SQF EDITION 9 – SUMMARY OF CHANGES

In the midst of everything else going on in the world, the SQF Code is undergoing a transition from Edition 8.1 to Edition 9.0. Effective May 24th, 2021, all sites will be audited to SQF Code Edition 9. ASI has compiled a summary of changes to aid in your transition to the new version. Please reach out to your account manager for additional services that ASI has to offer that can make this change as smooth as possible. As always, ASI is ready to help you meet all your certification goals and be compliant with customer requirements to ensure a safer food supply chain across the globe.

CONTACTS:

KIM SOBOTKA
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
KSOBOTKA@ASIFOOD.COM
314-333-6207

ANDREW WOOD
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
AWOOD@ASIFOOD.COM
314-333-6223

MAJOR CHANGES IN EDITION 9

Separation of Codes

One of the major changes for Edition 9 is the breakdown of the food sector categories into new Codes. The structure of each code will be relatively the same as Edition 8.1 as well as the individual food sector categories. The difference is that several FSCs have been broken out into a separate code which allows for the SQF program to be more specialized per each industry. Each code will better address specific food safety aspects specific to that industry.

SQF Edition 8.1 Codes	SQF Edition 9.0 Codes
Primary Production	Primary Plant Production
Manufacturing	Primary Animal Production
Food Packaging	Aquaculture
Storage and Distribution	Food Manufacturing
Retail	Pet Food Manufacturing
Food Service	Animal Feed Manufacturing
	Animal Product Manufacturing
	Dietary Supplement
	Storage and Distribution
	Food Packaging

Changes to the Elements in the Codes

Several portions of the Codes have been consolidated to increase your SQF program's efficiency and the audit itself. The numbering system has changed very little, but several redundancies have been reduced. Most of these changes can be found in the PRP elements in Section 11.2. A new Site Operations section now includes Repairs and Maintenance 11.2.1, Maintenance Staff and Contractors 11.2.2, Calibration 11.2.3, Pest Prevention 11.2.4, and Cleaning and Sanitation 11.2.5.

Scoring Changes and Audit Scheduling

An important scoring change is coming with Edition 9, a major non-conformance has been reduced from 10 points deducted to 5 points deducted. Minors will remain at 1 point deducted. Important scheduling changes are occurring with Edition 9. Desk audits are no longer required for initial certification but are allowed based on the certification body's risk assessment if one is requested. "Blended" audits are now officially part of the Code, which means that the documentation review portion of an audit can be performed remotely. A fully remote audit option is still not available per the Code.

Additional Requirement Changes

All facilities are now required to have a backup SQF practitioner as an employee of the company. The SQF Code for Storage and Distribution does not require HACCP any longer and allows for HACCP or preventive control-based food safety plans. Product recall and withdrawal systems can no longer be tested on the same raw ingredient every year. Edition 9 requires that a variety of items be considered, including packaging and raw materials.

NEW OR UPDATED SECTIONS

FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

Food Safety Culture 2.1.1.2 is not necessarily a brand new requirement, but it has been given a new name. Edition 9 includes adjustments in the Management Commitment section to require that senior site management lead and support food safety culture. This is largely based upon GFSI efforts and impresses that food safety culture should be implemented through documentation and communication between senior management and employees. Employee feedback to identify and measure positive behaviors or high-risk activities is an important part of an effective food safety culture. Performance measurements of food safety culture should include SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based) goals.

GOOD LABORATORY PRACTICES

Good Laboratory Practices 2.4.4.2 has been given an update for internal laboratory practices. External laboratories must still be ISO 17025 accredited, but now internal laboratories are required to have equivalent methods and processes to ISO 17025. Accreditation is not required for internal laboratories but documentation must be provided to confirm that practices meet the requirements of ISO 17025.

REQUIREMENTS FOR LABEL RECONCILIATION

Requirements for Label Reconciliation 2.6.1.2 is a brand new addition to the SQF Code that covers the procedures, activities, and records to be maintained to ensure that a product has the correct label. An authorized person is required to complete a label reconciliation against the product in production and maintain a record of the label check. This new section is intended to prevent, or at least minimize, the risk of allergen labeling recalls. The process requires a documented procedure and needs to be completed at each startup, product change, or packaging change on a specific line.

AMBIENT AIR TESTING

Ambient Air Testing 11.7.1.2 requirements have been updated with Edition 9. Testing is now required for high-risk areas at least annually, compared to the previous requirements that only asked for testing of compressed air that encountered food or food contact surfaces. This is only for high-risk areas and no test or method is defined by the Code. The two test types for ambient air sampling are passive air sampling and active air sampling and typically targets yeast or mold.

CONTRACT MANUFACTURERS

Contract Manufacturers 2.3.3 has been updated to require that a certified facility determines the risk level of each contract manufacturer. Contract manufacturers are facilities contracted by an SQF-certified facility to produce, process, pack, and/or store a portion or all of the products included in their SQF scope of certification. It has always been required that contract manufacturers meet the SQF standard, but now requires that if they are high-risk, a third-party audit must be conducted to verify compliance. Low-risk contract manufacturers can be audited by the certified facility or a third-party. Another update requires that a contract agreement is in place with all third-party storage and distribution facilities that are utilized by a certified facility.