ENGLISH FACT SHEET

IFS
International Featured Standards

Unannounced IFS Audits

This fact sheet provides valuable guidance on the rules for unannounced audits, outlining what businesses need to understand and the steps they should take.

What is the rule?

"At least once every third IFS Certification Audit shall be performed unannounced. The unannounced audit will be performed within a time window of [–16 weeks before audit due date; + two (2) weeks after audit due date] and shall take place without prior notification of the date to the production site, to ensure the unannounced character of the audit."

This "unannounced audit rule" specifies the obligation to perform every third certification audit unannounced. However, it is possible to conduct unannounced audits more frequently on a voluntary basis or because of customer agreements. The process is the same.

The rule

- **applies to:** IFS Food, IFS Logistics and IFS PACsecure, and
- **is optional for:** IFS Broker, IFS HPC and IFS Wholesale and Cash & Carry.

What do you need to do?

1. Review the applicable rules in the normative documents

- Check your relevant **IFS Standard** and related **Doctrine** to understand how to manage unannounced audits.
- Know that your certification body must inform you about options related to the "unannounced audit rule" well in advance.

2. Plan your unannounced audit

- Have information about your audit history with IFS or any other GFSI-recognised standard in the same scope ready and share it with your certification body.
- Confirm **the year for the unannounced audit** with your certification body well **before the registration deadline**, as specified in the relevant IFS Standard. If this deadline is missed, the unannounced audit can only be registered as an initial audit.

3. Prepare for your unannounced audit

- Ensure your documentation is complete and all IFS Requirements are implemented before the time window starts.
- Inform relevant staff of the **time window** and **what to expect during** the on-site audit.

Visibility of unannounced audits

- The **IFS Star status indicates that you successfully passed the unannounced audit**. Unannounced audits increase credibility in the audit process and demonstrate that your company implements the IFS Requirements every day. The IFS Star Status **makes your engagement visible** to your stakeholders.
- A star icon will be visible in **the IFS Database**. You'll find **the star status logo**, which we created for this purpose, **on the certificate and in the report**.
- **In the IFS Audit Report**, the **cover page** and **audit overview** will indicate that the audit has been performed unannounced. The audit overview will also specify the next announced and unannounced audit period.
- Your **IFS Certificate** will **specify the audit type** (announced or unannounced) and include **the last unannounced audit date and period** for the next recertification audit for the two kinds of audits.

Frequently asked questions and answers

What if production lines are not operating during the unannounced audit?

If some production lines involving different hazard analysis, risk assessments, or different product scopes are not operating during the audit, you will need a **mandatory extension audit** once those lines are fully operational.

How does the audit result affect the "unannounced audit rule"?

- An **unannounced audit always counts**, whether you pass or fail.
- If you receive a **Major** and a **total score ≥ 75 %** during an unannounced audit, your follow-up audit will be announced, but the certificate and report can still state "unannounced audit".
- A **failed announced audit does *not* count** toward the "every third unannounced" rule. You and your certification body can decide on the option for your next audit.
- A **cancelled audit** does not fulfil the "one (1) in every three (3) audits shall be unannounced" rule.

IFS Management GmbH
Am Weidendamm 1 A
10117 Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 30 726 10 53 74
E-mail: info@ifs-certification.com
www.ifs-certification.com

Follow IFS

Published: June 2026