search the various tables for the relevant requirements.
- e. Each scope now has a module with all relevant clauses and their requirements attached. The user downloads their scope and all the requirements are listed.

**What this all means
for GFSI stakeholders**

GFSI STAKEHOLDER	What the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 means for you
Buying companies: retailers, manufacturers, food service companies	GFSI benchmarking continues to drive continuous improvement in scheme management. The procedures for benchmarking have been revised to improve efficiency. The governance of the process remains credible. The major food industry companies are collaborating to enable simpler buying.
Certified primary and secondary suppliers	Certification to a GFSI recognised scheme remains a pathway to market access. The changes in GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 will improve the integrity of your certification.
Scheme owners, recognised and aspiring	The benchmarking process has been changed to improve efficiency. Good practice on scheme management has been enhanced.
Certification Bodies	The harmonisation of certification activities continues, led by the major food industry companies. Your accreditation needs to be with an IAF member that has signed the GFSI MLA.
Accreditation Bodies	When providing accreditation services to a certification body that includes a scheme recognised by GFSI, you need to be an IAF member that has signed the GFSI MLA.
Auditors	GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 includes new elements relevant to you which are designed to enhance your credibility and profession.
Regulators	GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 provides a credible harmonisation of certification activities in the food industry. Many regulators recognise the opportunity and are reviewing their risk management.
Academics	GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 continues its work to harmonise food safety management. The case study shows private sector collaboration and provide inspiration for many other sectors
International organisations	GFSI Benchmarking Requirements v7 is a private sector collaboration that provides opportunities that will support your objectives of building effective market linkages.