

The new unannounced IFS Food Audits

Since 2014 many IFS-certified companies have taken part in the voluntary unannounced IFS Food Checks – but there is something new here. According to an update of the IFS Audit Protocol, the unannounced audit will be discontinued in its present form and will make way for an unannounced full certification audit from October 2016 onwards.

+ Version 1 of the IFS Food Version 6 audit protocol for unannounced audits was published in English in February 2016. The document explains the rules for the new unannounced IFS Food Audits. The unannounced Audit that was previously usual, and which took place in addition to the

annual certification audit, will be discontinued as from 01.10.2016. In its place, the regular pre-announced certification audit can be replaced by an unannounced complete audit. However, participation in this option remains voluntary. The following is a summary of the essential key points.



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Participation

Participation is voluntary

A new participation application must be submitted for each recertification audit

Scope of the audit

The audit covers the entire IFS Food Standard

Enrolment

At the latest 16 weeks before the effective date of the audit

Audit date/time-window

The audit will take place within a defined time window. I.e. between 16 weeks before and 2 weeks after the effective date of the audit

Blackout periods

Specified blackout periods (maximum 10 working days) can be defined within the audit time window, plus operational downtime

Choice of a certification company

This can be chosen freely

Documents to prepare for the audit

The certifying company can request documents to prepare for the audit at the start of the audit time window

Audit planning

As in the past, the auditors will prepare an audit plan, but this will not be sent in advance to the company being audited. The plan will be adapted during the audit if necessary.

Audit preparation in the company

The current requirements of the IFS Food Standard must be present and implemented in the company.

Minimum documentation to be kept ready for the auditor. The *audit protocol for unannounced audits* does not give details of what is meant by this. In this case it is sensible to be guided by the specifications from the IFS Food Checks, i.e. at least the following documents:

- + Organization chart, including deputizing rules
- + Site layout plan, including routes for personnel, raw materials, semi-finished products and finished products
- + The current production plan
- + Flowcharts of all the production processes, including identification of the Critical Control Points
- + A list of the Critical Control Points and Control Points
- + Documents about pest monitoring

Audit procedure

After the arrival of the auditor, and following an introductory discussion and optionally an inspection of the minimum documents (see above) prepared by the company, the audit begins on site in the production area. The opening meeting and auditing of the documents do not take place until a later point in the course of the audit.

Extent of audit – Scopes

Operation of relevant production lines

As also applies to pre-announced audits, it is necessary that all the production lines should be audited in ongoing operation during the unannounced audit. Departure from this

requirement is possible only if production lines that are not producing during the audit are covered by the same HACCP study and display the same product scopes and technology scopes as the lines that are producing and are audited during the audit.

If it is impossible to audit all the plant in ongoing operation during the remaining course of the audit, an extension audit will be required for these areas.

Extent of audit – Requirements

The full extent of all the requirements of the IFS Food Standard will be audited during the unannounced audit.

Special feature – multi-site certification

The headquarters can be audited announced or unannounced. This audit should take place before the audits of the individual production sites.

The audits in the production sites will take place unannounced. The audit of the headquarters should not take place on days that are consecutive with the audit of a production site.

Application start date

Unannounced audits in this form can be carried out in companies whose audit reference date is from or after 01.10.2016. +++



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