

# IFS Food Auditor Management Position Paper



VERSION 1

ENGLISH

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## IFS FOOD AUDITOR MANAGEMENT POSITION PAPER

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# IFS FOOD AUDITOR MANAGEMENT POSITION PAPER

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Enhancing auditor qualification for trusted certification

## 1 Explanation of IFS Auditor Management and how we ensure the validity of IFS Food Certifications

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Since its inception in 2002, IFS takes responsibility for auditor management to ensure the highest level of auditor performance. To provide reliable assessments, our philosophy is that certifications must be based on the work of auditors who possess excellent audit skills, technical knowledge, and social acuity. In addition, we expect IFS Auditors worldwide to assess companies in a consistent manner. For these reasons, IFS manages the auditor qualification process, develops auditor training courses, monitors their performance, and conducts refresher training. This document explains what IFS Auditor Management is and how we ensure the integrity of the IFS Food Assessments.

## 2 Why IFS Auditor Management is crucial to providing trusted certifications

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It is our firm belief that the products and processes of food companies must be assessed by competent, trained auditors who fully understand the IFS Assessment product and process approach and related standard requirements as well as the high expectations IFS places on thorough assessments. IFS Auditors are required to have deep knowledge of the unique products and technologies of the companies they assess. Our commitment to provide trusted products can only be guaranteed if we ensure auditor competency. Retailers appreciate this approach as they know IFS takes auditor capability seriously and can trust the assessment results.

### **3 IFS auditor examinations are developed and reviewed by food safety authority and industry experts**

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The IFS Examination Working Group is a team of highly qualified experts that possess extensive experience and knowledge in the food industry and with auditing. The group consists of experts from food safety authorities, industry, and retail representatives from various countries. These individuals are responsible for creating the IFS written and oral exam documents, setting exam rules, and for validating technical exam translations. In Appendix A, we profile three of the experts working with us to ensure the auditor examinations are of the highest calibre.

### **4 The IFS rigorous qualification process for auditor approval**

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The prerequisites for IFS Auditor qualification include education and both work and audit experience. IFS seeks candidates with food-related education, and profound experience in food production activities, such as quality assurance, food safety, and/or research and development. The applicant must also possess previous GFSI and/or recognised second party audit experience or has to pass through a robust auditor trainee programme. Every candidate must pass this rigorous evaluation before acceptance. The specific and practical knowledge of the applicant is checked to determine which product and technical scopes he/she will be able to assess. In this way, the company being certified can rest assured the IFS Auditor has an understanding of their products and processes.

## **5 Initial training and examination follow the qualification evaluation**

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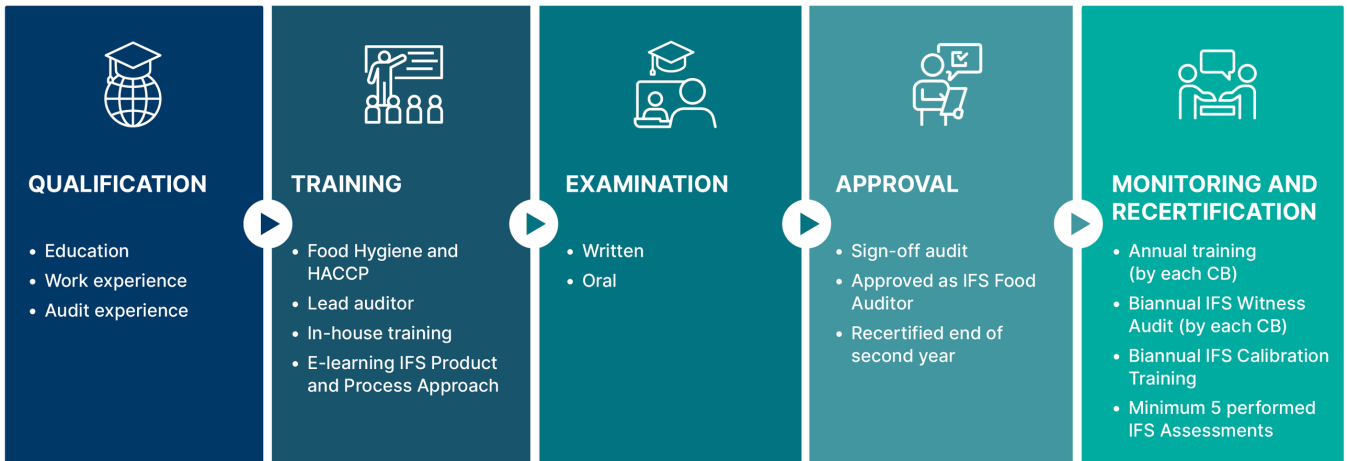
All IFS Food Auditors are mandated to have 16 hours of training in food hygiene (including HACCP), 40 hours of lead auditor training, and the 2-day initial IFS in-house training. Upon acceptance by IFS, the auditor is then given a written exam to test his/her knowledge. Upon passing the written exam, IFS conducts an oral exam to evaluate auditing skills and technical knowledge, as well as social skills. IFS contends that a person's ability to effectively engage their client and communicate in a professional manner are necessary skills to conduct a thorough assessment. The oral exam is unique to IFS and a pass is essential prior to performing the first IFS Food Assessment. Upon evidence and review of the first witnessed assessment, the auditor is approved to assess the IFS Food Standard within his/her product and technology scopes.

## **6 How IFS monitors auditor performance and ongoing refresher training**

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Once approved, the new IFS Auditor is permitted to assess companies until the end of the second calendar year. The certification body (CB) is responsible to maintain approval from IFS and provide ongoing training for at least two days/year on food-related legislation, IFS Food standard requirements, audit practices, and any current food issues. This training must be documented by the CB. Each auditor must also be monitored by an IFS on-site witness audit at least once every two years and he/she is reassessed before the certificate is renewed. To meet IFS approval, he/she shall have performed a minimum of five IFS Assessments and have participated in an IFS calibration training course. The calibration training course is consistent for all auditors worldwide and covers current topics, special standard requirements, and case study discussions. Every IFS Auditor must attend these bi-annual two-day sessions presented by IFS Trainers. In this way, we ensure harmonisation across all IFS Assessments.

# IFS FOOD AUDITOR MANAGEMENT



[www.ifs-certification.com](http://www.ifs-certification.com)

## 7 The effectiveness of IFS Auditor Management is checked by the IFS Integrity Program

The IFS Integrity Program assures the quality of IFS Assessments in a number of ways. Assessment reports of certified companies are analysed and monitored to review and improve the work of auditors. Based on results and to further assess auditor performance, IFS conducts witness audits. The certification bodies are also assessed approximately once every three years. Auditors performing IFS Assessments have to accept the IFS Integrity Program procedures to assure a qualitative performance of IFS Assessments. In addition, all complaints are investigated to determine if there are deficiencies by IFS Auditors in meeting our requirements.

## **8 Food companies and retailers trust the reliability of IFS Assessments**

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Retailers and wholesalers demand a high level of auditor management to ensure they provide products that meet their customer expectations. They know they can trust IFS Assessments because auditors demonstrate hazard and risk assessment knowledge, and their HACCP acumen is checked. IFS Auditors can take pride in knowing they are best in class in their field and that they meet our high expectations for auditor excellence.

## APPENDIX A

### IFS Examination Working Group Experts

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Dr. Helga Hippe, Germany

**Dr. Helga Hippe** is a food chemist with a doctorate degree in analytical chemistry and resides in Germany. Along with her laboratory work, Helga brings twenty years of second party and IFS Food auditing experience, and nine as IFS Director, Quality Assurance Management where she led the development of the IFS Integrity Program. Now retired, she continues to support IFS and is “honoured to develop and practise with international colleagues to create ambitious and fair examinations for upcoming auditors”.

**Marco Jermini** is our expert located in Switzerland. Highly educated, he has a Ph.D. in Food Microbiology, and has studied at both MIT and Harvard Medical School as well as various Swiss universities. His work encompassed leadership roles in food microbiology, and ultimately as a CEO Cantonal Chemist. Here, he conducted hundreds of inspections and audits at food companies. As a member of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency, Marco carried out various missions in less developed countries in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). He has been a member of the IFS Examination Working Group since 2005 and continues to train and test auditors. Marco has published more than 40 scientific papers on food safety in peer-reviewed journals.



Dr. Marco Jermini, Switzerland



Dr. Alberto Mancuso, Italy

**Alberto Mancuso**, our Italian representative, joined the working group in 2020 and brings a decade auditor training experience. He has a Veterinary Medicine degree and a Masters in food safety, and further education in health legislation. Alberto’s experience spans enforcing EU food safety as an inspector, and as an expert project leader for EU projects focused on food safety in numerous countries. Alberto has conducted hundreds of official inspections and audits, mainly in the meat and dairy sector. He has published more than 30 publications on food safety, official control, food legislation, and HACCP.



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