



GFSI TECHNICAL EQUIVALENCE REQUIREMENTS
VERSION 2020

PART I
THE GFSI
ASSESSMENT
PROCESS

Part I - The GFSI Assessment Process

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INTRODUCTION

Part I of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements specifies the GFSI Assessment Process, the method for the acknowledgement of food safety standards owned by public organisations / agencies. The objective of this document is to give a clear insight into this process. Further details may be provided on request and during the application process.

The steps and procedures detailed in this document ensure that the GFSI Assessment Process is:

- Carried out in an impartial and transparent manner by a technically competent Benchmarking Leader under the supervision of the GFSI Technical Manager,
- Transparent and open to stakeholder scrutiny,
- Reviewed, maintained and updated to ensure consistency and integrity.

A standard may have a major focus or a historical focus other than those related to food safety. Only those specified requirements in the standard relating to food safety shall be assessed by GFSI for the purpose of GFSI acknowledgement.

GFSI has defined in a Glossary of terms used in the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements. Part IV, the glossary, is an integrated part of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements and definitions shall be applied accordingly in standards.

For further information and support:
gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com

1. Section 1: Eligibility Criteria

The Applicant Standard Owners are required to satisfy the below eligibility criteria:

- the Standard Owner is a legal entity,
- the Standard is governed or owned by a public or governmental entity,
- the Standard Owner is not undergoing any significant changes,
- the Standard Owner has undertaken a self-assessment to validate that it is in alignment with the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

2. Scopes of Acknowledgement

GFSI has defined scopes of acknowledgement related to products or services, listed in table 1.

When selecting the GFSI scope(s) of acknowledgement for their application, the Standard Owner shall ensure that the GFSI Technical Equivalence

Requirements related to their selected GFSI scope(s) of acknowledgement are clearly addressed in their Standard, as these shall be assessed against them.

Table 1: the GFSI scopes of acknowledgement

SCOPE NUMBER	SCOPE NAME	SCOPE DEFINITION
AI	Farming of Animals for Meat/ Milk / Eggs / Honey	Raising of animals (other than fish and seafood) used for meat production, egg production, milk production or honey production. Growing, keeping, trapping and hunting (slaughtering at point of hunting) Associated temporary farm packing without modification or processing of the product.
AII	Farming of Fish and Seafood	Raising of fish and seafood used for meat production. Growing, trapping and fishing slaughtering at point of capture. Associated temporary farm packing without modification or processing of the product.
BI	Farming of Plants (other than grains and pulses)	Growing or harvesting of plants (other than grains and pulses), including horticultural products and hydrophytes for food. On farm storage of plants (other than grains and pulses), including horticultural products and hydrophytes for food.
BII	Farming of Grains and Pulses	Growing or harvesting of grains and pulses for food On farm storage of grains and pulses for food.
BIII	Pre-process handling of plant products	Activities on harvested plants, including horticultural products and hydrophytes for food, that keep the products whole and integral. Cleaning, washing, rinsing, fluming, sorting, grading, trimming, bundling, cooling, hydro-cooling, waxing, drenching, packing, repacking, staging, storing, loading / or any other handling activity that does not significantly transform the product from its original harvested form.
CO	Animal primary conversion	Conversion of animal carcasses intended for further processing. Including Lairage, slaughter, evisceration, bulk chilling, bulk freezing, bulk storage of animals and game Gutting, bulk freezing of fish, storage of game.

CI	Processing of perishable animal products	<p>Production and packing of animal products including fish and seafood, meat, eggs, dairy and fish products, perishable pet food from animal products only.</p> <p>Deboning, cutting, washing, trimming, grading, pasteurisation, cooking, curing, fermentation, smoking, chilling, freezing, packed in modified atmosphere, packed in vacuum packing.</p>
CII	Processing of perishable plant products	<p>Production of plant products, including fruits and fresh juices, vegetables, grains, nuts, pulses and perishable pet food from plant products only.</p> <p>Washing, slicing, dicing, cutting, shredding, peeling, grading, pasteurisation, cooking, chilling, juicing, pressing, freezing, packing in modified atmosphere, packed in vacuum packing or any other activity that significantly transforms the product from its original whole state.</p>
CIII	Processing of perishable animal and plant products (mixed products)	<p>Production of mixed animal and plant products, including ready to eat and perishable pet food.</p> <p>Mixing, cooking, chilling, freezing, packing in modified atmosphere, packed in vacuum packing.</p>
CIV	Processing of ambient stable animal and plant products (mixed products)	<p>Production of food products from any source that are stored and sold at ambient temperature, including canned food and ambient stable pet food.</p> <p>Aseptic filling, baking, bottling, brewing, canning, cooking, distilling, drying, extrusion, fermentation, freeze drying, pressing, frying, hot filling, irradiating, milling, mixing and blending, packing in modified atmosphere, packed in vacuum packing, pasteurising, pickling, roasting, salting and refining.</p>
D	Production of feed	<p>Production of feed from a single or mixed food source, intended for food-producing animals.</p> <p>Cooking, milling, mixing and blending and extrusion.</p>
E	Catering	<p>Preparation, storage and, where appropriate, delivery of food products for consumption at the place of preparation or at a satellite unit.</p> <p>Cooking, mixing and blending, preparation of component products.</p>
FI	Retail / Wholesale	<p>Buying and selling of food, feed and/or packaging products to a customer, including minor processing activities in counters when this is not the main activity of the business.</p>

FII	Food Broker / Agent	Buying and selling of food, feed and/ or packaging products, excluding the production, storage and any physical handling of the product.
H	Provision of Food Safety Services	Provision of services related to the safe production of food, feed and/ or packaging, including water supply, pest control, cleaning services, waste disposal.
G	Provision of Storage and Distribution Services	Storage facilities and distribution vehicles for the storage and transport of food, feed and/ or packaging products. Note: any packing with labelling activities are excluded.
I	Production of Food Packaging	Production of food and feed packaging materials. Packaging components in the form of raw materials, part processed, semi converted, converted or fully finished packaging materials and products for use in the supply chain.
JI	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building constructors and equipment manufacturers)	Manufacturers of equipment, including any components necessary to link them together, and their utilities and utensils necessary for their operation, for farms food production facilities, food retail and wholesale operations, and packaging dedicated to food; Architects, Engineers and Designers of food handling facilities, including farm, food manufacturing, storage and retail buildings; The builders of above facilities
JII	Hygienic Design of Food Buildings and Processing Equipment (for building and equipment users)	Specifying, purchasing, design and construction of buildings or refurbishments by farmers, food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, and packaging manufacturers for their own use; specifying, purchasing, design and construction of equipment, including any components necessary to link them together, and their utilities and utensils necessary for their operation, and facilities by farmers, food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, and packaging manufacturers for their own use.
K	Production of (Bio) chemicals and bio-cultures used as food ingredients or processing aids in food production	Production of food and feed additives, vitamins, minerals, bio- cultures, flavourings, enzymes and processing aids. Note: pesticides, drugs, fertilizers and cleaning agents are excluded.

3. Application Options

Standard Owners shall apply for **full assessment** if the Standard in the application has:

- not previously undergone assessment by GFSI,
- been assessed previously, but the application was withdrawn without completing the assessment process (re-submission),
- has successfully undergone assessment against a previous version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements (re-assessment),
- been previously acknowledged by GFSI but had their acknowledgement withdrawn.

Those Standard Owners shall submit a fully completed application form with supporting evidence of compliance to the GFSI eligibility criteria.

If they wish to maintain their acknowledgement status, GFSI-acknowledged Standard Owners shall apply for re-assessment for all their scopes of acknowledgement against the new version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements within nine months of its date of publication. The GFSI Board has the authority to extend this period under special circumstances.

Standard Owners shall apply for **continued acknowledgement** if the Standard in the application is:

- acknowledged by GFSI against the current version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements but will be subjected to changes which could compromise its GFSI acknowledgement, such as changes to its content,
- already been acknowledged against the current version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements, and the Standard Owner is applying for a new GFSI scope of acknowledgement (GFSI scope extension),
- subject to suspension of their GFSI acknowledgement.

Those Standard Owners shall confirm in writing to the GFSI Senior Technical Manager no less than 28 days before any changes to the Standard are intended to become effective:

- their application for continued acknowledgement;
- the significant changes introduced to the Standard, including those changes that would address the cause of suspension of the GFSI acknowledgement if applicable.

Upon receipt of the proposed changes to the Standard, The GFSI Senior Technical Manager and GFSI Executive Director shall decide within 28 days on the type of actions required to maintain acknowledgement based on the details of the changes introduced to the Standard.

4. The GFSI Assessment Methodology

Who is involved in the GFSI Assessment Process?

GFSI Technical Manager

The GFSI Technical Manager is responsible for safeguarding the GFSI Assessment Process. The Technical Manager appoints the Benchmark Leader to a Standard and supervises all the assessment activities and communication with the Standard Owner. The GFSI Technical Manager ensures training and calibration of the Benchmark Leaders.

Benchmark Leader

The Benchmark Leader is selected and approved by the GFSI Board in order to ascertain whether

a Standard conforms with the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

The Benchmark Leader reports to the GFSI Technical Manager; they perform the assessment of the Standard against the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements and give their recommendation whether to acknowledge a Standard based on the result of their assessment.

All Benchmarking Leaders undergo the same initial training and annual calibration activities to maintain alignment of their evaluation approaches. A list of all GFSI-approved Benchmark Leaders is available from GFSI upon request.

GFSI Executive Director

The GFSI Executive Director is accountable for the compliance to the GFSI Assessment Process. In particular, they oversee any necessary sanctioning activities. They may reassign the Benchmark Leader at any time, at their discretion, if it is deemed necessary to do so.

GFSI Board

The GFSI Board makes a final decision on GFSI acknowledgement of the Standard, based on the recommendation of the Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager. The GFSI Board also makes final decisions on any suspensions or withdrawals of GFSI acknowledgement, and answer to any appeals.

How much time does the GFSI Assessment Process take to complete?

The GFSI Assessment Process must be completed in a maximum of 12 months from the date GFSI accepts an application. The GFSI Board has the authority to extend this time.

Demonstrating alignment and Objective Evidence

In order to achieve GFSI acknowledgement, a Standard shall demonstrate alignment with each key element of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements. To do so, the Standard Owner shall provide objective evidence that the Standard meets the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

The GFSI Assessment Process is a pass / fail assessment: A key element is either met or not met.

5. The Key Procedural Steps

The GFSI Assessment Process shall be carried out in accordance with the following key procedural steps:

1. Application: this step confirms that the applicant Standard Owner satisfies the GFSI eligibility criteria and ensures a workplan is agreed,
2. Desktop Review: this step focuses on an assessment of the content of a Standard against Part III of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements,
3. Corrective Action Plan: this step ensures a corrective action plan is agreed and validated to address any non-alignments to the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements,
4. Public Stakeholder Consultation: this step ensures that the GFSI Assessment Process is transparent and submitted to the scrutiny of GFSI and the Standard Owner's stakeholders,

5. Completion of Corrective Actions: this step ensures verification that the planned corrective actions to address any non-conformities are fully implemented in the Standard,

6. GFSI Board final decision and communication: this step concludes the assessment of the Standard and ensures communication of the result of this assessment to GFSI and the Standard Owner's stakeholders.

Those steps are summarised in table 2.

Table 2: the GFSI Assessment Process

<p>A - Application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application from • Admin fee • Contact • Workplan 	<p>B - Desktop Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Assessment • BL Review • Call to Review findings • Final Review
	<p>D - Corrective action plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP proposal • CAP review
<p>E - Public Stakeholder Consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Assessment Report • Public Consultation • Amendment of CAP as required 	<p>F - Completion of Corrective Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of evidence of implementation • Validation of evidence
<p>G - Final Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report and recommendation • GFSI board vote • Public Announcement 	

APPLICATION

Any Standard Owner may apply for assessment via the GFSI website and email. The Standard Owner will find an Application Form including detailed guidance for its completion on the GFSI website. This form shall be completed and sent to GFSI with all required supporting documents providing evidence that the Standard Owner satisfies the GFSI Eligibility Criteria.

The GFSI Technical Manager will review the application. The GFSI Technical Manager reserves the right to reject or refer an application back to the Standard Owner if the quality of the application is poor.

A Standard Owner will be permitted to lodge multiple assessment applications with GFSI but will only be permitted to submit one application for the same Standard within a 12-month period, if the initial application is deemed unsuccessful.

The GFSI Technical Manager will inform the Standard Owner within 2 weeks of receiving the application if it is accepted or rejected:

- If the application is rejected, reasons for this decision will clearly be detailed,
- If the application is accepted, an MoU shall be signed between the Standard Owner and GFSI.

Once the MoU is signed by both parties, the GFSI Technical Manager will appoint a Benchmark Leader for the Standard assessment:

- A Benchmark Leader may perform the assessment activities of a given Standard for a maximum period of three years,
- The Benchmark Leader profile and current activities outside their contract with GFSI will be reviewed to ensure there is no potential conflict of interest or risk to impartiality,
- The Technical Manager may assign additional Benchmark Leaders to ensure that the assessment takes place within the desired timeframe; this will be done with the written consent of the Standard Owner.

NB: A Conflict of Interest, or the appearance of a conflict, can arise whenever a transaction, or an action, undertaken in the framework of the Benchmark Leader's services to GFSI, conflicts with the personal interests, financial or otherwise, of that of the Benchmark Leader.

The GFSI Technical Manager shall inform the Standard Owner of this appointment in writing. Upon request from the Standard Owner, additional impartiality or confidentiality agreements may be signed between GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.

The Standard Owner will agree the work plan (appendix 1) of activities and key dates with the Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager based on the number of scopes and the volume of documentation submitted.

In the year prior to the publication of a new version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements, no new application will be accepted. A notice will be displayed on the GFSI website to indicate the starting date of this one-year period.

Additionally, GFSI will not accept any applications for scope extension from existing Standard Owners in the last six months before the publication of a new version of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements. This does not apply to sub-versions of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

DESKTOP REVIEW

The Standard Owner Fills out the Self-Assessment forms.

The objective of the self-assessment is to allow the Standard Owner to demonstrate that the Standard includes all the key elements listed in the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

GFSI will provide the relevant self-assessment forms. The Standard Owner will complete those forms with their own assessment of their alignment to the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements as well as clear and precise justification against each key element, including the exact reference to the document, page and clause addressing each key element. The completed self-assessment forms as well as the referenced documents will be sent to the Benchmark Leader for review.

The Benchmark Leader performs a preliminary desk review.

The Benchmark Leader will review the evidence provided by the Standard Owner for each GFSI key element, to ensure it satisfies the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.

The Benchmark Leader will take note of any key elements where additional information is needed and / or where they do not agree with the self-assessment from the Standard Owner. These notes will include comprehensive explanations. All these findings will be sent to the Standard Owner in writing for consideration. Findings are also sent to the GFSI Technical Manager for review.

In a conference call, the Benchmark Leader exchange their detailed findings with the Standard Owner.

This will give the Standard Owner an opportunity to further clarify and complete their evidence. It will also give greater insight into what additional information and amendment to the self-assessment forms the Benchmark Leader requires. During the conference call, a timeframe is agreed to complete any corrections of the self-assessment forms and the workplan is reviewed accordingly.

The Standard Owner Updates (where applicable) and Resends Final Self- Assessment

Within the agreed timeframe, the Standard Owner will send updated self-assessment forms with any necessary additional information. In order to limit a possible back-and-forth exchange of information, the Standard Owner will be required to provide the requested information and / or adjustments in the final self-assessment. The final version of the self-assessment forms must be complete and validated by the Benchmark Leader before progressing to the next step of the GFSI Assessment Process.

The Benchmark Leader may recommend at this point that the process moves to the final acknowledgement recommendation:

- if the desktop review highlights that the Standard requires significant changes to align to the Technical Equivalence Requirements;
- if the deadline of the process does not allow for a public consultation.

In such situations, the GFSI Technical Manager reviews the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader and agrees the next steps with the Standard Owner.

The Benchmark Leader will sum up all findings from the desktop review on a draft assessment report that will be sent to the Standard Owner and the GFSI Technical Manager.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

The Standard Owner shall respond to the Benchmark Leader's report with a corrective action plan within two weeks of receiving the report from the Benchmark Leader.

The Benchmark Leader will review the corrective action plan and confirm whether it addresses the findings. Once the Benchmark Leader and the Standard Owner agree a full corrective action plan

addressing all findings, the Benchmark Leader sends their draft assessment report, including the proposed corrective action plan, to the GFSI Technical Manager for validation.

The GFSI Technical Manager will review the assessment report and include their assessment of the Corrective Action plan to this report.

PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The GFSI Technical Manager will make the self-assessment forms and the Benchmark Leader's assessment report available on the GFSI website for a stakeholder consultation of four weeks. The Standard Owner will be given the opportunity to approve the content of the published documents before it is made available in the public domain. The report will only be put to consultation once agreed by all above parties. The GFSI Technical Manager will collect any comments,

observations or objections made by stakeholders and will share them with the Standard Owner, who shall address them. The Benchmark Leader and the GFSI Technical Manager will evaluate every response from the Standard Owner.

The GFSI Technical Manager shall ensure that those stakeholders who submitted comments during the stakeholder consultation receive feedback.

IMPLEMENTATION OF CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The Standard Owner shall complete all required corrective actions and provide evidence of implementation to the Benchmark Leader.

The Benchmark Leader will validate the answers from the Standard Owner to the comments and findings of the assessments, and the implementation of the

corrective actions. Once the corrective actions are fully implemented, the Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report including the completed corrective action plan and a recommendation for acknowledgement to the GFSI Technical Manager for validation.

GFSI BOARD FINAL DECISION AND COMMUNICATION

The GFSI Technical Manager will inform the GFSI Board of the results of the Benchmark Leader's assessment and the recommendation for acknowledgement in the form of a final summary report previously agreed upon with the Standard Owner.

The GFSI Board will come to a decision based on consensus following the recommendation presented by the GFSI Technical Manager. If a vote is necessary, the votes of 75% of a quorum of the GFSI Board shall determine the final decision. Records shall be kept of the numbers of votes for, against and abstaining. The

GFSI Technical Manager shall communicate the GFSI Board decision in writing to the Standard Owner, as soon as is practicable after the GFSI Board decision.

In the event that the final decision of the GFSI Board is non-acknowledgement, the reasons for the Board decision shall be clearly documented and the GFSI Technical Manager shall make the Standard Owner aware of the decision and those reasons. The Standard Owner shall have the right to appeal against the GFSI Board decision; the appeal shall be undertaken in

accordance with the procedures specified in this document (see section “sanctioning”).

In the event of acknowledgement by the GFSI Board, the GFSI Technical Manager and the Standard Owner shall agree on a GFSI news release confirming this decision. The Standard Owner will be expected to

issue a similar news release. The timing of these announcements shall be agreed on by the GFSI Technical Manager and the Standard Owner.

The GFSI Technical Manager will ensure that the GFSI website is updated with the new acknowledgement status of the Standard Owner.

Table 3: The GFSI Key Procedural Steps

GATE	STEP	COMMENTS
A. Application	1 – the Standard Owner downloads the application form from mygfsi.com , completes it and sends it and any required supporting documents to gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com	http://www.mygfsi.com <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Standard Owner must define the GFSI scope of assessment they are applying for.
	2 – GFSI sends an invoice for the application fee; process progresses when the invoice is paid.	The application fee is non-refundable.
	3 – GFSI reviews the application and confirm within 2 weeks of receipts if the application is accepted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the information is complete and complies with the eligibility criteria defined in the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements Part I, the application is accepted, move to step 4. If the information is incomplete or does not satisfies the eligibility criteria defined in the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements Part I, the application is rejected, feedback is sent to the Standard Owner, back to step 1. NB: The Standard Owner may address concerns regarding the eligibility criteria and re-apply. Application fee would be invoiced for this new application.
	4 – An MoU is signed between GFSI and the Standard Owner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GFSI appoints a Benchmark Leader 	GFSI provides an agreement that all Standard Owners applying for acknowledgement must sign. The appointment of the Benchmark Leader must ensure the absence of conflict of interest between the Benchmark Leader and the Standard Owner.
	5 – A workplan is agreed upon between the Standard Owner and the appointed Benchmark Leader.	<p>The Standard Owner is accountable for their workplan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workplan should allow the completion of the assessment process within 12 months from the date the application was accepted, The workplan must be agreed upon with the Benchmark Leader based on the number of scopes included in the application, the amount of time needed to perform the GFSI assessment, and estimate of the cost involved.

B. Desktop Review	1 – GFSI sends Self-Assessment form(s) for the scope(s) included in the application form.	The information included within the self-assessment is the content of the Technical Equivalence Requirements (respective scope(s) of Part III).
	2 – The Standard Owner completes the Self-Assessment form(s) and submits them to the Benchmark Leader and GFSI with supporting evidence.	<p>The Standard Owner evaluates their Standard against the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements.</p> <p>For each requirement, the following must be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether and how the GFSI requirement is covered in the Standard; • The name of the Standard’s document covering the requirement with reference to the exact page and clause; • The relevant documents as objective evidence. <p>Files have to be numbered and a list of submitted documents provided together with the completed Self-Assessment forms.</p> <p>All documents may be submitted by email or a secured document sharing platform agreed with GFSI and the Benchmark Leader.</p>
	<p>3 – the Benchmark Leader reviews the completed self-assessment and supporting documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is complete and allows a comprehensive review by the Benchmark Leader – the Benchmark Leader sends the self-assessment with their assessment and comments, move to step 4; • The information is incomplete, and / or the evidence provided is insufficient – the benchmark leader sends feedback to the Standard Owner, back to step 2. 	<p>The Benchmark Leader assesses the alignment of the submitted information from the Standard Owner with each key element of the Technical Equivalence Requirements and rates them as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligned: the provided information addresses the key element • Partly aligned: the provided information addresses some aspects of the key element. The Benchmark Leader highlights the unaddressed element(s) in their comment • Not aligned: the provided information does not address the key elements. The Benchmark Leader clarifies the expected information in their comment.
	4 – The findings of the self-assessment review are discussed and clarified through a call with the Benchmark Leader, GFSI, and Standard Owner	<p>GFSI will facilitate the scheduling and IT tools necessary for the execution of the call.</p> <p>The following points will be discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Benchmark Leader’s assessment and clarification of any findings; • Agreement on a timeframe for the completion of the self-assessment; • Review of the workplan in light of the results of the self-assessment. <p>The Standard Owner ensures that relevant and competent representatives are present during the call.</p>

	<p>5 – The Standard Owner updates (where applicable) and sends the final Self-Assessment forms and additional supporting documents to the Benchmark Leader.</p>	<p>Within the agreed timeframe the Standard Owner will send the final version of the Self-Assessment forms to the Benchmark Leader.</p>
	<p>6 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the additional information provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information is complete and addressing the findings would not require a significant re-write of the Standard – the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed list of findings to the Standard Owner and GFSI, move to “corrective action plan”; • addressing the findings would require a significant re-write of the Standard - the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed report including the list of findings to the Standard Owner and GFSI, move to G; • information is incomplete or unclear – back to step 5. 	<p>The Benchmark Leader may recommend at this point that the process moves to gate G:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the self-assessment review highlights that the programme requires significant changes to align to the Technical Equivalence Requirements • If the deadline of the process does not allow for an office visit and a public consultation.
	<p>7 - The Benchmark Leader completes the draft report including the final list of findings and presents it to the Standard Owner</p>	<p>The assessment report includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standard Owner information (name(s), contact details), • The assessment details (scope of acknowledgement, benchmark leader etc), • An executive summary (summary of findings from Self-Assessment, any particular complexities). • Any findings from the self-assessment review.

D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting

1 – The Standard Owner sends the Benchmark Leader a corrective action plan to address any findings raised during the assessment.

2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the corrective action plan:

- The corrective actions address the findings – the Benchmark Leader accepts the corrective action plan, move to step 3;
- Some of the corrective actions do not address the findings – the corrective action plan is rejected, back to step 1.

3 – The Benchmark Leader completes the assessment report:

- The Benchmark Leader sends the assessment report including the list of findings to the Standard Owner
- The Standard Owner confirms that the content of the report is accurate.

4 – GFSI validates the finally agreed report and action plan:

- The Benchmark Leader sends the final report agreed with the Standard Owner to GFSI;
- GFSI reviews the report and validates its content.

E. Public Stakeholder Consultation

1 – GFSI prepares the documentation for public consultation, this includes

- An announcement statement;
- The assessment report with the corrective action plan;
- The completed and reviewed self-assessments.

The Standard Owner is asked to approve the documents for public stakeholder consultation.

2 – The Standard Owner reviews the proposed documentation for the public consultation:

- The Standard Owner approves the documentation: move to step 3;
- The Standard Owner has concerns over the content of the report, they submit their suggested changes to GFSI, back to step 1.

3 – GFSI makes the approved documentation available for stakeholder consultation on mygfsi.com for four weeks.

The assessment report and the completed self-assessment forms are made available from mygfsi.com.
Comments are sent to gfsibm@theconsumer-goodsforum.com.

4 – GFSI closes the public consultation and sends the list of received comments to the Standard Owner and the benchmark leader.

F. Completion of corrective actions

1 – The Standard Owner completes all required corrective actions and:

- Answers to any comments from the public consultation requiring an action or comment;
- Provides evidence of implementation for all corrective actions for the findings of the assessment;
- The Standard Owner sends the final report with their above addition, and any required supportive documents, to the Benchmark Leader.

2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the answers from the Standard Owner to the comments and findings of the assessments:

- The Benchmark Leader accepts the comments and completion of the corrective actions from the Standard Owner – move to gate G;
- The Benchmark Leader rejects the comments and evidence of completion of corrective actions from the Standard Owner – back to step 1.

All findings must be addressed with the corrective action plan completed before the process can progress to gate G.

3 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report with the completed corrective actions to GFSI:

- GFSI accepts the completed corrective actions: move to G
- GFSI rejects the completed actions and/or asks for more information: back to step 1.

G. GFSI Final Acknowledgement Decision and Communication

1 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report, including the executive summary with their recommendation for acknowledgement, to GFSI.

2 – GFSI reviews the final assessment report:

- GFSI accepts the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: move to step 3;
- GFSI challenges the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: feedback is sent to the Benchmark Leader for consideration, back to step 1;

3– GFSI submits the recommendation to the GFSI Board who votes for or against this recommendation. The Standard Owner acknowledgement status is based on the board majority vote.

Vote may be organised during a face to face meeting of the GFSI Board where the quorum is present, or by email. In the latter case, GFSI must gather enough written answers back from GFSI Board members to respect the GFSI Board governance rules.

4 – GFSI informs the Standard Owner of the final decision and confirms next step:

- The Standard Owner agrees to communicate publicly the result of their assessment – move to step 5.
- The Standard Owner does not want the result of their assessment publicly communicated – move to step 6
- In either case, GFSI posts a signed statement of alignment to the Standard Owner.

GFSI informs the Standard Owner of the reasons for the decision. The Standard Owner has the right to appeal the GFSI Board decision (see Part I of the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements).

5 – GFSI and the Standard Owner agree on a common news release text and publish this jointly on their respective media.
Move to step 6.

GFSI and the Standard Owner both publish a news release.

6 – GFSI updates mygfsi.com and ensures the Standard Owner updates their own website when applicable.

6. Sanctioning

If evidence of non-alignment against the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements is found, the GFSI Executive Director shall be informed. The GFSI Technical Manager and the GFSI Executive Director will review this evidence and agree on next steps.

If further investigation is required, the GFSI Technical Manager will promptly contact the Standard Owner. The GFSI Technical Manager will fully document the process of investigation. Based on their findings, the GFSI Technical Manager will make a recommendation to either:

1. take no action against the Standard Owner, or
2. maintain acknowledgement and require evidence of re-alignment, or
3. suspend acknowledgement, or
4. withdraw acknowledgement.

This recommendation is passed to the GFSI Executive Director and the GFSI Board for final decision. The GFSI Technical Manager will inform the Standard Owner of this final decision, including a full explanation for it.

Evidence of re-alignment required

In the event that the GFSI Board considers that evidence of re-alignment is required but acknowledgement may be maintained, the GFSI Technical Manager will follow up any required actions from the Standard Owner; the GFSI Technical Manager may ask for the support of the Benchmark Leader.

Once the re-alignment is confirmed, the GFSI Technical Manager will inform the GFSI Executive Director and the GFSI Board.

In the event that the GFSI Board is not satisfied with the progress made, they may suspend the acknowledgement of the Standard.

GFSI Suspension of acknowledgement

If the GFSI Board considers that a period of suspension of acknowledgement shall be imposed, the GFSI website shall clearly specify the details and conditions of the suspension.

The GFSI Executive Director shall formally inform the Standard Owner of the decision and period of the

suspension, and any remediation conditions imposed by the GFSI Board to regain acknowledgement status.

The Standard Owner shall confirm to the GFSI Board that these remediation conditions can be achieved within the timescales set out by the GFSI Board, when evidence of the implementation of the corrective actions will be expected, and alignment to the GFSI Technical Equivalence Requirements can be re-established.

the GFSI Technical Manager will follow up the implementation of the corrective actions with the Standard Owner; the GFSI Technical Manager may ask for the support of the Benchmark Leader.

Once the re-alignment is confirmed, the GFSI Technical Manager will inform the GFSI Executive Director and the GFSI Board.

A suspension period may be extended to a maximum of 12 months from the date the initial suspension occurred.

In the event that the GFSI Board is not satisfied with the progress made by the Standard Owner or their commitment to address any of their requirements, they may withdraw acknowledgement of the Standard.

GFSI Withdrawal of acknowledgement

If the GFSI Board considers that a withdrawal of acknowledgement is required, the GFSI Executive Director shall formally inform the Standard Owner of this decision.

In the event that GFSI acknowledgement is withdrawn, GFSI shall issue a news release and the GFSI website shall clearly specify the details and conditions of the withdrawal.

A Standard Owner may choose to voluntarily withdraw from GFSI acknowledgement when unforeseen circumstances put the Standard into contravention of GFSI requirements. In this instance, the Standard Owner will make a request to withdraw voluntarily and make a full dossier of the circumstances available to the GFSI Executive Director.

The GFSI Executive Director will inform the GFSI Board regarding the circumstances and convene a meeting to discuss the issue as soon as possible. The GFSI Board may grant voluntary withdrawal or initiate

a suspension process. The GFSI Executive Director will inform the Standard Owner of this decision.

GFSI Appeals Procedure

The Standard Owner has the right to appeal against any decision made by the GFSI Board, the GFSI Executive Director or any person contracted to GFSI in relation to the Assessment Process.

The Standard Owner shall submit an appeal to the GFSI Executive Director within 30 days of the matter in dispute occurring. The appeal shall be submitted in writing to the GFSI Executive Director and shall clearly describe the reason and provide a full explanation together with substantive evidence to support a thorough investigation of the appeal.

When the appeal procedure is initiated, the status of the Standard shall be amended on the GFSI website to reflect that the Standard is subject to an appeal.

Any appeal shall be heard by an Appeals Committee, which is a body specifically assembled by the GFSI Board for the purposes of hearing an individual

appeal. The GFSI Executive Director shall ensure that the investigation is conducted in an impartial and professional manner, and without any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

The outcome of the investigation by the Appeals Committee shall be heard by the GFSI Board, and the decision made by the Appeals Committee shall be upheld by the GFSI Board.

The GFSI Executive Director shall formally inform the Standard Owner of the GFSI Board decision.

The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. Once the final decision is given, the appeal process will be closed and the GFSI website updated accordingly.

Appendix 1 — GFSI Workplan

GATE	STEP	TYPICAL TIMELINE	AGREED DEADLINE	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
A. Application	1 – The Standard Owner downloads the application form from mygfsi.com, completes it and sends it and any required supporting documents to gfsibm@theconsumergoodsforum.com			GFSI Application form
	2 – GFSI sends an invoice for the application fee; process progresses when the invoice is paid.	1 week		
	3 – GFSI reviews the application and confirm within 2 weeks of receipt if the application is accepted.	2 weeks		
	4 – A MoU is signed between GFSI and the Standard Owner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFSI appoints a Benchmark Leader 	2 weeks		GFSI MoU
	5 – A workplan is agreed between the Standard Owner and the appointed Benchmark Leader.	1 week		GFSI Workplan
B. Desktop Review	1 - GFSI sends Self-Assessment form(s) for the scope(s) included in the application form.	1 week		GFSI Self-assessment forms
	2 – The Standard Owner completes the Self-Assessment form(s) and submits them to the Benchmark Leader and GFSI with supporting evidence.	3 months		GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	3 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the completed self-assessment and supporting documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information is complete and allows a comprehensive review by the Benchmark Leader – the Benchmark Leader sends the self-assessment with their assessment and comments, move to step 4; • The information is incomplete, and / or the evidence provided is insufficient – the Benchmark Leader sends feedback to the Standard Owner, back to step 2. 	4 weeks		GFSI Self-Assessment forms

B. Desktop ReviewT	4 – The findings of the self-assessment review are discussed and clarified through a call with the Benchmark Leader, GFSI, and Standard Owner.	2 hours		GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	5 – The Standard Owner updates (where applicable) and sends the final Self-Assessment forms and additional supporting documents to the Benchmark Leader.	2 weeks		GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	6 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the additional information provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information is complete and addressing the findings would not require a significant re-write of the programme – the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed list of findings to the Standard Owner and GFSI, move to “office visit”; addressing the findings would require a significant re-write of the programme - the Benchmark Leader sends the final validation of the self-assessments and a completed report including the list of findings to the Standard Owner and GFSI, move to G; information is incomplete or unclear – back to step 5. 	3 weeks		GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	7 - The Benchmark Leader completes the draft report including the final list of findings and presents it to the Standard Owner	2 weeks		GFSI Assessment Report

D. Corrective Action Plan and reporting	1 – The Standard Owner sends the Benchmark Leader a corrective action plan to address any findings raised during the assessment.	2 weeks		GFSI Assessment Report
	2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the corrective action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The corrective actions address the findings – the Benchmark Leader accepts the corrective action plan, move to step 3; • Some of the corrective actions do not address the findings – the corrective action plan is rejected, back to step 1. 	4 weeks after the office visit maximum		GFSI Assessment Report
	3 – The Benchmark Leader completes the assessment report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Benchmark Leader sends the assessment report including the list of findings to the Standard Owner • the Standard Owner confirms that the content of the report is accurate. 			GFSI Assessment Report
	4 – GFSI validates the finally agreed report and action plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Benchmark leader sends the final report agreed with the Standard Owner to GFSI; • GFSI reviews the report and validates its content. 	1 week		GFSI Assessment Report

E. Public Stakeholder Consultation	<p>1 – GFSI prepares the documentation for public consultation, this includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An announcement statement; • The assessment report with the corrective action plan; • The completed and reviewed self-assessments. 	1 week		GFSI Assessment Report Self-Assessment forms
	<p>2 – The Standard Owner reviews the proposed documentation for the public consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standard Owner approves the documentation: move to step 3; • The Standard Owner has concerns over the content of the report, they submit their suggested changes to GFSI, back to step 1. 	1 week		GFSI Assessment Report GFSI Self-Assessment forms
	<p>3 – GFSI makes the approved documentation available for stakeholder consultation on mygfsi.com for four weeks.</p>	4 weeks		GFSI Public Consultation comment form
	<p>4 – GFSI closes the public consultation and sends the list of received comments to the Standard Owner and the Benchmark Leader.</p>	1 week		

F. Completion of corrective actions	<p>1 – The Standard Owner completes all required corrective actions and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • answers to any comments from the public consultation requiring an action or comment; • provides evidence of implementation for all corrective actions for the findings of the assessment; • The Standard Owner sends the final report with their above addition, and any required supportive documents, to the Benchmark Leader. 	Depending on corrective actions		GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>2 – The Benchmark Leader reviews the answers from the Standard Owner to the comments and findings of the assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Benchmark Leader accepts the comments and completion of the corrective actions from the Standard Owner – move to gate G; • The Benchmark Leader rejects the comments and evidence of completion of corrective actions from the Standard Owner – back to step 1. 	2 weeks		GFSI Assessment Report
	<p>3 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report with the completed corrective actions to GFSI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFSI accepts the completed corrective actions: move to G • GFSI rejects the completed actions and/or asks for more information: back to step 1. 	1 week		GFSI Assessment Report

G. GFSI Final acknowledgement Decision and Communication	1 – The Benchmark Leader sends the final assessment report, including the executive summary with their recommendation for acknowledgement, to GFSI.	3 months after the public consultation maximum		GFSI Assessment Report
	2 – GFSI reviews the final assessment report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFSI accepts the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: move to step 3; • GFSI challenges the recommendation from the Benchmark Leader: feedback is sent to the Benchmark Leader for consideration, back to step 1; 	1 week		GFSI Assessment Report
	3– GFSI submits the recommendation to the GFSI Board who votes for or against this recommendation. The Standard Owner acknowledgement status is based on the board majority vote.	2 weeks		GFSI Assessment Report
	4 – GFSI informs the Standard Owner of the final decision and confirms next step: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standard Owner agrees to communicate publicly the result of their assessment – move to step 5. • The Standard Owner does not want the result of their assessment publicly communicated – move to step 6. In either case, GFSI posts a signed statement of alignment to the Standard Owner.	1 week		GFSI Statement of Alignment
	5 – GFSI and the Standard Owner agree a common news release text and publish this jointly on their respective media. Move to step 6.	2 weeks		
	6 – GFSI updates mygfsi.com and ensures the Standard Owner updates their own website when applicable.			