

## FAQs on Food Safety Auditing

### 1) **What is Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing), Regulations? And why the need of Third Party Private Auditing of FBOs arises?**

To strengthen the food safety surveillance system, FSSAI has envisaged audits of Food Business Operators through Private Auditing Agencies. In order to cultivate and foster the growth of compliance culture, FSSAI is enabling compliance through private recognised Auditing Agencies. Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing) Regulations, 2018 (<https://www.fssai.gov.in/home/safe-food-practices/THIRD-PARTY-AUDITS.html>) has been prepared for the same.

Food Safety Audits will reduce the regulatory Food Safety Inspections conducted by Central or State Licensing Authorities. Satisfactory Audits will lead to less frequent regulatory inspections by Central or State Licensing Authority except the regulatory sampling. This will strengthen food safety surveillance system and encourage self-compliance.

### 2) **Where does this Regulation draw its powers from?**

**Section 44** of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 provides the power to Food Authority to recognize an organization or an agency for carrying out food safety audit and checking compliance with the Food Safety Management Systems; and

**Section 16(2)(c)** of the Act, provides for a mechanism and guidelines for accreditation of certification bodies for Food Safety Management System (FSMS).

### 3) **Is Food Safety Auditing through Auditing Agencies mandatory?**

Food Businesses classified by Food Authority for mandatory Food Safety Audits will be liable to get their businesses timely audited by recognised Auditing Agencies. Food Authority will declare the category/type of food businesses subject to mandatory audit based on risk classification and the frequency of audits. This classification will be based on factors like Food type, Intended Customer use, nature of activity of the business, Volume of the business & Method of processing/any other factors prescribed by Authority.

Food businesses which are not subject to mandatory Food Safety auditing can also go for auditing of their businesses on voluntary basis.

### 4) **What are the eligibility criteria for Recognition of Auditing Agencies? What is the procedure for recognition of Auditing Agencies?**

The Eligibility criteria for Auditing Agencies and its set of Auditors, willing to apply for selection as Food Safety Auditing Agency, for conducting food safety audits of Food Businesses are as prescribed under section 3, Part II of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Safety Auditing) Regulations, 2018. The detail procedure for application is available at <https://www.fssai.gov.in/home/safe-food-practices/THIRD-PARTY-AUDITS.html>.

### 5) **What is the fee prescribed for recognition of agencies?**

Fee for Recognition/Renewal of Recognition for a period of 3 years is Rs. 30,000/-

**6) How should the agency report the audit finding?**

The auditing agency shall submit the audit report in the format specified by Food Authority to the Food Business Operator immediately after completion of the audit and also to the Central or State Licensing authority within fifteen days. The audit report shall clearly bring out the finding or non conformities. The non-conformities of the audit may be classified into two categories, namely,-

(I) Major Non-Conformity- When there is a serious failure in the food safety management system of the Food Business Operator, which may result in adverse health consequence possibly even fatal, the auditor shall report such findings to the Central or State Licensing Authority within twenty four hours. The Central or State Licensing Authority after ascertaining the seriousness of the situation shall take regulatory action against the concerned food business operator.

(II) Minor Non-Conformity- When there is a shortcoming in the food safety management system or regulatory contravention of the Food Business Operator, which may not cause any adverse health consequence, the auditor shall set up an appropriate timeframe for its rectification and follow up, so that the non-conformance could be rectified.

Failure by food business operator to rectify the minor non conformity within the specified timeframe shall be referred to the Central or State Licensing Authorities, as the case may be.

As per regulations, after conduct of the audit, audit agency has to submit a copy of audit report to the FBO immediately after completion of audit and forward the audit reports to the Food Authority within fifteen days of the conduct of the audit. The agency should not issue any certificates on behalf of FSSAI.

**7) After completion of audits, should the auditing agency issue any certificates (Schedule IV compliance, FSMS etc) to the FBOs?**

No, the agency should not issue any certificates on behalf of FSSAI. As per regulations, after conduct of the audit, audit agency has to submit a copy of audit report to the FBO immediately after completion of audit and forward the audit reports to the Food Authority within fifteen days of the conduct of the audit.

**8) What is the audit frequency, audit man-days to be followed while auditing?**

An **Auditor Manual** has been prepared incorporating all these details and is uploaded on FSSAI website at <https://www.fssai.gov.in/home/safe-food-practices/THIRD-PARTY-AUDITS.html>. This manual consists of the roles and responsibilities of auditors, duties of the auditor and outlines the Food Safety Audit Process. It also defines the code of conduct to be followed by the auditors while auditing. Further, it also appraises the auditor/agency about the frequency of audit for each kind of business and the duration or man-days to be followed for each kind of business. It also details the steps for audit execution. The closure of audits in the case of major and minor non-conformities is also detailed in the manual. Further, the manual also informs the auditors/ agency of the audit monitoring programme that will be followed by FSSAI to monitor the audits and other details and reasons for suspension / cancellation of recognition. In addition, the report formats for audit reporting, forms for declaration and other requisite documents are made available to the auditors through this manual at one place.