BRC Global Standard for Food Safety Issue 7

A Guide to the changes from Issue 6 to Issue 7

The BRC published the Global Standard for Food Safety Issue 7 in January 2015 and the new Standard will be used for all audits from 1st July 2015. Certificates issued against Issue 6 will remain valid for the duration indicated on the certificate.

This document is intended to provide an introduction to the new Issue and a guide to all users of the changes and the reasons for change.

The Appendix provides a full index of all changes to the requirements and is intended as a reference for managers needing to update their quality systems in preparation for an audit against issue 7. There are a range of guidance documents including the full Interpretation Guide providing guidance on all clauses available. The documents are all included within the subscription to BRC Participate or to purchase as additional documents on the BRC Bookshop.

1. Background to the production of Issue 7 and objectives

Consultation and development process

The BRC Food Safety Standard is widely used around the world and before starting the review for Issue 6, the BRC undertook an extensive consultation with the users of the Standard to understand the strengths and potential areas for improvement.

The feedback on Issue 6 was generally very positive and the continual growth in use of the Standard around the world, with over 18,000 certificated sites in 2014, is a testament to its increasing international popularity.

The consultation and review of emerging food safety concerns since the development of issue 6 identified a number of opportunities for further improvement.

The key objectives identified for the working groups were:

- Look for new ways to reduce the burden of multiple audits of certificated sites
- Ensure that the grading system provided a true reflection of the standards at the sites and provide more opportunities for the best sites to differentiate themselves.
- Include requirements to encourage sites to reduce their exposure to food fraud
- Review High care and High risk requirements and ensure that where higher risk ambient products are produced controls are identified
- Ensure the requirements and audit process is focused on reducing the issues most frequently causing recalls and withdrawals
- Revise the Enrolment programme to encourage uptake

The detail of the Standard was developed using 2 multi-stakeholder working groups one in North America and one in Europe. Each group was made up of representatives from retailers, food service, certification bodies, food manufacturers and in Europe - UKAS.
The draft Standard was tested in a series of trial audits and made available for public consultation. More than 2,800 people from around the world downloaded the draft document. All of the comments on the draft were reviewed before the final draft was produced.

The BRC would like to thank all of those people who have contributed to the development of the Issue 7 of the Standard.

2. Key changes to the Requirements for Issue 7

Stability

The Issue 6 standard was well received and we recognise that the Standard is used as the basis for the Quality management systems for many thousands of sites around the world. In reviewing and rewriting the Standard we have tried to concentrate on a few major areas where the standard needed to be revised to reflect the changing food safety landscape. The vast majority of the requirements of the Standard are unchanged or with slight edits to the wording to add clarity. This should mean that for most sites the focus for getting ready for issue 7 is concentrated on a few key areas.

Reducing the exposure to Food Fraud (5.4.1-3)

There have been several very high profile food fraud or adulteration issues in the last couple of years including the addition of melanin to milk powder in China and the substitution of beef by horsemeat in Europe. Whilst the Standard is not designed to detect food fraud it should provide confidence to customers that their suppliers have robust systems in place to protect themselves from being the victims of a fraud further back in the supply chain. Although covered as part of HACCP and supplier approval in Issue 6 we have increased the focus on fraud prevention by introducing 3 new clauses looking at vulnerability to fraud as well as tightened controls on supplier approval and looked specifically at the controls of Agents and Brokers.

Supply chain traceability (3.9.3)

The supply chains for products have become increasingly complex, often including raw materials from around the world and may include agents or brokers as intermediaries. This has led to a lack of transparency which becomes apparent too often when an issue occurs requiring full traceability of a raw material. Retailers and Food Service companies are increasingly looking for more information about the source of raw materials used in their products and confidence in the food safety systems operated by raw material suppliers. In recognition of this Issue 7 has extended the requirements for traceability to include assurances about the traceability system operated by raw material suppliers.

Agents and Brokers (3.5.1.3)

Where raw materials are supplied by Agents and Brokers it will be necessary to know the manufacturer of the raw material and ensure the manufacturer meets the raw material supplier approval process of the site.

Product Labelling and Packing controls (5.2 and 6.2)
An analysis of product recall and product withdrawal data shows that the underlying cause of the greatest number of problems is labelling. Either because the label information is incorrect as a result of changes to ingredients or suppliers or because of errors made during packing products. To attempt to focus on the issue, clauses relating to labelling and packing have been expanded and included in a new Fundamental section

**Customer Focus (3.12)**

Many of the customer audits undertaken at BRC certificated sites have a focus on the customers own policies. A new set of requirements has been added to provide customers greater confidence that sites are aware of and act on customer specific policies when producing products for the customers.

**Management of surplus food products (4.13)**

The practice of providing surplus products to charities has become more common and is to be encouraged. The new Standard has 2 new clauses designed to ensure the food is safe and labelled appropriately and to ensure that products donated that bear the customers brand are treated in accordance with the brand owners policies.

**New Ambient High Care Area (4.3.7)**

Issue 6 introduced more detail on the environmental controls for high care and high risk chilled and frozen products. Since issue 6 there have been a number of high profile food safety incidents affecting ambient products for example Salmonella contamination of Peanut Butter in the US. In response a new requirement has been introduced to ensure there are risk based environmental controls to protect ambient products where the product is at risk of cross contamination from a raw material after processing.

3. **Changes to the Protocol**

There have been a very few changes to the way in which the Standard is audited and certificated from issue 6 and full details can be found within the Protocol section of the Standard. The main changes and reasons for the changes have been summarised below.

**Grading** – The grading structure for issue 7 has been extended to allow more differentiation between certificated sites. The new certificated grades will be AA, A, B, C and D with a + added to the grade where the audit is carried out unannounced. Grading as before is based on the type and number of non conformities identified at the audit. Full details are provided in the Standard.

**Exclusions from scope** – The rules for the exclusion of products from the audit scope have been clarified and the reasons for exclusion need to be included on the audit report. Exclusion of products from scope is discouraged.

**Voluntary Modules** – The new issue has been designed to enable additional voluntary modules to be added to the audit to meet particular customer or geographical requirements and reduce the need for further audits. The first of the voluntary modules covers Traded Goods which previously required a second certification audit.
**Unannounced Audits** – the unannounced audit schemes remain voluntary and have been extended to allow access to any site wanting to join the unannounced scheme irrespective of the previous grade.