

# IFS Global Markets Food v3 Assessment Supporting Document



# Contact details of the IFS Offices

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## GERMANY

IFS Office Berlin  
Am Weidendamm 1A  
DE- 10117 Berlin  
Phone: +49 (0)30726105374  
Email: [info@ifs-certification.com](mailto:info@ifs-certification.com)

## ITALY

IFS Office Milan  
Federdistribuzione  
Via Albricci 8  
IT- 20122 Milan  
Phone: +39 0289075150  
Email: [ifs-milano@ifs-certification.com](mailto:ifs-milano@ifs-certification.com)

## POLAND | CENTRAL EAST EUROPE

IFS Representative CEE Marek Marzec  
IFS Representative Poland Beata Studzińska-  
Marciniak  
ul. Serwituty 25  
PL - 02-233 Warsaw  
Phone: +48 888787440  
Email: [ifs-poland@ifs-certification.com](mailto:ifs-poland@ifs-certification.com)

## CZECH REPUBLIC

IFS Representative Miroslav Šuška  
Phone: +420 603893590  
Email: [msuska@qualifood.cz](mailto:msuska@qualifood.cz)

## BRAZIL

IFS Office Brazil  
Rua Antônio João 800  
BR- 79200-000 Aquidauana / MS Brazil  
Phone: +55 67981514560  
Email: [cnowak@ifs-certification.com](mailto:cnowak@ifs-certification.com)

## NORTH AMERICA

IFS Representative Pius Gasser  
Phone: +1 4165642865  
Email: [gasser@ifs-certification.com](mailto:gasser@ifs-certification.com)

## FRANCE

IFS Office Paris  
14 rue de Bassano  
FR- 75016 Paris  
Phone: +33 140761723  
Email: [ifs-paris@ifs-certification.com](mailto:ifs-paris@ifs-certification.com)

## SPAIN

IFS Representative Beatriz Torres Carrió  
Phone: +34610306047  
Email: [torres@ifs-certification.com](mailto:torres@ifs-certification.com)

## HUNGARY

IFS Representative László Gyórfi  
Phone: +36 301901342  
Email: [gyorfi@ifs-certification.com](mailto:gyorfi@ifs-certification.com)

## TÜRKIYE

IFS Representative Ezgi Dedebas Ugur  
Phone: +90 5459637458  
Email: [ifs-turkiye@ifs-certification.com](mailto:ifs-turkiye@ifs-certification.com)

## ROMANIA

IFS Representative Ionut Nache  
Phone: +40 722517971  
Email: [ionut.nache@inaq.ro](mailto:ionut.nache@inaq.ro)

## LATIN AMERICA

IFS Office Chile  
Av. Apoquindo 4700, Piso 12,  
CL - Las Condes, Santiago  
Phone: +56 954516766  
Email: [chile@ifs-certification.com](mailto:chile@ifs-certification.com)

## ASIA

IFS Office Asia  
IQC (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.  
Man Po International Business Center Rm 205,  
No. 660, Xinhua Road, Changning District,  
CN - 200052 Shanghai  
Phone: +86 18019989451  
Email: [china@ifs-certification.com](mailto:china@ifs-certification.com)  
[asia@ifs-certification.com](mailto:asia@ifs-certification.com)

# 1 Initial remarks

This document provides additional clarification to specific topics in the IFS Global Markets Food Program. The IFS Global Markets Food Assessment Supporting Document is available to certification bodies, assessment service providers, assessors, auditors, assessed companies and all other IFS users with the aim to provide further detail on elements related to the IFS Assessment. The document applies to the latest IFS Global Markets Food version 3.

In case of any queries regarding the interpretation of IFS Standards and Programs, please contact [standardmanagement@ifs-certification.com](mailto:standardmanagement@ifs-certification.com)

## 2 IFS Global Markets Food Assessment related topics

### 2.1 IFS Global Markets Food – the IFS Development Program perspective

#### 2.1.1 What is the aim of the IFS Global Markets Food Program and which type of company does it apply to?

IFS Global Markets Food is a non-accredited stepwise development program that initiates gradual progress towards food safety and quality management, having also been optimized with a risk based, product and process, and continuous improvement approach.

The program is intended to assist various food suppliers of processed and loose food (from retailer branded or branded food products to food ingredients for food manufacturers and other uses) to implement and further progress their food safety and quality processes, helping them meet legal and customer requirements while supplying safe and high-quality products. Companies can set out on the path towards IFS Certification with their customers, while deciding their own pace and milestones.

In addition to assisting developing companies, the program also supports and simplifies the steps for companies either willing or required to achieve IFS Food Certification.

It encompasses businesses starting from different food safety and quality implementation levels, from small food manufacturers to various sized food manufacturers, including those with the potential to achieve IFS Certification.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 1.*

#### 2.1.2 How are IFS Global Markets Food levels defined and how are development goals set?

The program is structured in two levels: basic level (which may include HACCP requirements shifted from intermediate level, known as Basic + HACCP) and intermediate level. In order to define the entry level, a pre-assessment or self- assessment should be undertaken and/or the business partner shall be contacted to additionally define the entry level and development goals.

As the IFS Global Markets Programs are oriented on continuous improvement, the duration of each level should not exceed one (1) year and the assessed companies willing or required to achieve certification should achieve the requirements of the IFS Food Standard within a maximum of three (3) years.

Nevertheless, IFS Global Markets is a flexible development program. Therefore, contingent on several factors (such as product risk, market and supplier nature, business partners supplier strategies, etc.), individual agreements in terms of the development goals (level permanence duration and certification goals for example) could be set and agreed on with business partners.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 1.*

### 2.1.3 What are the main differences between the IFS Global Markets Food Program and the IFS Food Standard?

The main differences between IFS Global Markets Food and IFS Food are summarized below in comparison chart 1:

**Chart 1:** IFS Global Markets Food Program and IFS Food

	IFS Global Markets Food	IFS Food
<b>General approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stepwise development and assessment program</li> <li>• Non-accredited</li> <li>• One complete assessment per year</li> <li>• Certification expected within 3-year cycle</li> <li>• Voluntary unannounced assessments</li> <li>• Not a certification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification Standard</li> <li>• Accredited (ISO 17065)</li> <li>• One complete audit per year</li> <li>• Unannounced audits mandatory once every 3 audits.</li> </ul>
<b>Target companies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various sized food manufacturers progressing with food safety and quality management processes, including those the potential and intention to achieve IFS Certification as their next development goal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sizes of food manufacturers where a comprehensive food safety and quality management system is implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessor/auditor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessors shall comply with program requirements.</li> <li>• Qualified and managed by certification body/ assessment service provider.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFS approves auditors; IFS Exams approach (scope, written and oral).</li> </ul>

	IFS Global Markets Food	IFS Food
<b>IFS Integrity Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No, nevertheless Quality Assurance concerns are monitored and addressed (appeals, complaints, risk-based monitoring process).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes.</li> </ul>
<b>Scoring System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slightly different from certification standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainly the KO and impact of the D and Major differs.</li> </ul>
<b>KO requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No (but all requirements may be scored with a Major).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes.</li> </ul>
<b>Result</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If passed, IFS Letter of Confirmation in respective approved level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If passed, IFS Certificate.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 IFS Global Markets Food version 3 enforcement

### 2.2.1 From which date will IFS Global Markets Food version 3 become applicable and mandatory?

IFS Global Markets Food Assessments in version 3 become possible from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 on. From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 IFS Global Markets Food version 3 Assessments will be mandatory.

### 2.2.2 Are there exceptional situations where IFS Global Markets Food version 2 may apply after October 1<sup>st</sup>?

In general, the applicability of IFS Global Markets Food version 2 ends on 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. For the time being no exceptional situations are expected as unannounced assessments, follow-up assessments, extension assessments and multi-location production sites assessments apply only for version 3. Nevertheless, in case of specific situations, certification bodies and assessment service providers shall contact IFS directly.

When relevant and applicable, new IFS Global Markets Food v3 features (such as extension and follow-up assessments) are only possible if the main assessment was performed in the respective version.

## 2.3 IFS Global Markets Food Assessment relevant topics

### 2.3.1 Is there supportive information to clarify allocation of product scopes?

An IFS Food chart with examples of products and the respective allocations of product scopes is available on IFS website: [www.ifs-certification.com](http://www.ifs-certification.com).

### 2.3.2 Is it possible to perform a fully remote IFS Global Markets Food Assessment?

No, but under exceptional circumstances (e.g. due to a widely acknowledge crisis) and when a full on-site assessment is not really feasible, the company may agree with the certification body or assessment service provider (and respective business partner, if applicable) to perform an IFS Split Assessment. The on-site part of this assessment shall be performed first, followed by the remote part using ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).

For IFS Global Markets Food, the IFS Split Assessment is only possible for intermediate level and sufficient justification shall be given in the IFS Assessment Report.

*Additional information: IFS Split Audit Protocol (normative document which also applies for IFS Global Markets).*

### 2.3.3 How is the duration of the IFS Global Markets Food Assessment defined?

The duration of the IFS Global Markets Food Assessment shall be estimated by the certification body or assessment service provider, as there is no duration calculation tool for an IFS Assessment. The duration shall be sufficient to comprehensively perform a product and process assessment.

Based on the expertise of the certification body/ assessment service provider and minimum elements listed in IFS Global Markets Program, the following shall be taken into consideration when estimating the duration:

- IFS Global Markets Assessments typically last four (4) to eight (8) hours, nevertheless the size, process complexity and nature of the companies and defined level of the assessment shall be considered, therefore additional time may be needed.
- Minimum assessment duration: four (4) hours for basic level and six (6) hours for intermediate level.
- Business partner needs/agreements in terms of the duration shall be considered (e.g when a retailer specifies assessment duration according to supplier levels). Still the minimum time defined in the program shall be complied with.
- Preparation of assessment and writing of the assessment report should typically add a minimum of two (2) to three (3) hours.
- The duration of an IFS Global Markets Assessment is not proportional and cannot be compared to an IFS Food Audit duration, especially in terms of the number of requirements in the Program versus Standard. As a development program, the IFS Global Markets Assessment is similar to a second party audit, and this is conveyed through a different complexity of the requirement levels, structure of the food safety and quality management and the assessment process when compared to a third party audit (certification).

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 2.7.2.*

### 2.3.4 Are certification bodies and assessment services required to fill out the form for extraordinary information in the IFS Database in case of notifications for specific situations (e.g product recall)?

No, this is only applicable to IFS Standards and not to IFS Global Markets Programs. The responsibilities of certification bodies and assessment service providers in case of notifications and specific situations (described in requirement 1.1.3 – Part 2) are detailed in the respective parts of the program. Nevertheless IFS may request information about the status of the investigation and respective actions.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 2.2.2 and Part 2 requirement 1.1.3.*

### 2.3.5 How is the COID managed for companies in some specific cases?

A new COID is required when:

- **The site is moving to a new location:** if a company has a new address but the same employees, same equipment, same processes: a new COID has to be created and a new assessment shall be organised (considered as the initial assessment, therefore the 3 consecutive assessments by the same assessor rule does not apply). The old assessments are visible and connected to the old COID. The access rights to the report, the action plan and the assessment comparison are transferred to the new COID. Both COIDs will be linked in the IFS Database. It is recommended that the action plan of the old site is checked by the assessor.
- **There is a new legal entity and assessment rights are not transferred:** If a company changes its legal entity but has the same address, same employees, same equipment, same processes: a new COID has to be created. The old assessments are not visible but the old COID is provided. The access rights to the report, the action plan and the assessment comparison are not transferred. The certification body/ assessment service provider decides if the old report and letter of confirmation with the new legal entity is uploaded under the new COID (it will be considered as an initial assessment for the new legal entity) or if a new assessment shall be performed. The 3 consecutive assessments by the same assessor rule does apply. The certification body/ assessment service provider decides whether the letter of confirmation of the “old” site shall be withdrawn as soon as production stops. It is recommended that the action plan of the “old” site is checked by the assessor.

**Note:** If the rights are fully transferred to the new legal entity (e.g., contracts), then a new COID is not required. Also if there is just a change of the the legal form (e.g., name change from Jelly LTD to Jelly LLP) or company name (e.g., Jelly sweet LTD to Jelly LTD) the COID shall not be changed.

If a new COID is created by mistake:

- If a certification body/assessment service provider creates a new COID by mistake for a company with an already existing COID, they shall contact IFS Customer Support.

When the management of the company changes (new owner):

- When there is a management change (new owner) but the company still has the same employees, same equipment and the same processes: no change of COID, the certification body/assessment service provider shall assess that the current letter of confirmation is still ensured.

In case of any queries related to COID management in the IFS Database (e.g., how to create, delete, link, etc.), the certification bodies / assessment service providers shall contact IFS Customer Support.

### **2.3.6 How can a COID be inactivated?**

The supplier shall contact the respective certification body/assessment service provider to inform them of the need/reason for deactivation and to take the necessary actions.

If the COID no longer has a valid IFS Letter of Confirmation and no further assessment will be performed, the COID will deactivate automatically. The certification body / assessment service provider can unlink the connection with the COID.

### **2.3.7 How is the assessment history and other information ensured in case the assessments are transferred from one certification body/assessment service provider to another?**

New certification body/assessment service providers can view the last assessment data only. History of all assessments is visible for suppliers only. Suppliers can download any assessment data and send it to the new certification body/assessment service provider if required.

### **2.3.8 Shall the assessor review the action plan from the previous IFS Global Markets Food Assessment prior to the next assessment?**

Yes. The assessor shall review the action plan from the previous IFS Assessment to check the implementation and effectiveness of corrections and corrective actions. This applies for renewal assessments and new initial assessments (next assessment after a failed assessment or an assessment cycle interruption) regardless of the date when the previous assessment was performed. For example, if there are still deviations present from the previous assessment in the actual new initial assessment, or if the scorings were lowered, the assessor shall evaluate the situation in accordance with chapter 5.10 of the assessment checklist, Part 2. Action plan review of recommendations related to COID changes shall also be taken into consideration as mentioned above.

In case the assessor has information or verifies that the company has not implemented the previous action plan at all at any stage of the assessment, the assessment shall continue to completion and criticality will be addressed through proper scoring under chapter 5.10.

In case the production site has changed their certification body/assessment service provider, the company shall update this information in the IFS Database and inform their new certification body/assessment service provider so that the assessor can check the action plan from the previous assessment.



### 2.3.9 Are exclusions allowed in the scope of IFS Global Markets Food Assessments?

The exclusion of production process(es), including storage and transport, is not allowed. Exclusions of product(s) are in general not allowed but may be accepted under exceptional circumstances.

Additional detailed information shall be found in the program and respective supporting document (IFS Global Markets Food Supporting Document: exclusion orientations and decision tree).

#### Notes:

- (1) The only exception to this rule is seasonal process(es), which can be excluded, as long as the scope of the assessment is unambiguous and only takes the process assessed in functioning into account.
- (2) By definition, all by-products from processing (feed grade/tech. grade) which are not specified in Annex 4 are excluded from the scope of the IFS Global Markets Food Assessment. Those products shall not be specified in the IFS Letter of Confirmation as exclusions and can only be described in the company profile of the assessment report.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 – chapter 2.3.2 and IFS Global Markets Food Supporting Document: exclusion orientations and decision tree.*

### 2.3.10 What types of sites are covered by the IFS Global Markets Food Program?

The IFS Assessment is production site specific: one production site is subject to one assessment and one letter of confirmation. Most of the IFS Global Markets assessed companies are typically single production sites (not centrally managed by a head office / central management, only one legal entity and no decentralised structure(s)). Nevertheless, in some cases according to different markets and company size and nature, the types of assessed sites may vary and the following shall be considered in terms of assessment management:

- **Multi-location production sites** (company with multiple production sites at different locations, which may have a head office / central management):
  - a) Company with head office / central management
    - With additional processing activities: the site shall be assessed and subjected to its own IFS Letter of Confirmation and Assessment Report.
    - No additional processing activities: the site cannot be subject to an IFS Letter of Confirmation. The company can decide whether to organise a specific assessment (which can also be remote in this case) for the activities managed by the head office / central management. This shall be defined in advance with the certification body/assessment service provider, before the assessment takes place:

If a head office / central management assessment is **not performed**:

- The company shall ensure that all necessary information and responsible personnel from the head office / central management are available (when necessary) during the assessment of each production site, to ensure that the assessor can assess centrally managed activities properly.

If a head office / central management assessment is performed:

- Assessment of the head office / central management shall always take place before assessment of each production site associated to each assessment cycle and respective assessment level.
- The maximum period of time between the assessment of the head office / central management and the assessment of all production sites is twelve (12) months.
- The certification body/assessment service provider has to determine which parts of the head office / central management assessment cover the site operation parts, also according to their levels.
- Each production site shall get an individual letter of confirmation and report.
- The centrally managed activities, as well as the outcome of the assessment shall be described in the assessment report of each production site.
- Deviations identified during the head office / central management cannot be partly solved in the assessment reports of each production site. Deviations can be downgraded, for example, to a non-conformity, but neither fixed nor improved to a better scoring.
- If a Major non-conformity has been raised during the assessment of the head office / central management at the respective level, the assessed production sites may also be affected depending on the assessment level of the production site. The certification body/assessment service provider shall assess the impact of the Major non-conformity on the letter of confirmation of these production sites and decide on its suspension. In case a follow-up assessment applies to the head office / central management and the result is deemed positive, the suspension of the letter of confirmation of the production sites can be lifted.
- Both assessment dates of the production site and head office / central management shall be visible in the assessment report.
- All COIDs of the production sites linked to the head office / central management shall be mentioned in each assessment report.

b) Company without head office / central management

If a company has several independent production sites at different locations, without a head office / central management, each production site shall have one assessment, one COID, one report and one letter of confirmation.

In the case of multi-location production sites with or without a head-office: different COIDs are created for each production site and linked in the IFS Database.

**Note:** A multi-location production site can individually choose whether it wants to be assessed as part of multi-location production sites, as a single production site or not be assessed at all.

- **Multi-legal entity production site** (a production site has multiple legal entities at one physical location):
  - a) with the **same scope**:
    - One assessment shall be performed.
    - Letter of confirmation and report shall be duplicated for each legal entity.

- Each legal entity shall have its own COID.
- The COIDs shall be mentioned in the assessment overview of each IFS Assessment Report and linked in the IFS Database (visible for certification body/assessment service provider only).

b) with **different scopes:**

- Each legal entity shall have its own COID, report and letter of confirmation.
- The assessments shall be performed by one certification body/assessment service provider.
- The assessment duration shall be separately estimated for each COID.
- The COIDs shall be mentioned in the assessment overview of each IFS Assessment Report and linked in the IFS Database (visible for certification body/assessment service provider only).

**Note:** In both cases, if a contractual relationship between the legal entities exists, the COIDs of each legal entity shall be linked in the IFS Database. If the letter of confirmation of one legal entity is suspended/ withdrawn, the letter of confirmation of all legal entities shall also be suspended/ withdrawn, unless the certification body/ assessment service provider can demonstrate that the other legal entities are not affected.

- **Production site with decentralised structure(s):** Off-site facility owned by the company where part(s) of the processes and operations of the production site take place. It could be a workshop or a warehouse, for example, belonging to the main assessed production site (same legal entity and usually same food safety and quality management) but physically located off-site. The decentralised structures shall be part of the assessment scope and when the assessment of the main production site is insufficient for gaining a full view of the company's processes and its decentralised facilities, then all relevant facilities shall also be included in the on-site assessment.

**Note:** If there is an off-site facility with logistics activities which is not a decentralised structure, the COID shall be provided in the report in case it is IFS Global Markets Logistics assessed or IFS Logistics certified.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 – chapter 2.4 and glossary.*

### 2.3.11 How to manage logistics activities owned by the food processing company situated at the same location?

Storage and transport requirements are covered by IFS Global Markets Food, nevertheless if the company or the customer wishes to have these operations assessed under IFS Global Markets Logistics, an IFS Global Markets Logistics Assessment can be performed. In this case, the following requirements shall be fulfilled:

- An IFS Global Markets Food Assessment of the food processing company shall be performed; IFS Global Markets Logistics is an additional assessment (but they can be performed together).
- In case of two (2) Letter of Confirmations (IFS Global Markets Food and IFS Global Markets Logistics), the respective scope of each assessment and letter of confirmation shall be clearly defined.

- The requirements of IFS Global Markets Food concerning transport and storage shall be evaluated during the IFS Global Markets Food Assessment in any case.

### 2.3.12 Why were unannounced assessments introduced to the IFS Global Markets Food Program and in which cases do they apply?

Unannounced assessments were introduced to the IFS Global Markets Food Program as a voluntary option to encourage and invite companies to embrace the challenge of the continuous improvement approach towards evolving supply chain transparency. Additionally it was also an opportunity to expand the assessment options towards enhancing the program's framework and simultaneously meeting the demands of IFS Stakeholders.

Examples where unannounced assessments may apply:

- When companies voluntarily wish to undertake an unannounced assessment.
- When companies are not required to evolve to IFS Certification, according to their agreed development goals, and will remain in IFS Global Markets.
- When specifically agreed with business partners to positively meet development goals.

Unannounced assessments are only applicable for intermediate level assessments.

**Note:** The only possibility of having a report and letter of confirmation issued and indicating an unannounced assessment at basic level are in cases where production sites were assessed with the objective to achieve or maintain status at intermediate level, but nevertheless failed to fulfil intermediate level requirements but were approved at basic level.

### 2.3.13 Are unannounced assessments mandatory for IFS Global Markets Food?

Different from other IFS Standards (e.g IFS Food) where different certification and benchmarking rules apply, the unannounced assessments for the IFS Global Markets Program are not mandatory, but voluntary and do not follow any frequency cycle (such as every third audit, as is the case for some IFS Certification Standards), as this is decided by the company or agreed with business partners when intended, according to own or agreed development goals

### 2.3.14 How shall unannounced assessment registration be undertaken?

The certification body / assessment service provider shall be notified of the registration for this assessment by the site at latest four (4) weeks before the start of the assessment time window (to allow it to be registered in the IFS Database).

### 2.3.15 Is the production site allowed to select blackout periods for the unannounced assessment?

Yes. If needed, the production site when registering for the unannounced assessment shall inform the certification body/assessment service provider about the blackout period of a maximum of ten (10) working days when the production site is not available for the assessment, which includes non-operating periods. The ten (10) working days can be split into a maximum of three (3) periods.

A blackout period is a period of time when an unannounced assessment cannot take place. This includes a maximum of ten (10) operational days when the production site is not available for assessment (e.g. staff holidays, maintenance days, etc.) as well as non-operating periods (when production lines are not operating at all, e.g., planned maintenance work, bank holiday, planned production site shutdown for holidays, etc.).

If the site produces seasonal products (and is not assessed under extension assessment conditions), the expected seasonal production dates shall be notified and the time window [-16 weeks, + two (2) weeks] does not apply. Providing a blackout period is not permitted in this situation and the unannounced assessment shall take place at any time during this seasonal production period.

### **2.3.16 What happens if access to the facility is denied to the assessor during the scheduled assessment window?**

If the production site denies access to the assessor (apart from “force majeure”), the currently valid IFS Letter of Confirmation shall be withdrawn by the certification body /assessment service provider within a maximum of two (2) working days of the assessment date. All stakeholders with access to the IFS Database and with the respective production site in their favourites’ list will receive an e-mail notification from the IFS Database, informing them that the current letter of confirmation has been withdrawn. This information will be visible in the production site’s history in the IFS Database. The production site will be invoiced by the certification body and assessment service provider for the total cost of the assessment.

### **2.3.17 Are unannounced assessments possible for multi-location sites?**

Yes. The registration of unannounced assessments for multi-location production sites with a head office / central management shall comply with the following rules:

- The head office / central management shall either undergo an announced or unannounced assessment and it shall always take place before the assessment of each production site, and be performed before the start of the unannounced assessment time window of the production site(s).
- When the head office / central management undergoes an announced assessment: the announced assessment of the head office / central management and unannounced assessment of the production site shall not be performed on consecutive days (e.g. if they are located within one of the production sites, there shall be two (2) different assessments; one being announced for the centrally organised processes and one unannounced for the production site).

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 2.6.2.*

### 2.3.18 Why were “re-assessments” excluded from the program?

In IFS Global Markets Food version 2, re-assessment was referred to as the assessment following a “not approved” assessment. In order to better align with the IFS structure and wording and to better convey consistency, an assessment after a failed assessment (no approval at any level) or a break/interruption of an assessment cycle, shall be referred to as a new initial assessment. The “new” initial assessment in IFS Global Markets Food is performed:

- after an interruption of the assessment cycle.
- after a failed assessment due to one or several Major non-conformity(ies) or a total score <75%, which means no approval at any level in the respective current assessment cycle.
- after a failed follow-up and extension assessment (no approval at any level).

In case the production site was assessed at intermediate level and fails, having only basic level approval, the full new assessment to be conducted for intermediate level approval, if accomplishment of this level is still desired, shall be referred to as a **new complete assessment** at intermediate level.

To maintain IFS Global Markets Food approval, the production site shall be assessed every year through renewal assessments.

### 2.3.19 Why were follow-up assessments introduced in the program?

The follow-up assessments were introduced to the program as an opportunity to expand the assessment options towards enhancing the program’s framework aligned with its needed flexibility and simultaneously meeting IFS Stakeholders demands. Additionally, it further creates more coherence (specially when compared to IFS Standards, where follow-up audits are possible and to a development program perspective) and improves the assessment process, such as eliminating complexities (e.g., provisionally approved status in basic level).

Based on a development program’s perspective, the main intention was to convey flexibility and development opportunities to assessed sites, also motivating them to progress further with the IFS Global Markets Program, while also keeping the character of an solid assessment protocol.

### 2.3.20 When are follow-up assessments possible?

A follow-up assessment is required in a specific situation where the result from an initial or renewal assessment did not allow for a letter of confirmation to be issued due to one Major non-conformity in a basic level requirement and/or in an intermediate level requirement and a total score  $\geq 75\%$  at respective level(s).

The follow-up assessment is focused on the implementation of corrections and corrective actions to solve one Major non-conformity at the respective level(s).

Follow-up possible scenarios:

- In a **basic level assessment**, a follow-up assessment is possible when:
  - Score  $\geq 75\%$  in basic level requirements
  - Maximum one (1) major in a basic level (or + HACCP) requirement

**Notes:**

- (1) When basic + HACCP is performed, maximum one Major is possible.
- (2) In case score <75% and/or more than one Major in basic level requirement (or + HACCP requirement) is raised, no follow-up assessment is possible.

- In an **intermediate level assessment**, a follow-up assessment is possible when:
  - Score  $\geq 75\%$  both in basic and intermediate level requirements
  - Maximum one Major:
    - in a basic level requirement or
    - in an intermediate level requirement or
    - in a basic and intermediate level requirement.

**Notes:**

- (1) In case score <75% at respective levels and/or more than one Major in basic level or intermediate level requirement is raised, no follow-up assessment is possible.
- (2) Where a maximum of one Major in one basic level requirement is raised in addition to one in an intermediate level requirement, the follow-up is possible once it conveys, from a development program perspective, an opportunity for the assessed company to evolve in their approved level or to not fall back to basic level. Nevertheless this means the overall scoring results of all other requirements should be in good level of compliance to keep the total score higher or equal to 75%.

### **2.3.21 When are certification bodies and assessment service providers required to withdraw the current letter of confirmation in case one Major is raised in a basic and/or intermediate level requirement and a follow-up assessment is required?**

When a Major has been scored in a basic and/or intermediate level requirement and a follow-up assessment shall be undertaken according to the program rules, the certification body/assessment service provider shall assess the impact of the major(s) to the current issued letter of confirmation and decide if the current letter of confirmation shall be withdrawn from IFS Database.

Note: in the case of follow-up assessments where the current valid letter of confirmation will be withdrawn, no reinstatement of this respective letter of confirmation is possible regardless of the respective previous assessment status and approved level.

### **2.3.22 In case of a successful follow-up, which date is considered for the letter of confirmation validity and next assessment period?**

After a successful follow-up assessment, the letter of confirmation validity is calculated from the main assessment dates (not the follow-up assessment date, meaning it remains in the assessment cycle).

### **2.3.23 Are remote follow-up assessments allowed?**

No. Follow-up assessments shall be performed on-site.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 2.5.5.*

### 2.3.24 Why were extension assessments introduced in the program?

The extension assessments were introduced to the program to allow the extension of the current assessment scope and as an opportunity to expand the assessment options towards enhancing the program's framework aligned with the IFS approach and simultaneously meeting IFS Stakeholders demands.

**Note:** The extension assessment shall be performed according to the defined main assessment level and under any circumstances cannot be used to upgrade the assessment level.

*Additional information: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 2.5.6.*

## 2.4 IFS Global Markets Assessment outcomes, reporting, letter of confirmation and IFS Software related topics

### 2.4.1 Does evidence of the corrections set in the action plan by the company need to be sent and checked prior to the IFS Letter of Confirmation issuance (if approval conditions are met)?

No, the assessor/certification body and assessment service provider shall only validate the action plan (which encompasses corrections and corrective actions) as a whole, considering:

- relevance of the corrections and corrective actions.
- relevance of implementation dates (implemented within three (3) months for corrections and implemented within twelve (12) months for corrective actions).

The effectiveness of the implementation of the action plan from the last assessment will be checked during the next assessment cycle.

*Additional for action plan: IFS Global Markets Food version 3, Part 1 - chapter 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.*

### 2.4.2 Is it possible to upload reports from failed IFS Global Markets Food Assessments in the IFS Database?

IFS Global Markets Food failed reports shall only be uploaded in IFS Database in case the assessment final result is deemed as fully failed (no approval at any level and no letter of confirmation will be issued) for administrative purposes and will not be visible to IFS Users, which leads to a new initial assessment at the respective level.

### 2.4.3 Should the technical scope managed by third-party companies (outsourced) be mentioned in the assessment scope?

The assessment scope shall only mention the processes managed by the assessed company, not by the third-party. Other fields in the report are dedicated to mentioning details about outsourced processes and products.



#### **2.4.4 Which fields in the report and letter of confirmation must be translated to English?**

If the report is written in a different language to English, it is essential that the assessment scope is translated in English, as part of other additional mandatory translations as listed below:

In the IFS Global Markets Assessment Report:

- Cover page: result and assessment level.
- Assessment scope: detailed description of processes and products.
- Observations regarding non-conformities (Majors): overview regarding Major non-conformity(ies).

In the IFS Global Markets Food Letter of Confirmation:

- Description of the assessment scope.

#### **2.4.5 Is it possible to make references to product claims in the IFS Global Markets Food Report?**

Product claims shall not be included in the description of the assessment scope in the report nor in the letter of confirmation. Nevertheless, to ensure the consistency of the report information, it can be mentioned in the report under company profile and additional information.

#### **2.4.6 Are GLN (Global Location Number) mandatory for IFS Global Markets assessed companies?**

No. If a company has a GLN it can be informed in the report and letter of confirmation.

#### **2.4.7 Can results (such as evidences, scorings, etc.) from a failed IFS Food certification audit be considered to be used as an IFS Global Markets Food Checklist and allow an IFS Report and Letter of Confirmation issuance in IFS Global Markets Food?**

No. A failed certification audit for IFS Food cannot have its results used to issue an IFS Global Markets Food Report and Letter of Confirmation under any circumstances, regardless if any level in the program would have been approved.

#### **2.4.8 Are certification bodies and assessment service providers allowed to use their own letter of confirmation template?**

The IFS Software includes a letter of confirmation format with the minimum required content, but certification body / assessment service provider may use its own layout, providing that this mandatory information is included.

Regardless of the format, accreditation body logos are not allowed to be included in the letter of confirmation, as it may imply that the program is accredited.

#### 2.4.9 What are the main conditions where a letter of confirmation could be withdrawn?

An IFS Global Markets Food Assessment Letter of Confirmation shall be withdrawn when any information indicates that the products/processes may no longer comply with the requirements of the IFS Global Markets Program and specifically due to the following situations:

- In case Major non-conformity(ies) is/are identified during the assessments (e.g., main, follow-up, extension assessments).
- Assessment fails (e.g. <75% or extension assessment failure).
- If the production stopped and moved to a new location.
- In case of a cancellation of the assessment contract (between the certification body/ assessment service provider and the company)/ when the assessment activities are transferred from one certification body / assessment service, decided by the certification body/assessment service provider.
- Assessor access is denied (apart from “force majeure”).

In the IFS Database, the explanation about the reasons for withdrawing a letter of confirmation shall be provided in English.

**Note:** In IFS Global Markets, in most cases where the assessment results are leading to a follow-up assessment or to a failed assessment at the respective level, the letter of confirmation withdrawal depends on some factors such as (and mainly) the current letter of confirmation status and its approved level and current assessment scoring impact, thus for every potential withdrawal need, the certification body/assessment service provider is requested to assess each situation, understand the impact and decide on the current IFS Letter of Confirmation withdrawal from the IFS Database.

#### 2.4.10 In case a company is moving from IFS Global Markets Food to IFS Food and the certification audit was failed, shall the current IFS Global Markets Food Letter of Confirmation be withdrawn?

The responsible certification body shall assess the impact (e.g. raised non-conformities according to the impacted requirements), in the current assessment status and level and decide if the letter of confirmation shall be withdrawn or not (e.g. if the internal audit requirement was scored with a non-conformity, this would not impact the current letter of confirmation, as internal audits are not part of the IFS Global Markets Food Requirements, and therefore the current IFS Letter of Confirmation would not be withdrawn).

In case the previous assessment was performed by another certification body or even an assessment service provider, the current certification body/assessment service provider shall contact the IFS Integrity Program department which will contact the former certification body/assessment service provider to proceed with the letter of confirmation locking and inclusion of the justification.

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The owner of the present document is:

**IFS Management GmbH**  
**Am Weidendamm 1 A**  
**10117 Berlin**  
**Germany**

Managing Director: Stephan Tromp  
AG Charlottenburg  
HRB 136333 B  
VAT-N°: DE278799213

Bank: Berliner Sparkasse  
IBAN number: DE96 1005 0000 0190 0297 65  
BIC-/Swift-Code: BE LA DE BE

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