

CERTIFICATION · FOOD

Food safety: what EU retail requires

For food, part of the evidence is required by EU law and the rest is demanded by retailers. If you ship fruit, meat, fish, coffee or wine to Europe, you need both.

LEGALLY REQUIRED	REQUIRED BY RETAIL	RECOGNITION	PRIMARY PRODUCTION
HACCP under Reg. (EC) No 852/2004	IFS Food, BRCGS, FSSC 22000	through GFSI benchmarking	usually GLOBALG.A.P.

In brief

Two levels work together. The first is EU food law. Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 requires food business operators to put in place and maintain a permanent procedure based on the HACCP principles. The seven principles are: identify hazards, determine critical control points, set critical limits, establish monitoring, define corrective actions, verify effectiveness regularly and document all of it. Primary production, meaning growing and harvesting, is exempt and follows general hygiene rules.

The second level is private standards. European retailers and brand manufacturers ask their suppliers for a certificate under a standard recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). These include IFS Food, the BRCGS Global Standard Food Safety and FSSC 22000. ISO 22000 is the international standard for food safety management systems. On its own it is not GFSI recognized. FSSC 22000 builds on ISO 22000 and adds further requirements; only with those does the system meet what retailers expect.

Why EU customers ask for it

For shipments from non-EU countries, EU food law applies through the official controls under Regulation (EU) 2017/625. Products of animal origin, such as beef from Uruguay or shrimp from Ecuador, may only be imported from listed countries and from approved, listed establishments. HACCP is the basis for this, and the authority in your country checks it before an establishment is put on the list.

Retailers go further. A supermarket in Germany is liable for what sits on its shelves, so it wants to see an independently audited standard. IFS Food is common mainly with retailers in Germany, France and Italy, BRCGS in the United Kingdom and internationally, and FSSC 22000 with industrial customers that process ingredients further. Ask your buyer which standard counts for them before you decide.

An example: a blueberry packer from La Libertad supplies an importer in Rotterdam that sells on to supermarkets in Germany and the United Kingdom. For the farm, the importer requires GLOBALG.A.P.; for the packhouse, IFS Food or BRCGS, depending on where the goods go. The official import documents and residue analyses come on top. None of these replaces the others.

Questions from other EU rules come in as well. If you supply coffee, cocoa, soy or cattle, you need geolocation data for the plots under the [EUDR](#); a food safety certificate does not cover that. Large retail chains also ask about social and environmental standards as part of [CSRD](#) and [CSDDD](#).

Who needs it in South America

- Meat exporters in Uruguay, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay
- Fruit and vegetable packers in Chile and Peru, for example for grapes, blueberries and avocados
- Fish and shrimp operations in Ecuador, Chile and Peru
- Coffee and cocoa processors, for example in Huila or Esmeraldas, once they roast, grind or pack
- Wineries in Mendoza or the Valle Central, juice and concentrate producers
- Manufacturers of ingredients, oils and flour for the EU food industry

For primary production, meaning farms and plantations, many buyers also require GLOBALG.A.P.

Steps to certification

1. Agree on the standard with your most important EU buyer: IFS Food, BRCGS or FSSC 22000.
2. Review prerequisite programs: hygiene, pest control, water, cleaning, physical separation, training.
3. Prepare or revise a HACCP study for each product or product group.
4. Implement the requirements of the chosen standard, such as food safety culture, traceability, supplier approval, food fraud and food defense.
5. Run recall and traceability exercises, and perform an internal audit.
6. Certification audit by a body that is accredited and approved by the standard owner.
7. Close nonconformities within the deadline, and the certificate is issued.

A plant with a working HACCP system typically needs 6 to 12 months to its first certificate. If building work is needed, for example better separation of raw and processed products, it takes longer. IFS Food and BRCGS are audited every year. FSSC 22000 follows the three-year cycle of a management system with annual surveillance audits. We deliberately do not give costs, because they vary widely by plant and standard.

Accreditation: which body counts

Food safety standards come with two conditions. The certification body must be approved by the standard owner (IFS, BRCGS or the FSSC Foundation). And it must be accredited for the standard: IFS Food and BRCGS as product certification under ISO/IEC 17065, FSSC 22000 as management system certification under ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO 22003-1. The accreditation body must have signed the international recognition arrangement: until the end of 2025 the IAF MLA, since January 1, 2026 the MRA of the Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (Global ACI).

COUNTRY	ACCREDITATION BODY
Argentina	OAA, Organismo Argentino de Acreditación
Bolivia	DTA-IBMETRO, Dirección Técnica de Acreditación of the Instituto Boliviano de Metrología
Brazil	Cgcre (Coordenação-Geral de Acreditação) at INMETRO
Chile	INN, Instituto Nacional de Normalización
Colombia	ONAC, Organismo Nacional de Acreditación de Colombia
Ecuador	SAE, Servicio de Acreditación Ecuatoriano
Paraguay	ONA, Organismo Nacional de Acreditación (at CONACYT)
Peru	INACAL, Dirección de Acreditación
Uruguay	OUA, Organismo Uruguayo de Acreditación

Global ACI lists all nine as signatories (as of October 11, 2026). Which food safety standards each of them is recognized for varies. In practice, many exporters work with large international certification bodies that hold a European accreditation. IFS, BRCGS and FSSC publish their own lists of approved bodies.

Common mistakes

- The plant gets certified to ISO 22000, but the retailer wanted IFS Food or BRCGS. The certificate is not accepted.
- The HACCP study comes from a template and does not match the actual line.
- Traceability works only on paper. The audit calls for a traceability test, and it takes too long.
- Food safety culture is treated as a poster on the wall. Auditors talk to the people on the line.

- Certificate and audit do not cover all products. When a new line is added, for example frozen instead of fresh products, the scope has to be extended.
- The exporter believes a food safety certificate also takes care of the EUDR. Then the geolocation data is missing when the obligation kicks in: from December 30, 2026 for large and medium-sized companies, from June 30, 2027 for micro and small companies.

How Sightadel helps

[Sightadel](#) helps you keep the management side in order, with HACCP available as its own framework: documents, supplier approvals, corrective actions, internal audits and evidence for several standards in one place. With a consulting package, experienced consultants also guide you all the way to the certificate.

FAQ

Is HACCP mandatory for exporters from South America?

Yes, for all stages after primary production. For imports the EU requires equivalent hygiene standards, and for products of animal origin your establishment must be approved and listed.

Is ISO 22000 enough?

For European retail usually not, because ISO 22000 on its own is not GFSI recognized. FSSC 22000 builds on ISO 22000 and is recognized.

IFS Food or BRCGS?

Your buyer usually decides. IFS is common with retailers in Germany, France and Italy, BRCGS in the United Kingdom and internationally.

Do farms need their own certificate?

For primary production, many buyers require GLOBALG.A.P. The packhouse and processing then need one of the processing standards.

Which tool helps keep the HACCP documentation current?

A GRC platform with a HACCP framework, such as [Sightadel](#), holds the HACCP study, prerequisite programs, supplier approvals and corrective actions with their evidence in one place. Sightadel does not certify; the IFS, BRCGS or FSSC 22000 certificate comes from an accredited certification body.

Sources · Last updated: October 11, 2026

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2004/852/oj>

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/625/oj>

GFSI: recognized Certification Programme Owners: <https://mygfsi.com/how-to-implement/recognition/certification-programme->

owners

IFS Food: <https://www.ifs-certification.com/>

BRCGS Food Safety: <https://www.brcgs.com/>

FSSC 22000: <https://www.fssc.com/>

Global ACl: recognized accreditation bodies: <https://global-aci.org/en/recognised-abs/>

General information, not legal advice. The official texts are authoritative.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE WITH TOOLS MADE IN GERMANY



Sightadel walks your team through HACCP: templates, tasks, evidence and audit preparation in one place. Built and hosted in Germany, with an optional consultant package.

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The free EU Readiness Check shows you by industry and country in 10 minutes.

<https://www.mercoeu.com/en/eu-readiness-check>