HACCP & GMP

Food Safety Certification Standard

Issue 1

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Aligned with the Codex Alimentarius
General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969, Rev. 2022)

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Certification to this Standard is a statement of compliance at the time of audit and a statement of the assessed ability of the organisation to identify and control food safety hazards within the certified scope. It is not a guarantee of an organisation's food safety performance, nor an assurance that no food safety incident will occur, nor that all legal and regulatory requirements will at all times be met. Responsibility for the safety and legality of products at all times rests with the certified organisation.

Where a requirement of this Standard differs from a relevant statutory or regulatory requirement in the country of manufacture or country of sale, the higher requirement shall apply.

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PART I

Introduction

1.1 About this Standard

The STC HACCP & GMP Food Safety Certification Standard sets out the requirements an organisation shall meet to achieve and maintain certification of its food safety system by STC Training & Certifications Ltd. ("STC"). It is intended for organisations operating at any stage of the food chain - including primary producers, manufacturers, processors, packers, storage and distribution operators, food service and food retail businesses, and suppliers of ingredients, packaging and services to the food industry - that wish to demonstrate to their customers and suppliers that they operate a preventive, hazard-based food safety system.

The Standard is built on the principles and practice of the Codex Alimentarius General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969) and its annexed Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system. It combines two complementary elements: Good Manufacturing and Good Hygiene Practices (GMP/GHP), which establish the basic environmental and operating conditions for safe food production, and a HACCP food safety plan, which identifies and controls the significant hazards specific to the product and process.

1.2 Benefits of certification

Certification to this Standard supports an organisation to:

- operate a preventive food safety system based on internationally recognised Codex principles;
- provide assurance to customers and suppliers of a consistent and verifiable approach to hazard control;
- focus resources on the controls that matter most to product safety;
- demonstrate compliance with applicable food safety legislation in the countries of manufacture and sale;
- reduce the likelihood of food safety incidents, recalls and customer complaints through early identification of problems; and
- drive continual improvement of food safety performance and food safety culture.

1.3 Scope of certification

Certification is specific to the products, the scope of operations and the site at which those products are handled. The scope shall be defined and agreed between the organisation and STC before the audit and shall be stated on the audit report and certificate. An organisation shall, as a precondition of certification, meet the food safety obligations applicable in its country of manufacture and country of sale, including relevant legislation, regulations, codes of practice and industry guidance.

Where an organisation chooses to address quality and product-suitability hazards (for example legality, weight control or sensory quality) within the same system, these shall not in any way detract from the focus on product safety.

This Standard applies to organisations operating at any stage of the food supply chain, including manufacturers and packers, agents and brokers, and storage, distribution and wholesale operations. The activities within the defined scope determine which requirements apply, but a documented HACCP-based food safety plan is required in every case.

Where a requirement is not relevant to the activities within the defined scope (for example, requirements specific to manufacturing, or to the handling of open product at a site that only holds or trades pre-packed product), it may be recorded as not applicable. Each exclusion shall be justified by the organisation, agreed with STC, and recorded on the audit report.

As guidance, clause numbers shown in **amber** mark requirements that are often not applicable to non-manufacturing sites; applicability is confirmed for each site at scope setting and audit. An organisation that does not handle product at all (for example an agent or broker) may, with justification, record a broader set of requirements as not applicable, including much of the Good Manufacturing and Good Hygiene Practices requirements.

1.4 Structure of the Standard

The Standard is presented in four parts and a set of appendices:

- **Part I - Introduction.** Background, benefits, scope and structure of the Standard.
- **Part II - Requirements.** The food safety requirements an organisation shall meet, organised in four sections.
- **Part III - Audit protocol.** How audits are prepared and conducted, the three-year certification cycle, and the rules for certification.
- **Part IV - Management and governance.** Requirements for STC, auditor competence, use of logos and management of the scheme.
- **Appendices.** Definitions, hazard analysis and CCP determination tools, a summary of the certification cycle, and alignment with the GB Food Law Code of Practice.

1.5 Conventions used

“Shall” indicates a requirement that must be met for compliance. **“May”** indicates an option or a permitted means of meeting a requirement. Guidance notes are advisory only and do not form part of the assessable requirements. The applicability of individual requirements depends on the nature of the operation; where a requirement is not relevant to the certified scope, this shall be justified and recorded.

Demonstrating conformity. Conformity with every requirement in this Standard must be demonstrated by evidence of conformity: either something the auditor observes directly on site, or documented evidence. ‘Documented’ means recorded in any retrievable form, including paper, electronic records, photographs or video. Because evidence of conformity must be maintained for the site for all requirements, individual clauses do not separately state that evidence must be documented.

1.6 Alignment with international and regulatory frameworks

This Standard, and the way STC operates and audits against it, are designed to align with the recognised international and regulatory frameworks for food safety and for the conduct of audit and certification. STC operates this Standard as a voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programme in the sense of Codex CXG 93-2021, so that the audit information it generates is credible, reliable and capable of being relied upon by customers and, where appropriate, by competent authorities. In particular:

- **Codex CXC 1-1969 - General Principles of Food Hygiene.** The source of the food safety requirements in Part II, including GHP/GMP provisions and the seven HACCP principles.
- **Codex CXG 93-2021 - Voluntary third-party assurance programmes.** The criteria for the credibility and integrity of an assurance programme - governance, accreditation, standard-setting, conformity assessment, response to non-conformity and data sharing - which STC meets through Part III and Part IV.
- **ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC TS 22003-1.** The requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems - the basis for the certification cycle (Part III) and for STC's competence, audit-time determination, impartiality and governance (Part IV).
- **GB Food Law Code of Practice.** This Standard is structured so that a certified site can demonstrate the matters assessed by competent authorities during official controls - compliance of food hygiene and safety procedures, compliance of the structure of the establishment, and confidence in management and control procedures - supporting a risk-based, intelligence-led approach to official controls (see Appendix D).

1.7 Normative and reference documents

The following documents are referenced in, or underpin, this Standard. Where a referenced document is revised, the current edition applies.

- Codex Alimentarius CXC 1-1969 - General Principles of Food Hygiene (Rev. 2022).
- Codex Alimentarius CXG 93-2021 - Principles and Guidelines for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes.
- ISO/IEC 17021-1 - Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems.
- ISO/IEC TS 22003-1 - Food safety - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems.
- ISO/IEC 17065 - Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.
- GB Food Law Code of Practice and Food Law Practice Guidance, issued under the Food Safety Act 1990.

1.8 Revision and version control

This Standard is reviewed and revised from time to time. Certification is held against the current issue, and each certified site shall meet the current issue by the time of its next audit, unless that issue was published less than three months before the audit, in which case it shall be met by the following audit.

PART II

Requirements

Part II sets out the requirements of the Standard. The requirements are organised in four sections:

- Section 1 - Senior management commitment
- Section 2 - Good Manufacturing and Good Hygiene Practices
- Section 3 - HACCP food safety plan
- Section 4 - Food safety management system

1 Senior management commitment

1.1 Senior management commitment and food safety culture

The site's senior management shall demonstrate that food safety is fundamental to the operation of the business and shall provide the leadership, resources and culture necessary to produce safe and suitable food.

1.1.1 Senior management shall demonstrate commitment to the production and handling of safe food by promoting awareness of food safety throughout the organisation, facilitating communication of food safety issues, and providing adequate human and financial resources to implement and maintain the food safety system.

1.1.2 Senior management shall establish, communicate and maintain a positive food safety culture. The programme to develop and measure food safety culture shall, as a minimum, address:

- leadership that sets a clear direction and engages all personnel in food safety;
- awareness among all personnel of the importance of food hygiene;
- open and clear communication, including the reporting of deviations and expectations; and
- the availability of sufficient resources for the effective functioning of the food safety system.

1.1.3 Senior management shall ensure that the food safety system is maintained when changes are planned and implemented, that controls are carried out and working, that documentation is kept up to date, and that the appropriate training and supervision are in place for personnel.

1.1.4 An adequately resourced management review of the food safety system shall be conducted at planned intervals, and at least annually, to confirm its continuing suitability and effectiveness. The review shall consider results of internal and external audits, verification activities, corrective actions, non-conforming product, complaints, incidents and any changes that could affect food safety. Records of the review and resulting actions shall be maintained.

1.2 Food safety policy and objectives

1.2.1 The organisation shall document a food safety policy stating its commitment to the production of safe and suitable food that meets customer expectations and the legal requirements of the countries of manufacture and sale. The policy shall be authorised by senior management, communicated to all personnel and reviewed for continuing suitability.

1.2.2 Food safety objectives shall be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART), and they shall be established, monitored and reviewed, and the organisation shall demonstrate a commitment to continually improving its food safety performance, taking into account new scientific developments, advances in technology and industry best practice.

1.3 Organisational structure, responsibilities and competence

1.3.1 Roles, responsibilities and authorities that affect food safety shall be defined and clearly communicated within the organisation. Documented job descriptions or equivalent shall be available for positions responsible for food safety and for the maintenance of the HACCP system.

1.3.2 Arrangements shall be in place to ensure that, in the absence of key personnel, food safety activities continue to be carried out by competent staff.

1.3.3 Where the organisation engages a consultant to assist in developing or maintaining the food safety system, it shall ensure the consultant is appropriately qualified, and the organisation shall remain responsible for the day-to-day management of the system.

2 Good Manufacturing and Good Hygiene Practices

The organisation shall establish, implement and maintain the prerequisite programmes set out in this section to create and sustain the environmental and operating conditions necessary for the production of safe and suitable food. The extent and stringency of each programme shall be appropriate to the products, processes and associated risks.

2.1 Site standards and external areas

The grounds and external areas of the site shall be maintained, controlled and located so as to minimise the risk of product contamination.

2.1.1 The external areas shall be maintained in good order, with vegetation controlled and no accumulation of waste or other harbourage that could compromise pest control or contaminate product. External traffic routes, deliveries and receiving areas shall be managed so that product, ingredients and packaging are protected from environmental contamination, and waste areas shall be controlled.

2.2 Building fabric, internal structures and fittings

The fabric, structures and fittings of food handling areas shall be suitable for their purpose and shall be maintained to enable effective cleaning and to protect product from contamination.

2.2.1 Buildings shall be constructed of durable, non-toxic materials suitable for the intended use, and shall be maintained in a condition that enables effective cleaning and, where necessary, disinfection.

2.2.2 Walls, floors and partitions shall be impervious to moisture where required, easy to clean and maintained in good condition; floors shall slope to drains where wet processes occur, and coving used where appropriate to facilitate cleaning.

2.2.3 Ceilings, overhead fixtures, windows and doors shall be designed and maintained to minimise the build-up and shedding of dirt, to prevent the entry of pests and dust, and to be readily cleanable.

2.2.4 Doors to production areas shall be close-fitting and kept closed when not in use.

2.2.5 Light fittings and glass in production and storage areas shall be protected against breakage, or controlled by procedures, to prevent contamination of product.

2.2.6 Areas of different hygiene risk shall be separated proportionately to the risk, by physical or time-based means, location or airflow.

2.2.7 Where product is ready-to-eat, or will not undergo a further step at the site sufficient to reduce pathogens to a safe level, the organisation shall identify the areas requiring a higher level of hygiene control and apply controls proportionate to the risk of recontamination. Such controls may include physical or time-based separation of higher-hygiene areas, controlled movement of people, equipment and materials, dedicated equipment, air and environmental controls, and environmental monitoring for pathogens. (Such areas are sometimes described as high-care or high-risk areas.)

2.3 Utilities - water, ice, air and other gases

Water, ice, steam, air and other gases that contact food or food-contact surfaces shall be suitable for use and shall not present a contamination risk.

2.3.1 An adequate supply of potable water shall be available for use in processing, as an ingredient, and for hand-washing and cleaning. A risk assessment of the water supply shall be carried out and shall determine the monitoring required, including any testing frequency, method, limits and the actions to be taken on out-of-limit results.

2.3.2 Recirculated or recovered water shall be treated where necessary to ensure it does not compromise the safety or suitability of food.

2.3.3 Air, steam and other gases in direct contact with product shall be filtered or treated as necessary to prevent contamination.

2.4 Equipment

Equipment shall be suitably designed, constructed and located for its intended food use and to enable effective cleaning and maintenance.

2.4.1 Food-contact equipment and containers shall be made of food-grade, non-toxic materials, designed and located so that they can be effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected, and maintained or discarded as necessary to avoid contamination.

2.4.2 Equipment used to heat, cool, freeze or otherwise process food shall be capable of achieving the required process conditions and, where necessary, of allowing temperature and other parameters to be monitored and controlled.

2.5 Maintenance

A preventive maintenance programme shall be in place to keep premises and equipment in a condition that does not compromise food safety.

2.5.1 A preventive maintenance programme covering premises, equipment, services and external areas shall be implemented.

2.5.2 Maintenance activities shall not present a food safety risk, and product, ingredients and packaging shall be removed or protected during maintenance.

2.5.3 Temporary repairs shall be controlled and made permanent as soon as practicable. After maintenance, equipment shall be checked to confirm that tools, debris and swarf have been removed and that the equipment has been cleaned and correctly reassembled before use. Records of maintenance shall be kept.

2.6 Personnel facilities

Personnel facilities shall be sufficient, suitably located and maintained so as not to present a risk of contamination to product.

2.6.1 Hand-washing facilities shall be provided at appropriate locations, of suitable hygienic design, with warm running potable water, soap and a hygienic means of drying hands. Changing, toilet, eating and storage facilities shall be provided as required and shall not pose a risk of contamination in any way. A site map may be used to facilitate assessment of potential contamination.

2.6.2 Personnel facilities shall include, as appropriate to the operation:

- toilets that do not open directly into food handling areas, with hand-washing facilities adjacent;
- changing facilities where a change of clothing is required;
- clearly displayed hand-washing signage;
- designated areas for smoking, eating and drinking, away from food handling areas.

2.7 Personal hygiene

2.7.1 A personal hygiene policy shall be implemented, appropriate to the products and processes, and communicated to all personnel, contractors and visitors. As a minimum it

shall address hand-washing; eating, drinking, smoking and vaping restrictions; the covering of cuts and wounds; clothing and personal protective equipment; jewellery and personal-effect restrictions; control of personal items and medication; and the control of false nails and eyelashes.

2.7.2 Hand-washing shall be carried out at the start of food handling, on returning to work after breaks, after using the toilet, and after handling any contaminated material. Suitable signage shall be provided in the languages spoken by personnel.

2.8 Health status, illness and injury

2.8.1 Procedures shall require personnel known or suspected to be suffering from, or carrying, an illness or condition likely to be transmitted through food to report it to management, and shall provide for their exclusion from food handling where there is a likelihood of contamination. Where appropriate, exclusion for a defined period after symptoms resolve, or medical clearance, shall be required before return to work.

2.8.2 Personnel with cuts or wounds shall have them covered with a suitable, detectable dressing, and shall be assigned to duties without direct product contact where necessary.

2.9 Protective clothing

2.9.1 Where protective clothing and footwear are required, suitable provision shall be made in appropriate sizes, and procedures shall ensure that protective clothing worn in areas of different hygiene risk is laundered, stored and changed so as not to contaminate product.

2.10 Cleaning and disinfection

Cleaning and disinfection systems shall be in place and verified to be effective at removing food residues, dirt and allergens that could be a source of contamination.

2.10.1 A cleaning programme shall be implemented for the site. For each area, item of equipment and utensil, it shall identify:

- what is to be cleaned;
- the method and frequency of cleaning;
- the cleaning chemicals to be used, applied at the contact times and concentrations specified by the manufacturer;
- who is responsible.

2.10.2 All cleaning chemicals shall be approved for use in a food environment.

2.10.3 The programme shall state how cleaning is monitored and verified, the frequency of monitoring and the corrective action to be taken where cleaning is found to be ineffective.

2.10.4 Where cleaning or disinfection is relied upon to control a specific hazard identified in the hazard analysis, the method shall be validated (for example, allergen-cleaning validation).

2.10.5 Cleaning equipment shall be suitable for its purpose, identified for its intended use, and cleaned and stored so that it does not become a source of contamination.

2.10.6 Environmental monitoring (for example protein, allergen or microbiological testing) shall be undertaken commensurate with product and process risk, and records maintained.

2.10.7 Where clean-in-place (CIP) systems are used, procedures shall ensure removal of soiling, the absence of residual cleaning chemicals in product, and the system shall be validated at a frequency based on risk. Separate, designated cleaning equipment shall be used for different hygiene zones.

2.11 Waste management

Waste shall be managed so that it does not accumulate in or contaminate food handling areas and does not attract pests.

2.11.1 Waste shall be removed from food handling areas at suitable intervals and not allowed to accumulate.

2.11.2 Waste bins shall be clearly identified and distinguishable from product containers; external bins shall be covered, emptied at an appropriate frequency and kept clean.

2.11.3 Equipment used for waste shall be included in the cleaning programme.

2.12 Pest management

A pest management programme shall be in place to keep the site free of pest infestation and harbourage.

2.12.1 The site shall be maintained free of pest infestation and harbourage.

2.12.2 A pest management programme shall be implemented by competent internal staff or contracted pest-control operators.

2.12.3 The programme shall cover all areas of the premises up to and including the boundary, with a schedule of inspections and treatments. It shall state how pest activity is monitored, the indicators of an ineffective programme (such as adverse trends in pest activity or sightings), and the corrective action to be taken.

2.12.4 The building shall be proofed against the entry of pests; proofing of doors, windows, other openings and service penetrations shall be provided and maintained.

2.12.5 The programme shall include bait maps, secured and tamper-resistant devices, records of chemicals used.

2.12.6 Pest-control measures shall not pose a risk of product contamination.

2.13 Foreign-body and physical contamination control

Controls shall be in place throughout the operation to prevent, detect and remove physical contaminants.

2.13.1 Controls shall be in place to prevent contamination by foreign materials, including glass, hard and brittle plastics, ceramics, metal, wood and soft plastics. The controls shall address:

- a policy for the use and control of each material type;
- preventive maintenance and regular inspection of equipment;
- procedures for dealing with breakages.

2.13.2 Where detection or screening equipment (for example filters, sieves, metal detectors etc.) is used, it shall be appropriately specified, operated and routinely checked, and personnel responsible for its use and for corrective action shall be trained.

2.14 Chemical contamination control

Chemicals on site shall be controlled so that they do not present a contamination risk to product.

2.14.1 A procedure shall control the receipt, identification, storage and use of chemicals (including cleaning chemicals, non-food-grade lubricants and maintenance chemicals). Chemicals shall:

- be approved for use and accompanied by safety data sheets;
- be clearly labelled;
- be stored securely and separately from food, ingredients and packaging;
- be used only by trained personnel and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

2.14.2 Evidence shall be available that chemicals are suitable for use in a food premises, and personnel and contractors who handle them shall be trained.

2.15 Allergen management

Allergenic materials shall be managed so as to prevent the unintended presence of allergens in product and to ensure accurate declaration.

2.15.1 All allergens handled on site shall be identified. An allergen management programme shall be implemented, based on a risk assessment of the likelihood of allergen cross-contact through the process. It shall address:

- receipt, storage and segregation of allergenic materials;
- production scheduling and control of rework;
- cleaning and changeover between products;
- consideration of allergens during product development.

2.15.2 The organisation shall ensure that:

- allergens present are declared on product labels in accordance with the legislation of the country of sale;
- a procedure verifies that product labels are correct before use;
- any "free-from" claim is validated and verified at an appropriate frequency based on risk;
- personnel and contractors are trained in the allergen management programme.

2.16 Storage

Storage facilities and practices shall protect the safety and suitability of ingredients, packaging, work in progress and finished product.

2.16.1 Storage facilities shall be fit for purpose, clean and of sufficient capacity, and shall provide segregation of non-conforming product, control of allergens, and protection from contamination and cross-contact.

2.16.2 Climate-controlled storage shall be monitored and records maintained.

2.16.3 A stock-rotation process based on first-in/first-out or first-expiry/first-out principles shall be in place. Off-site and third-party storage shall be included in the food safety system or in the approved-supplier programme as applicable.

2.17 Control of operations - process control

Operations shall be controlled to ensure that products are produced consistently within their defined safety parameters.

2.17.1 The HACCP plan shall be fully implemented in operations. Process parameters that affect food safety (reference control measures in HACCP plan)- in particular time and temperature during cooking, cooling, processing and storage - shall be defined, controlled, monitored and recorded as appropriate. Where formulation (for example pH or water activity) is used to control hazards, the controlling parameters shall be monitored.

2.18 Calibration of measuring and monitoring equipment

Equipment used to monitor food safety shall be accurate and maintained in a known state of calibration.

2.18.1 A procedure shall ensure that equipment used to inspect, measure, test or monitor food safety, including that used at CCPs, reads accurately and is calibrated wherever possible, and / or checked against a suitable reference at defined intervals.

2.18.2 Personnel performing and reviewing calibration shall be trained, records shall be maintained, and corrective action shall be taken where equipment is found to be out of calibration.

2.19 Dispatch and transport

Product shall be protected during dispatch and transport so that its safety and suitability are not compromised.

2.19.1 Vehicles and containers used to transport food shall be suitable, clean and capable of maintaining the temperature and other conditions necessary to protect product. The securing and condition of transport shall be checked and recorded, and procedures shall address vehicle breakdown and dispatch in adverse conditions.

3 The HACCP food safety plan

The organisation shall develop, document, implement and maintain an effective HACCP-based food safety plan in accordance with the seven principles and twelve application steps of the Codex Alimentarius. The plan shall be founded on properly implemented prerequisite programmes (Section 2 and Section 4). A separate, or combined modular style HACCP study shall be undertaken for each product or group of products sharing similar hazards and production technology.

3.1 Scope and the HACCP team (Step 1)

Scope shall be established and operational before the HACCP plan is applied, and a multi-disciplinary team with the knowledge and competence to develop and maintain the plan shall be appointed.

3.1.1 A HACCP team shall be appointed, comprising multi-disciplinary personnel with the appropriate knowledge and experience of the products, processes and associated hazards. Where the necessary expertise is not available in-house, it shall be obtained from external sources, but the organisation shall remain responsible for the plan.

3.1.2 The scope of each HACCP study shall be defined, stating the products and processes covered and the start and end points of the process under consideration.

3.1.3 The references used to develop the HACCP plan shall be identified and kept available, such as relevant legislation, codes of practice, guidelines and recognised scientific or technical sources.

3.2 Describe the product (Step 2)

Each product or group of products shall be fully described to support the hazard analysis.

3.2.1 A full description shall be established for each product or group of products covered by the HACCP plan. The description shall include, as relevant:

- composition and ingredients
- physical and chemical characteristics (for example pH and water activity)
- preservatives and allergens present
- processing methods and technologies
- packaging
- storage, handling and distribution conditions
- shelf life and date coding
- any relevant statutory or customer limits

3.2.2 Products may be grouped within a single description only where they share similar attributes such as: common inputs, characteristics, process steps and intended use. Products controlled by different food safety controls, processing techniques or packaging methods shall be described separately.

3.3 Identify intended use and users (Step 3)

3.3.1 The intended consumers and users of each product shall be identified, including any vulnerable consumers (such as infants, pregnant, elderly, immunocompromised consumers or those with allergies).

3.3.2 The intended use, and the reasonably expected handling of the product by the next business in the food chain or by the consumer, shall be identified. Any known unintended use shall also be considered, and controls enhanced as appropriate for vulnerable groups.

3.4 Flow diagram and confirmation (Steps 4 and 5)

A flow diagram shall be established and confirmed for each product or process.

3.4.1 A flow diagram shall be established for each product or group of products. It shall be sufficiently detailed to show:

- the sequence and interaction of all process steps
- all inputs (ingredients, processing aids, packaging, water and air where relevant)
- outsourced processes, rework and recycling
- the points at which intermediate products, end products, waste and by-products are released or removed
- customer and supplier returns

3.4.2 The accuracy of each flow diagram shall be confirmed by a person or persons with sufficient knowledge of the process, during all relevant stages and hours of operation, at least annually and whenever a change occurs.

3.5 Conduct a hazard analysis and identify control measures (Step 6 / Principle 1)

All potential food safety hazards associated with each process step and input shall be identified, and a hazard analysis shall be conducted to determine the significant hazards and the control measures necessary to control them.

3.5.1 The HACCP team shall list all potential biological, chemical, physical, allergen and, where relevant, radiological hazards reasonably likely to be introduced, increased or controlled at each step and input. Both the hazard and its cause shall be assessed in sufficient detail to enable identification of effective control measures. Hazards shall be specific and not grouped (for example, foreign matter shall be separated into glass, metal, wood and similar), unless the cause is common to all such hazards (for example, damaged packaging leading to contamination).

3.5.2 The team shall evaluate the listed hazards in the form of a risk assessment, to determine which are significant - that is, with the potential to occur in the absence of control and with the potential to cause illness or injury if present. The evaluation shall take into account the likelihood of occurrence (considering prerequisite programmes), the likelihood and severity of adverse effects on the user.

3.5.3 For each significant hazard, at least one control measure capable of preventing or eliminating the hazard, or reducing it to an acceptable level, shall be identified.

Capability of the control measure controlling the specific and significant hazard shall be validated (whether identified as a PRP, oPRP, CP or CCP).

3.5.4 As part of hazard identification and risk assessment, the organisation shall consider the potential for food to be deliberately compromised, whether for economic gain (food fraud) or with intent to cause harm (food defence), and shall apply proportionate controls where a significant risk is identified.

3.6 Determine the critical control points (Step 7 / Principle 2)

Critical control points shall be determined for each significant hazard.

3.6.1 The critical control points (CCPs) shall be determined for each significant hazard, at the steps where control is essential to prevent or eliminate the hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level and where a deviation could result in potentially unsafe food. A structured method shall be used, primarily based on the risk assessed ref. 3.5.2, and may also include the use of other tools such as a decision tree (Appendix B).

3.6.2 Where a control measure at a particular step, works in combination with a control measure at another step to control the same hazard, the team shall assess each step to determine whether it is a critical control point; control measures at both steps are CCPs only where each is genuinely essential to control the hazard.

3.7 Establish validated critical limits (Step 8 / Principle 3)

Validated critical limits shall be set for each critical control point.

3.7.1 Measurable or observable critical limits shall be established for each CCP to separate acceptable from unacceptable product. More than one critical limit may apply at a CCP (for example, time and temperature for a heat treatment).

3.7.2 Critical limits shall be scientifically validated to demonstrate that, if properly implemented, they are capable of controlling the hazard to an acceptable level. Validation may draw on scientific literature, regulations, guidance from competent authorities, studies by equipment manufacturers.

3.7.3 Wherever site variables can affect the capability of the CCP, site-specific studies must support the validation. Validation data shall be retained.

3.8 Establish a monitoring system (Step 9 / Principle 4)

Each critical control point shall be monitored to confirm it remains in control.

3.8.1 A monitoring system shall be established for each CCP. Monitoring shall be capable of detecting a deviation from a critical limit in time to allow affected product to be isolated, and shall be continuous wherever practicable. For each CCP the monitoring system shall define:

- what is monitored;
- the method of monitoring;
- the frequency of monitoring;

- the location;
- the person responsible.

3.8.2 Personnel responsible for monitoring CCPs shall be trained and assessed as competent. Monitoring records shall be signed or initialled by the person performing the monitoring and shall record the result and the timing of the activity.

3.8.3 There shall be an independent verification of CCP monitoring records.

3.9 Establish corrective actions (Step 10 / Principle 5)

Corrective actions shall be defined for use when a critical limit is not met.

3.9.1 Specific written corrective actions shall be established for each CCP for use when a critical limit is not met. The corrective action shall:

- bring the CCP back under control;
- segregate and identify affected product and assess its safety;
- ensure that potentially unsafe product does not reach the consumer;
- state the action to be taken on the affected product and on the process, and who is responsible;
- identify and correct the root cause, where possible, to prevent recurrence.

3.10 Validate the HACCP plan and verify the system (Step 11 / Principle 6)

The HACCP plan shall be validated before implementation and verified on an ongoing basis to confirm that it is correctly implemented and that the food safety system controls the significant hazards as intended.

3.10.1 Before implementation, the entire HACCP plan shall be validated to confirm that the identified hazards, CCPs, critical limits, control measures, monitoring, corrective actions, verification and records are together capable of controlling the significant hazards.

3.10.2 Verification procedures shall be established and carried out on a planned basis to confirm the system is working effectively. Verification activities may include:

- review of monitoring and corrective-action records;
- calibration of measuring equipment;
- observation of control measures;
- product sampling and testing;
- environmental monitoring;
- internal or third-party audits.

3.10.3 Verification of the HACCP plan shall be carried out by a person other than the individual responsible for monitoring and corrective actions, and may be supported by external experts or qualified third parties.

3.10.4 A comprehensive review of the HACCP system shall be carried out at least annually, and whenever changes occur to product, process or equipment, to confirm that:

- the appropriate significant hazards have been identified;
- control measures and critical limits are adequate;

- monitoring and verification occur as planned;
- corrective actions are appropriate.

3.10.5 New and re-developed products shall have a defined shelf-life, supported by a testing schedule unless justification demonstrates this is not required. Acceptable justification includes historical evidence, scientific literature, supplier validation data or challenge testing.

3.10.6 Schedules of microbiological and chemical testing, and of finished-product assessments against specification, shall be implemented, with results reviewed by a competent person and corrective action taken where limits are exceeded.

3.11 Establish documentation and record keeping (Step 12 / Principle 7)

The HACCP system shall be supported by appropriate documentation and records.

3.11.1 Documentation and records appropriate to the nature and size of the operation shall be maintained to demonstrate that the HACCP controls are in place and effective. Records shall include CCP monitoring, deviations and corrective actions, verification activities, validation of critical limits, changes to the system and prerequisite-programme records.

3.11.2 Where records are kept electronically, they shall be authentic, secure, backed up and attributable to the person who completed them.

4 Food safety management system

This section sets out the management-system requirements that apply to every certified organisation, whatever its activities.

4.1 Control of documented information

4.1.1 A system to manage documented information, in hardcopy or electronic form, shall be implemented to ensure that only current versions are in use, that obsolete documents are removed from use, and that records are retained, protected from loss or damage, and readily retrievable. Documentation shall be appropriate to the nature and size of the organisation.

4.1.2 A register of the documents that form part of the food safety system shall be maintained. The organisation shall have access to, and control of, the external documents and references it needs to maintain the system, including applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, codes of practice, guidelines and standards.

4.1.3 Records associated with the food safety system shall be legible, accurate and genuine. Records shall be retained for a minimum of 12 months beyond the shelf life of the product, or for a longer period where required by the customer or by law.

4.2 Approved suppliers and incoming materials

4.2.1 Suppliers of materials and services that affect food safety shall be approved and monitored, and incoming materials shall be verified as fit for purpose. Action shall be taken where monitoring indicates that a supplier or material no longer meets requirements.

4.2.2 An approved-supplier programme shall be implemented for ingredients, packaging, chemicals, outsourced processes and contracted services that may affect food safety. It shall include criteria for selecting, approving, monitoring of suppliers, and arrangements for emergency suppliers.

4.2.3 A method shall be implemented for checking incoming materials, which may include:

- inspection for damage, date coding, temperature, contamination and allergen status;
- receipt of certificates of analysis or conformance;
- reconciliation of documentation;
- materials that do not meet food safety criteria shall not be accepted.

4.3 Specifications

Documented specifications shall define the requirements for materials and finished products relevant to food safety and legality.

4.3.1 Documented specifications shall be available and current for all raw materials (including packaging) and for finished products, sufficient to ensure compliance with food safety and legislative requirements in the country of sale.

4.4 Product labelling and information

Products shall be labelled and accompanied by the information needed to handle, store, prepare and use them safely.

4.4.1 A process shall be in place for the preparation and review of labels to confirm that label information, including allergen declaration and date coding, complies with the food safety and labelling regulations of the country of sale. Labels shall be checked before production commences, and reviewed following changes in legislation, recipe, raw materials or process. Records of label reviews shall be maintained.

4.5 Traceability

The organisation shall be able to trace product through all stages of its operation.

4.5.1 A traceability procedure shall ensure that products are identified at all stages from receipt of raw materials through to finished goods, including work in progress, rework, on-hold, reject, returned and waste product. The procedure shall enable trace forward to the customer and back to the supplier (one-up, one-back). Records shall be maintained.

4.5.2 The traceability system, including forward and backward traceability, shall be tested at least annually and following significant changes affecting traceability, and may be combined with the mock recall. Records of the test shall be maintained.

4.6 Control of non-conforming product

Non-conforming product shall be controlled to prevent its unintended use or release.

4.6.1 Documented controls shall ensure that non-conforming product is identified, segregated and quarantined to prevent accidental release or use. Procedures shall state the action to be taken on the affected product, the responsibilities, and the requirement for root cause analysis. Records, including product hold, corrective action and disposal, shall be maintained.

4.7 Corrective and preventive action

The organisation shall act on failures in the food safety system to correct them and prevent recurrence.

4.7.1 The organisation shall use information from monitoring, complaints, non-conformities, incidents and audits to identify the root cause of failures, make the necessary corrections, and implement preventive action to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. Records shall be maintained and trends reviewed.

4.7.2 Customer complaints relating to food safety shall be recorded, investigated by competent personnel and considered in the context of the HACCP system.

4.8 Management of incidents, withdrawal and recall

The organisation shall be able to manage food safety incidents and to remove unsafe product from the supply chain.

4.8.1 A procedure shall be in place to manage incidents and to enable the comprehensive, rapid and effective withdrawal and recall of product that may be unsafe, in compliance with the legislation of the country of sale. The procedure shall identify responsibilities, communication arrangements (including notification of relevant authorities and, where appropriate, customers) and the secure handling of recalled product.

4.8.2 The recall procedure shall be tested at least annually by means of a mock recall, and clear records of recalls, withdrawals and mock recalls shall be maintained and used to improve the procedure.

4.9 Training and competence

All personnel whose work affects food safety shall be trained, instructed and supervised commensurate with their activity, and shall be competent to perform their tasks.

4.9.1 A food safety training programme shall be implemented to ensure that personnel who handle food, and those whose activities affect food safety, have the necessary knowledge and skills. The programme shall consider the hazards associated with the products and processes and shall cover environmental and personal hygiene, HACCP-based controls, allergen controls, cleaning and the prevention of contamination.

4.9.2 Personnel responsible for an activity associated with a CCP, or for the implementation of a prerequisite programme, shall be demonstrably competent in that activity. Personnel moving into new roles shall be trained for the new role, and refresher training shall be carried out at a frequency appropriate to the product risk and role.

4.9.3 Records of training, qualifications and competence assessments shall be maintained, and the effectiveness of training shall be reviewed.

PART III

Audit protocol and the certification cycle

Part III describes how an organisation achieves and maintains certification to this Standard, and the rules governing the audit and certification process. STC operates a three-year certification cycle consistent with the principles for the audit and certification of management systems set out in ISO/IEC 17021-1. The certification decision is made independently of the audit. This part forms an essential element of the Standard and shall be read and understood by organisations seeking certification.

1 Achieving certification

1.1 A contract shall exist between the organisation and the STC approved certification body (CB) defining the scope of certification and the reporting requirements. The CB shall act impartially and shall not provide consultancy or any other service to an organisation that would compromise the impartiality of its certification; the same individual shall not undertake both pre-assessment or consultancy and the certification audit at the same site.

1.2 Before the initial audit the organisation shall conduct a self-assessment against the current issue of the Standard and address any gaps. An optional pre-assessment may be carried out to provide guidance on the certification process; it does not form part of the certification decision.

1.3 A newly commissioned site shall have its food safety system fully implemented and operational before the initial audit. It is unlikely that full compliance can be demonstrated less than three months from commencement of operation, as evidence of the system operating over time is required.

2 The certification cycle

Certification shall be granted for a three-year cycle, comprising an initial certification audit conducted in two stages, annual surveillance audits, and a recertification audit completed before the certificate expires.

The certification cycle runs over three years. Each subsequent cycle begins with the recertification decision. The cycle comprises the following audits:

Cycle point	Audit	Purpose
Year 0	Initial certification audit - Stage 1 and Stage 2	Confirm readiness and assess implementation and effectiveness of the full food safety system.
Year 1	First surveillance audit	Confirm the certified system continues to be implemented and remains effective.
Year 2	Second surveillance audit	Confirm continued implementation and

Cycle point	Audit	Purpose
		effectiveness, and progress of improvement.
Year 3	Recertification audit	Comprehensively reassess the whole system and its performance over the cycle, before the certificate expires.

2.1 Where the certification decision is positive, a certificate shall be issued with a validity of three years from the date of the certification decision, subject to the satisfactory completion of the annual surveillance audits.

2.2 Surveillance audits shall be conducted on site at least once each year. The first surveillance audit following initial certification shall be completed no later than twelve months from the date of the certification decision; there is no tolerance beyond this date, except where STC has granted a documented concession based on mitigating circumstances beyond the organisation's reasonable control audits may be scheduled in advance of the due date, typically up to three months before, but not after it. A failure to complete a surveillance audit by its due date shall result in suspension of the certificate.

2.3 The recertification audit shall be planned to take place in good time before the certificate expiry date, normally two to three months before, so that the audit, the closure of any non-conformities, the technical review and the certification decision are all completed before expiry. Where recertification is completed before expiry, the expiry date of the new certificate may be based on the existing expiry date, and the issue date shall be on or after the recertification decision. A new three-year cycle commences on the date of the recertification decision.

2.4 Where recertification is not completed before the certificate expiry date, certification shall lapse and the organisation shall not claim certification during the period of lapse. STC may restore certification within six months of expiry provided the outstanding recertification activities are completed; otherwise at least a Stage 2 audit shall be conducted. The effective date of a restored certificate shall be on or after the recertification decision.

3 Initial certification audit

3.1 The initial certification audit shall be conducted in two stages. The Stage 1 audit shall assess the organisation's readiness for Stage 2, including the design and documentation of the food safety system, the HACCP plan and prerequisite programmes, the scope, the internal audit and management review arrangements, and the site's understanding of the requirements. The outputs of Stage 1 shall be recorded, including any areas of concern that could be raised as non-conformities at Stage 2.

3.2 The Stage 2 audit shall be conducted on site or remotely based on the STC risk assessment criteria, and shall assess the implementation and effectiveness of the food safety system against the full requirements of the Standard. It shall include an assessment of the operation, review of documentation and records, an assessment of the HACCP plan, a traceability test, and interviews with personnel. The interval between Stage 1 and

Stage 2 shall allow the organisation to resolve areas of concern; where significant changes occur, all or part of Stage 1 may need to be repeated.

4 Surveillance audits

4.1 Surveillance audits are designed to maintain confidence that the certified system continues to fulfil the requirements of the Standard between recertification audits. A surveillance audit need not assess every requirement, but the surveillance programme shall be planned so that the full Standard is covered across the cycle on a risk basis.

4.2 Each surveillance audit shall, as a minimum, assess: internal audits and management review; the status of corrective actions from the previous audit; complaints and their handling; changes affecting the certified system or scope; the continued use of the STC badge and certification claims; and progress against food safety objectives.

4.3 The following food safety activities shall be assessed at every surveillance audit regardless of the risk-based selection: review of the HACCP plan, a traceability test, and a test of the product withdrawal and recall procedure (mock recall).

5 Recertification audit

5.1 The recertification audit shall be conducted in the third year of the cycle, prior to the certificate expiry date. It shall be comprehensive, of similar depth to the Stage 2 audit, and shall reassess the whole food safety system against all requirements of the Standard, taking into account the performance and effectiveness of the system over the complete certification cycle.

5.2 Where the recertification audit identifies non-conformities, these shall be closed in accordance with section 7 before the recertification decision is made. A new three-year cycle shall commence on the date of the recertification decision.

6 Audit principles and conduct

All audits shall be planned, conducted and reported in a consistent, systematic manner based on the following principles: independence and impartiality of the audit from the activity being audited; objectivity and an evidence-based approach, with findings supported by verifiable objective evidence obtained by sampling; integrity and professional conduct; and confidentiality of information obtained during the audit. Audits shall assess both the conformity and the effectiveness of the food safety system against the requirements of the Standard.

6.1 Each audit shall be planned in advance. An audit plan shall be prepared and communicated to the organisation, identifying the scope, the audit type and objectives, the criteria (this Standard and applicable requirements), the areas and processes to be assessed, the audit team and the planned duration. The plan shall ensure that, across the certification cycle, the full requirements of the Standard are assessed.

6.2 Each audit shall begin with an opening meeting to confirm the scope, plan, method and arrangements, and shall conclude with a closing meeting at which the auditor presents

the findings and re-confirms all non-conformities. The most senior manager available on site shall attend both meetings so that decisions on corrective action can be progressed.

6.3 During the audit the auditor shall gather objective evidence through examination of documents and records, observation of activities and conditions in the operational areas, and interviews with personnel . The audit shall assess both the design of the food safety system (document review) and its implementation on site, and shall include an assessment of the HACCP plan, a vertical (traceability) audit tracing product through the process, and, at each surveillance and recertification audit, a test of the withdrawal and recall procedure. Findings shall record evidence of both conformity and non-conformity against the requirements assessed.

6.4 A written summary of the non-conformities shall be provided to the organisation at the closing meeting. An audit report shall be produced for each audit recording the scope, the audit type and duration, the audit team, the conformities and non-conformities with objective evidence, and the recommendation to the certification decision. The certification decision is confirmed following an independent review of the report (Part IV).

7 Non-conformities and corrective action

Non-conformities are classified by severity as follows:

Level	Definition
Critical	A failure to comply with a food safety or legal requirement, or a situation that presents a serious and immediate risk to product safety or legality.
Major	A substantial failure to meet the requirements of a clause, or a situation that raises significant doubt about the safety or legality of product.
Minor	A single lapse in meeting a requirement of a clause where, on the basis of objective evidence, the safety of product is not in question.

7.1 All non-conformities shall be clearly recorded with objective evidence and the clause against which they are raised. The organisation shall determine and address the root cause of each non-conformity, implement correction and corrective action, and take preventive action to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

7.2 Major non-conformities shall be addressed with objective evidence of correction, root cause analysis and corrective action accepted by STC within 28 calendar days of the audit and, in any case, before the relevant certification or recertification decision is made. Where a major non-conformity cannot be verified by submitted evidence, close-out shall require a further on-site or remote assessment.

7.3 Minor non-conformities shall have a corrective action plan agreed within 28 calendar days of the audit; their effective close-out shall be verified at the next scheduled audit. A failure to address a minor non-conformity by the next audit may result in its escalation to a major non-conformity.

8 Certification decision, suspension and withdrawal

8.1 The certification decision shall be made by competent STC personnel who were not involved in the audit. A certificate shall be issued, maintained or renewed only when all critical and major non-conformities have been closed and all minor non-conformities have an accepted corrective action plan.

8.2 A certificate shall not be issued, and certification shall be suspended or withdrawn, where a critical non-conformity is raised, where a major non-conformity is not closed within the permitted period, where the organisation fails to permit a surveillance or recertification audit when due, or where the STC logo or certification claims are misused. Reinstatement following suspension shall require verification, which may include an on-site audit, that the cause has been resolved.

8.3 The certificate shall state the certified scope, the site, the issue of the Standard, the date of the certification decision and the expiry date (three years), and shall identify the certification cycle.

9 Special audits, scope changes and audit planning

9.1 STC may conduct short-notice or unannounced audits, in addition to the scheduled surveillance and recertification audits, to investigate complaints, significant changes, a suspected serious food safety failure, or as part of the routine integrity activity of the scheme.

9.2 A request to extend or amend the certified scope shall be assessed by STC, which shall determine whether the change can be verified by review or requires an additional site visit before the scope is amended.

9.3 The duration of each audit shall be determined and recorded on a risk-based basis consistent with ISO/IEC TS 22003-1. The determination shall take into account the number of employees (including shifts), the number of HACCP studies, the number and complexity of processes and product lines, the size and scope of the operation, the outcome of previous audits, and any reductions justified for multi-site or integrated systems. Audit duration shall not be reduced below the level needed to audit the system effectively.

PART IV

Management and governance

1 Operation and governance of the scheme

1.1 STC shall operate the certification scheme impartially and competently, informed by the principles for bodies providing audit and certification of food safety management systems set out in ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC TS 22003-1, supplemented by ISO/IEC 17065 where products, processes or services are certified. STC shall maintain a management system capable of supporting and demonstrating the consistent delivery of these requirements.

1.2 STC's governance arrangements and responsibilities shall be clearly defined, and structured to identify, evaluate and manage threats to impartiality and conflicts of interest. The certification decision shall be made by competent personnel independent of the audit, and STC shall not provide consultancy or any other service that would compromise the impartiality of its certification.

1.3 STC shall maintain records of certificated organisations, audit reports, certificates and decisions, and shall manage the issue, maintenance, suspension and withdrawal of certificates. STC reserves the right to conduct announced, short-notice or unannounced compliance visits to a certificated site to protect the integrity of the scheme.

2 Auditor and personnel competence

2.1 Audits shall be carried out by auditors who are competent in food safety, the principles and application of HACCP, the relevant prerequisite programmes, the applicable statutory requirements, and auditing technique, and who hold the relevant education, training and industry experience. Competence shall be demonstrated for the specific food category and scope being audited.

2.2 STC shall define, document and maintain competence requirements for auditors, technical reviewers and certification decision-makers, consistent with ISO/IEC TS 22003-1. Competence shall be established before authorisation and maintained through continuing professional development, witnessed audits, performance monitoring and calibration. Records of competence shall be retained.

2.3 Auditors and other personnel shall not undertake any activity in which they have a conflict of interest, including the audit of any site for which they, or STC, have provided consultancy or training that would compromise impartiality.

3 Certificate validity, suspension and withdrawal

3.1 A certificate is valid for the three-year certification cycle and remains valid while the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the Standard and to satisfy the

surveillance and recertification audit programme (Part III). STC may suspend or withdraw a certificate where evidence is found that gives cause to doubt continued compliance, including the identification of a critical non-conformity, a failure to complete corrective action, a failure to permit a surveillance or recertification audit when due, or a serious food safety failure.

3.2 An extension to the certified scope shall be assessed by STC, which shall determine whether the change can be verified by review or requires an additional site visit before the scope is amended.

4 Appeals and complaints

4.1 The organisation may appeal against a certification decision. STC shall maintain an appeals procedure ensuring that appeals are handled impartially by persons not involved in the original decision, and that the outcome is communicated to the organisation.

4.2 STC shall maintain a procedure for receiving, investigating and responding to complaints concerning certificated organisations and the operation of the scheme.

5 Use of the STC logo and certification claims

5.1 The STC logo is owned by STC and may not be used by certificated organisations.

5.2 On certification, STC issues a certification badge to the organisation. The badge may be used for marketing purposes, for example on the organisation's website and social media, only for the certified scope and in a manner that does not imply that a product, rather than the organisation's system, is certified. The badge shall not be applied to product or packaging. Misuse of the badge or of certification claims may result in suspension or withdrawal of certification.

5.3 Each certificate and badge carries a unique identifier (QR) linked to STC's online verification register, so that customers and other parties can verify the validity, scope and current status of any certification claim at any time.

5.4 Only the following statement may be use on product packaging:

Manufactured in a facility certified to STC HACCP & GMP. Verify: (QR).

This statement may only be used with the provision that the certificate is current and its scope covers the site locations, products and processes audited.

6 Ownership, review and improvement of the Standard

6.1 STC owns and maintains this Standard. The requirements are derived from, and shall remain consistent with, Codex CXC 1-1969 and applicable regulatory requirements, and are written so that conformity can be objectively assessed.

6.2 The Standard shall be developed and revised through a transparent process that takes account of input from relevant experts and stakeholders, and shall be reviewed at planned intervals, and whenever there is a significant change in science, regulation or

best practice, to keep it current. The issue status and date of the Standard shall be controlled, and changes shall be communicated to certificated organisations and auditors.

7 Data, transparency and cooperation with competent authorities

STC shall operate transparently as a voluntary third-party assurance programme, maintaining reliable information on the status of certificated organisations and cooperating with competent authorities in support of a risk-based approach to official controls.

7.1 STC shall maintain an up-to-date record of certificated organisations and their certification status, scope and validity, and shall make appropriate verification of certification status available, including, where adopted, through a publicly accessible register.

7.2 The certificated organisation owns the audit information relating to its operation. STC shall handle that information confidentially and in accordance with applicable data protection law, and shall share it with a competent authority only with the organisation's consent or where required or permitted by law.

7.3 Where, in the course of certification activity, STC becomes aware of a significant risk to public health, of unsafe product reaching the market, or of consumer deception, STC shall act without delay, which shall include requiring the organisation to take action and, where appropriate or legally required, alerting the relevant competent authority.

7.4 STC's certification and audit information is intended to be capable of supporting competent authorities in risk-profiling and in the intelligence-led, risk-based targeting of official controls, consistent with Codex CXG 93-2021 and the GB Food Law Code of Practice. The use of such information by a competent authority is at that authority's discretion and does not replace or reduce the organisation's statutory obligations or the authority's regulatory controls.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Definitions

The following definitions, drawn from the Codex Alimentarius General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969), apply throughout this Standard.

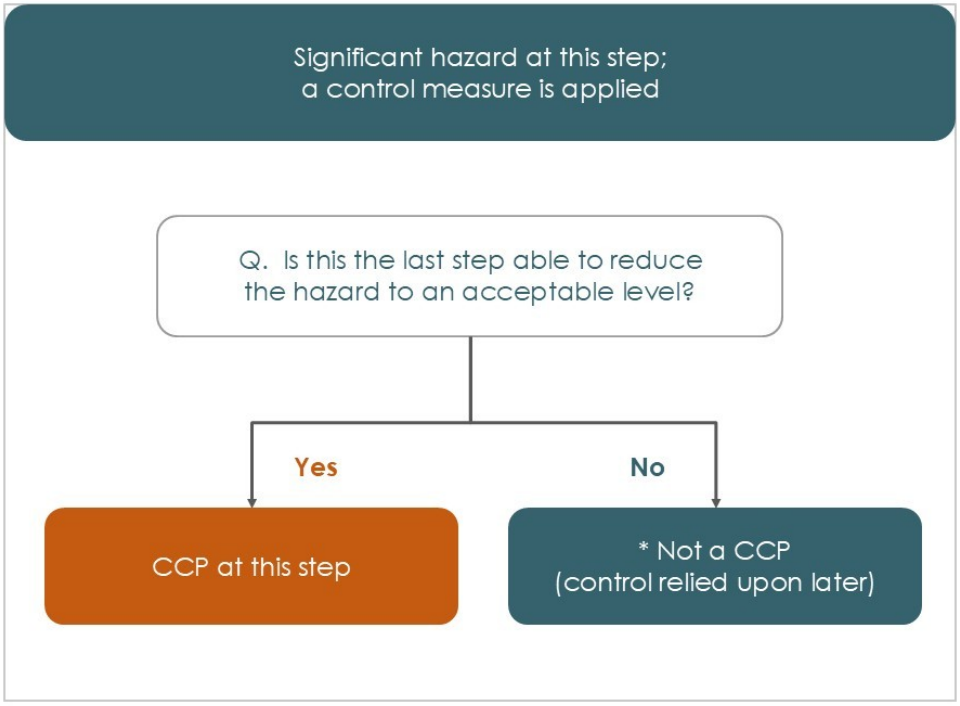
Term	Definition
Acceptable level	A level of a hazard in a food at or below which the food is considered to be safe according to its intended use.
Allergen cross-contact	The unintentional incorporation of an allergenic food or ingredient into another food not intended to contain it.
Cleaning	The removal of soil, food residues, dirt, grease or other objectionable matter.
Concession	A documented, time-limited authorisation permitting a temporary deviation from a specified requirement where exceptional circumstances beyond reasonable control prevent timely compliance.
Contaminant	Any biological, chemical or physical agent, foreign matter or other substance not intentionally added to food that may compromise food safety or suitability.
Control measure	Any action or activity that can be used to prevent or eliminate a hazard or reduce it to an acceptable level.
Control point (CP)	A step at which control can be applied that is important for food safety or suitability but is not a critical control point.
Corrective action	Any action taken when a deviation occurs in order to re-establish control, segregate and determine the disposition of the affected product, and prevent or minimise recurrence.
Critical control point (CCP)	A step at which a control measure, essential to control a significant hazard, is applied in a HACCP system.
Critical limit	An observable or measurable criterion relating to a control measure at a CCP which separates acceptability from unacceptability of the food.
Deviation	Failure to meet a critical limit or to follow a good hygiene practice procedure.
Disinfection	Reduction, by biological or chemical agents or physical methods, in the number of viable microorganisms on surfaces, in water or in air to a level that does not compromise food safety or suitability.
Evidence of conformity	Objective proof that a requirement has been met: either observed directly by the auditor on site, or provided as documented evidence. 'Documented' includes any retrievable form, such as paper, electronic records, photographs or video.
Food business operator	The entity responsible for operating a business at any step in the food

Term	Definition
(FBO)	chain.
Food hygiene	All conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety and suitability of food at all stages of the food chain.
Food safety	Assurance that food will not cause adverse health effects to the consumer when prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use.
Good hygiene practices (GHPs)	Fundamental measures and conditions applied at any step within the food chain to provide safe and suitable food.
HACCP plan	Documentation prepared in accordance with the principles of HACCP to ensure control of significant hazards in the food business.
Hazard	A biological, chemical or physical agent in food with the potential to cause an adverse health effect.
Hazard analysis	The process of collecting and evaluating information on hazards and the conditions leading to their presence, to decide which are significant.
Material	Any raw material, ingredient, processing aid or packaging used in the production of food.
Monitor	To conduct a planned sequence of observations or measurements of control parameters to assess whether a control measure is under control.
Operational prerequisite programme (oPRP)	A control measure, or combination of control measures, applied to prevent or reduce a significant hazard to an acceptable level, managed against action criteria rather than a critical limit.
Prerequisite programme	Programmes, including good hygiene, agricultural and manufacturing practices, that establish the basic conditions for implementation of a HACCP system.
Significant hazard	A hazard identified by hazard analysis as reasonably likely to occur at an unacceptable level in the absence of control, and for which control is essential.
Validation	Obtaining evidence that a control measure or combination of control measures, if properly implemented, is capable of controlling the hazard to a specified outcome.
Verification	The application of methods, procedures, tests and other evaluations, in addition to monitoring, to determine whether a control measure is or has been operating as intended.
Audit	A systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with planned objectives (CXG 93-2021).
Competent authority	The government authority or official body authorised by the government that is responsible for the setting of regulatory food safety requirements and/or for the organisation of official controls, including enforcement.
Conformity assessment	Demonstration that specified requirements are fulfilled (CXG 93-2021).

Term	Definition
Voluntary third-party assurance (vTPA) programme	An autonomous scheme comprising the ownership of a standard, a governance structure for certification and conformity assessment providing for periodic audits of operations for conformity with the standard, and in which participation is voluntary (CXG 93-2021).

Appendix B - CCP determination (decision sequence)

Critical control points are best determined by the HACCP team using professional judgement. The following one key question may be used at each step at which a significant hazard has been identified, to aid the decision process.



** Where a control measure at this step works in combination with a control measure at another step to control the same hazard, the team shall assess each step to determine whether it is a critical control point; more than one step is a CCP for the same hazard only where each is genuinely essential to control the hazard.*

Longer decision trees exist, including the four- and five-question trees in the Codex Alimentarius HACCP guidance and other guides. The team may use these if helpful, but they shall be applied with caution and logic, as Codex advises, and shall not override the team's reasoned judgement.

Appendix C - Summary of the certification cycle

Certification is granted for a three-year cycle. The audits within the cycle, and the rules for closing non-conformities, are summarised below.

Cycle point	Audit	On site	Timing
Year 0	Initial certification - Stage 1	On site or remote	Readiness review prior to Stage 2
Year 0	Initial certification - Stage 2	On site	Following Stage 2: certification decision and certificate issue
Year 1	First surveillance	On site	Within 12 months of the last day of Stage 2
Year 2	Second surveillance	On site	Within 12 months of the previous surveillance
Year 3	Recertification	On site	Completed before the certificate expiry date

Non-conformity	Close-out requirement
Critical	Certification cannot be granted or maintained; suspension/withdrawal applies (clause 8.2). Resolution verified before reinstatement.
Major	Objective evidence accepted within 28 days and before the certification or recertification decision.
Minor	Corrective action plan within 28 days; effective close-out verified at the next scheduled audit.

A major non-conformity that is not closed within the permitted period, or any critical non-conformity, prevents certification.

Appendix D - Alignment with the GB Food Law Code of Practice

During official controls, competent authorities (for example environmental health officers) assess a food business in three broad areas. The table shows where the requirements of this Standard address each area, so that a certified site can demonstrate the matters assessed during official controls and so that STC audit information can support a risk-based, intelligence-led approach to official controls.

Area assessed during official controls	Relevant requirements of this Standard
Compliance of food hygiene and safety procedures (the HACCP-based food safety management system, including its implementation)	Section 3 (HACCP food safety plan); 2.10 (cleaning and disinfection); 2.13–2.15 (foreign-body, chemical and allergen control); 2.17 (process control); 4.5 (traceability); 4.6–4.8 (non-conforming product, corrective action, incidents and recall); 2.7–2.9 (personal hygiene, health and protective clothing); 4.9 (training).
Compliance of the structure of the establishment (premises, layout, equipment, facilities, cleanliness, pest control)	Sections 2.1–2.6 (site, building fabric, utilities, equipment, maintenance, facilities); 2.11 (waste); 2.12 (pest management); 2.16 (storage).
Confidence in management and control procedures (management commitment, records, competence, traceability and the ability to manage food safety)	Section 1 (management commitment, food safety culture, policy, responsibilities); 4.1 (document and record control); 3.10–3.11 (validation and verification); 4.2 (approved suppliers); 2.18 (calibration); 4.6–4.7 (non-conforming product, corrective action).

Certification to this Standard does not replace official controls or an organisation's statutory obligations. The use of STC certification or audit information by a competent authority is at that authority's discretion.

