

1. What is the purpose of an IFS Food Safety Check?

The purpose of the IFS Food Safety Check is to review whether a company complies with the IFS requirements regarding HACCP, hygiene and pest control in daily operations and thus continuously guarantees food safety and quality as well as product safety and quality. An IFS Food Safety Check determines whether the IFS Food Standard or the IFS Wholesale Version is implemented in daily practice. The IFS Food Safety Check is voluntary. An announced IFS Food audit in combination with an unannounced IFS Food Safety Check is equivalent to an unannounced IFS Food audit.

2. When is the IFS Food Safety Check performed?

The IFS Food Safety Check is carried out unannounced and can be conducted at any time, even in the absence of the management board, quality management representative or plant management. Precondition for the performance of the IFS Food Safety Check is the company is operating or producing at the time of the IFS Food Safety Check.

3. Which are the preconditions for an IFS Food Safety Check order?

The IFS Food Safety Check can only be carried out if the company has a valid IFS certificate. As soon as the audit documents of the current IFS certification audit is uploaded into the IFS database, the client can order the IFS Food Safety Check, so this will be the earliest possible date. The certificate has to have a term of at least 6 month to guarantee the unannounced character of the IFS Food Safety Check. For this reason, interested companies should register for the IFS Food Safety Check as soon as possible after issuing the IFS certificate by their certification body.

In justified individual cases, IFS Management GmbH reserves the right to make changes to the above deadline in order to enable interested companies to participate.

4. How to order an IFS Food Safety Check?

Only the IFS certified company itself can order an IFS Food Safety Check. The company places an order for an IFS Food Safety Check through the login area of the IFS website (www.ifs-certification.com). The order for the IFS Food Safety Check is binding by fully completing the order form online and accepting the General Terms and Conditions.

The IFS Food Safety Check is assigned only to one term of certificate validity and the order refers to the performance of one IFS Food Safety Check.

5. What are the costs of the IFS Food Safety Check?

The costs for the IFS Food Safety Check can be found in the current *schedule of fees* and are payable in advance directly to IFS Management GmbH. The IFS Food Safety Check is conducted by two auditors if the calculated audit time for the regular IFS certification audit results in ≥ 36 hours and/or the number of employees per production or operating site is > 500 . This means that two person-days must be charged if the IFS Food Safety Check is conducted by two auditors. All auditor travel expenses will be invoiced after the IFS Food Safety Check.

6. What is meant by blocking period and normal operating times?

The online order form is available on the IFS website in the Login area of the relevant company, includes the opportunity to indicate non production times (where the company is not operating) and a blocking period. The company can mention 10 operational days as blocking period. These 10 operational days can be split into maximum of 3 periods and shall consider company specific reasons like planned customer visits and/or holidays, where the IFS Food Safety Check cannot take place. Companies with seasonal production can't allocate blocking times and shall guarantee during the complete season, that the IFS Food Safety Check can be performed.

For all other periods, performance of an IFS Food Safety Check shall be facilitated and at least one informed contact person shall be available at the company. The IFS Management GmbH has to be informed about short-term changes regarding these periods when the IFS Food Safety Check cannot take place (e.g. days where other certification procedures are taking place in your company, production downtime due to maintenance/ repair/ measures in pest control/ force majeure) via email: safetychecks@ifs-certification.com.

Additionally, the company has to mention the operating times means the weekday and working hours where normally the company is operating and/or producing.

7. What are the consequences if the IFS Food Safety Check cannot take place?

There are 3 theoretical possibilities that an IFS Food Safety Check cannot be performed:

a) auditor does not get access although the company has ongoing operations (company denied the auditor access)

In that case IFS deletes the mark regarding the registration of the company for an IFS Food Safety Check in the IFS database and forwards the case to the responsible certification body and to the IFS Integrity Program for further investigation and decision.

Costs for the non-realizable IFS Food Safety Check: fee for a complete IFS Food Safety Check according the current fee schedule and also the related auditor travel costs.

b) unannounced certification audit or procedure related to another scheme takes place at the same time of the IFS Food Safety Check and company cannot handle both audits/ visits

Costs for the non-realizable IFS Food Safety Check: half of the fee for an IFS Food Safety Check according the current fee schedule and also the related auditor travel costs.

c) main processes within the certification scope do not take place at the time of the IFS Food Safety Check due to unforeseeable circumstances

Costs for the non-realizable IFS Food Safety Check: half of the fee for an IFS Food Safety Check according the current fee schedule and also the related auditor travel costs.

For the cases described in b) and c), the IFS team will organize another IFS Food Safety Check within the validity of the respective IFS certificate and this Check must be made possible by the company.

8. Who is informed about the company's registration for the IFS Food Safety Check?

The certification body performing the IFS certification audit at the company is informed of the company's registration for the IFS Food Safety Check. Retailers and other database users which have mentioned the company in their favorite list of the IFS database are also automatically notified of its participation.

9. Which criteria form the basis for review of the IFS Food Safety Check?

The basis for evaluation of an IFS Food Safety Check is a checklist including main requirements of the relevant IFS Standard. The focus is on reviewing the implementation of HACCP system, hygiene and pest prevention/control. During the check, document review is restricted to the minimum necessary level. The relevant checklist is available at www.ifs-certification.com.

10. How long does an IFS Food Safety Check last and what is the procedure for conducting IFS Food Safety Check?

Auditors from IFS Management GmbH perform an IFS Food Safety Check in one day. No prior announcement of the IFS Food Safety Check is given. The opening meeting at the company is scheduled for a maximum of 30 minutes. An on-site inspection is subsequently conducted with the focus on reviewing the implementation of HACCP system, hygiene as well as pest prevention/control. Findings made in the course of the check are described by the auditor in the visit report. As objective evidence, photos of the findings are taken, but these photos must be agreed upon by the company, will not be published and are only for internal use at IFS Management GmbH.

The preliminary result of the IFS Food Safety Check is specified by the auditor at the end of the one-day check and mentioned in the visit report. Finally, the visit report is forwarded to IFS Management GmbH.

11. What are the options for evaluation?

There are two options for evaluating the IFS Food Safety Check - classified as “passed” or “failed”. There are no A, B, C, D, Major or KO ratings. If in an IFS Food Safety Check considerable deficiencies have been found, but the result of the IFS Food Safety Check is still “passed”, the company is required to implement corrective actions. Those will be checked by the respective certification body during the next IFS renewal audit. The preliminary result of an IFS Food Safety Check, including possible findings, is specified by the auditor in the visit report following the performance of the IFS Food Safety Check. After being reviewed by IFS Management GmbH, the visit report containing the final result will be sent by e-mail to the company and will also be uploaded into the IFS database.

12. What form of confirmation of a “passed” IFS Food Safety Check does the company receive?

If the IFS Food Safety Check is classified as “passed”, confirmation is provided to the company that the relevant IFS Standard was implemented in everyday practice. The basis for this evaluation is formed by compliance in principle with the checked standard requirements of the IFS Food Safety Check. The company receives a letter of confirmation from IFS Management GmbH which will not be uploaded into IFS database.

If the IFS Food Safety Check is rated as “passed”, but considerable deficiencies have been found, the company also receives a confirmation letter and the written information that corresponding corrective actions are required and will be checked by the respective certification body during the next IFS renewal audit.

13. When is an IFS Food Safety Check evaluated as “failed” and what is the subsequent procedure?

The IFS Food Safety Check is classified as “failed” if a risk to food or product safety has been identified and/or there were severe hygiene deficiencies and/or the conformity to fulfil IFS Standard requirements is, in general, not assured. The visit report is forwarded to the IFS Integrity Program, which reviews the visit report and informs the responsible certification body which performed the last IFS certification audit. The visit report for the failed IFS Food Safety Check is uploaded into the IFS database. Furthermore, an e-mail is sent to the company, the certification body which performed the IFS certification audit and retailers which have mentioned the company in their favorite list of the IFS database. The IFS Integrity Program processes the facts and gathers relevant statements from the responsible certification body. Depending on the circumstances, the certification body can arrange the suspension of the current IFS certificate.

14. Who is entitled to view and download the visit report for the IFS Food Safety Check?

The visit report for an IFS Food Safety Check can be viewed and downloaded on the IFS database as a PDF by the following authorised users:

- The respective company which was checked,
- the certification body performing the IFS certification audit at the company, and
- authorized retailers and database users which have been granted access by the company to view the report of the IFS certification audit.

15. What will be done with the taken photos?

In the frame of the IFS Food Safety Check photos will be taken in case of considerable deficiencies and findings which might lead to the result „failed“. This can be done by the company itself or by the auditor, but have to be shown to the respective company. The auditor will take care that no trademarks (retailer brands), persons or hints regarding the respective company are visible on these photos.

At the end of the IFS Food Safety Check the company can also get these photos. These photos are forwarded to IFS Management GmbH and will be stored as objective evidence exclusively at IFS Management GmbH and will not be uploaded with the visit report of the IFS Food Safety Check to the IFS database. They will not be accessible to third parties.

16. What are the advantages and benefits of an IFS Food Safety Check?

A successful IFS Food Safety Check demonstrates constant compliance with IFS Standard requirements at the company. It supports a risk-based approach to reviews by industrial partners and may result in a reduction in supplier audits by retailers. Furthermore, the IFS Food Safety Check offers the chance to strengthen the credibility of the industry's internal control systems with respect to surveillance authorities and include the IFS certification audit and IFS Food Safety Check in its risk assessment for company classification.

17. Does the IFS certificate need to be adapted with regard to the company's registration for the IFS Food Safety Check?

The IFS certificate of the respective company does not need be updated with regard to the company's registration for the IFS Food Safety Check.