



Qualitätssicherung. Vom Landwirt bis zur Ladentheke.

Guideline General Regulations



*Lebensmittel
aus guten Händen*





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1 Fundamentals

The goal of the QS scheme is the assurance of process quality along all stages in the supply chain.

QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH is the scheme owner and holder of the QS certification scheme for foods. The standards defined by QS lay down strict, verifiable production criteria for all stages of the value-added chain. The cross-stage check of these criteria, as well as the traceability of agricultural products and the foods made from them, are the distinguishing features of the scheme.

1.1 Scope and scheme partners

The guideline applies to all participants in the QS scheme.

All companies which participate in the QS scheme work towards the common goal of making food production processes transparent and safe for consumers all the way from production to the shop counter. The scheme participants are contractually bound to comply with the standards defined by QS and have them verified.

Participation in the QS scheme is open to all domestic and foreign companies who fully satisfy the requirements of the scheme.

At www.qs-plattform.de "Scheme Participant Search", suppliers, buyers and other interested parties can identify which companies are scheme participants and are eligible to deliver into the QS scheme.

1.2 Requirements

All of the requirements on the companies are outlined in guidelines. An overview of the guidelines can be found in the separate document "Explanatory Notes for the Scheme Manual".

The requirements are set under consideration of

- legal provisions,
- the actual risks of food production and
- process peculiarities and economic relationships.

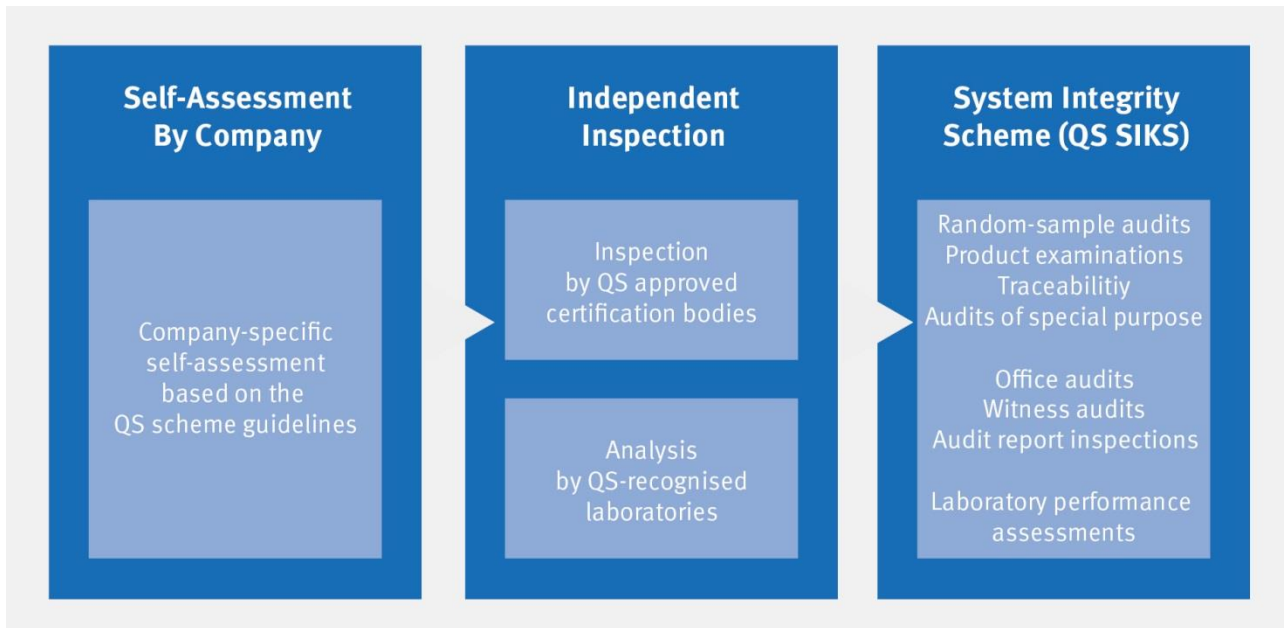
Requirement which would have a particularly critical influence on food safety if not complied with, or which are of great significance for the scheme for other reasons, are defined as K.O. criteria. Non-compliance with one of these criteria results in the opening of the sanction procedure and can lead to loss of eligibility of delivery.

1.3 Control system

The control system is made up of a mandatory self-assessment of operations, independent inspection by approved certification bodies and recognised laboratories, and the measures contained in the internal scheme integrity system (QS SIKS).



Figure 1: Control System



Self-assessment by the company

The scheme participants conduct and document a self-assessment on the basis of the guidelines to be used for the production, processing or marketing stage.

Independent inspection

Independent certification bodies regularly check all scheme participants for compliance with requirements. A risk-based approach (the better the result of the inspection, the longer the duration of the certificate) produces incentives to improve process quality in the companies. Definite deadlines for the correction of established defects are determined with the agreement on corrective actions.

The laboratories approved by QS conduct the product tests in the monitoring programmes.

QS works with accredited certification bodies and laboratories in Germany and abroad. The approval of the certification bodies, including the auditors and recognition of the labs, is granted by QS in accordance with clearly defined criteria and qualification requirements. The cooperation between QS and the certification bodies and/or laboratories is regulated per contract.

The rules of independent inspections are outlined in the **Guideline Certification** and in the **monitoring programme guidelines**.

Scheme Integrity System (QS SIKS)

QS head office checks the functioning of the QS scheme regularly and comprehensively. The checks are geared towards the reliability of the work of the certification bodies, auditors and laboratories, as well as constant and consistent compliance with requirements by the scheme participants. In addition to the examination of the status quo, they simultaneously serve the continuous further development and optimisation of the processes in the QS scheme.

The measures involved in the scheme integrity system are outlined in the **Guideline Certification**.



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1.4 International openness and cooperation

QS relies on international cooperation and integration with a view towards achieving a uniformly high quality standard in the field of food safety on a European level. By doing so, double auditing by the responsible bodies involved in the economy is avoided while simultaneously enabling the flow of goods between the various quality assurance schemes. To this end, QS has reached agreements on mutual recognition with various standard owners in neighbouring European countries.

The basis of these agreements in the supply chain Meat and Meat Products is formed by the requirements of the European Meat Alliance (EMA). EMA is the amalgamation of the quality assurance schemes from Belgium (Certus), Denmark (QSG), the Netherlands (IKB) and Germany (QS) in collaboration with the food retail sector.

The joint further development of standards for the production of fruit and vegetables is being pursued by the European "A-NET" network, which comprises the standard owners AMA GAP (Austria), Assured Produce (United Kingdom), Swissgap (Switzerland), Vegaplan (Belgium) and QS (Germany).

The latest agreements with international scheme owners are described under the keyword "QS Agreements" on the QS websites www.q-s.de.

2 The Way to Scheme Partnership

The participating companies are tied into the QS scheme by means of a scheme agreement with QS or a coordinator.

2.1 Scheme agreement with QS

The businesses tied into the QS scheme by a scheme agreement include:

- Feed producers* and dealers (*feed material, compound feed, additive and premix producers)
- hatcheries
- Slaughtering and deboning businesses
- Meat processing businesses
- Meat wholesale
- Broker meat and meat products
- Fruit, vegetable and potato wholesalers
- Preparation and Processing companies of fruit, vegetables, potatoes
- Coordinators who combine businesses and branches and bind them per contract to the QS scheme in the fields of agriculture and production, fruit, vegetables, potatoes, logistics, butchery and food retail.

After their registration and certification, they sign a scheme agreement with QS and are given approval which makes them eligible to deliver into the QS scheme. The scheme agreement is published separately on the QS homepage www.q-s.de.

Registration of companies

The companies/scheme applicants register online in the QS database (www.qs-plattform.de). The coordinators additionally register their combined groups of companies.

After registration, each scheme applicant automatically receives confirmation of registration with their QS identification number (QS-ID) per e-mail.

Independent inspection

After registering, the scheme applicant commissions a certification body approved by QS to conduct the independent inspection at each location in accordance with the **Guideline Certification**.



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Every location that is to be approved must be audited. The businesses bundled together in the food retail sector are checked once a year using a random sample method.

The complete audit report with result is entered into the QS database by the certification body.

Approval

After the successful certification of the registered location and a final check of all approval prerequisites by QS head office, the scheme applicant receives a contract offer (scheme agreement) for participation in the QS scheme. The **scheme agreement** regulates participation in the QS scheme, use of the QS certification mark and the imposing of sanctions for violations of the requirements of the QS scheme.

The scheme applicant is approved for participation in the QS scheme with the signing of the agreement. He/she is then eligible to deliver and can be looked up in the QS database under "Scheme participant search" (www.qs-plattform.de).

The scheme participant is given authorisation to use the QS certification mark in accordance with the provisions of the style guide. For more on this, see

⇒ Style Guide for the QS Certification Mark.

Scheme participants are charged annual fees in line with the **scale of fees**. The fees are published separately on the QS homepage www.q-s.de.

The extension of approval to include another of the scheme participant's locations or product scopes requires the successful certification of that location or product scope and subsequent granting of eligibility of delivery by QS head office.

The scheme participants must be able to provide evidence of compliance with requirements at all times. In order to maintain approval, they must allow their businesses to be checked regularly by an independent certification body approved by QS.

If violations of the scheme agreement or requirements of the QS scheme (e.g. non-compliance with K.O. criteria) are determined with a scheme participant, a sanction procedure is opened in the course of which sanctions extending to loss of eligibility of delivery can be imposed. For more on this, see

⇒ Annex 5.2 Sanction Procedure Regulation.

2.2 Participation via coordinators

The Agriculture/Production coordinators

following business types participate in the QS scheme via Agriculture/Production coordinators:

- Agricultural businesses (cattle, pigs, poultry)
- Producers of fruit, vegetables, potatoes
- Livestock transporters
- Crop farming and grassland businesses

The businesses select a coordinator from the **list of approved coordinators for Agriculture/Production** and conclude a written agreement with him/her (declaration of participation). Further organisation of participation is then regulated by the coordinator who also ensures that the independent inspections are conducted at each location and that the businesses participate in the obligatory monitoring programmes.

The tasks and responsibilities of Agriculture/Production coordinators are outlined in the **Guideline Coordinator Agriculture/Production**.



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Food Retail Coordinators

- Food retail branches and groups of companies with several branches

are combined and contractually bound into the QS scheme via Food Retail Coordinators. When registering the companies, the corporate structure (legally dependent or legally independent company) and type of goods procurement (supply relationships) of the food retailer must be taken into account.

Scheme coordinators for feed material producer

The rules for participation are outlined in the **guidelines or the food retail sector**.

- Small feed material producers who only produce a limited amount

are bound by contract to the QS scheme via scheme coordinators for feed material producer. Among other things, these coordinators ensure the registration and the independent inspections conducted at these production sites.

The duties of the Scheme coordinators as well the participation of the producers are outlined in the **Guideline Feed Sector**.

The rules for participation are described on the QS websites www.q-s.de.

2.3 Participation via certification bodies

The following producers and service providers are bound by contract to the QS scheme via certification bodies:

- Small scale feed material producers,
- Mobile feed milling and mixing plant operators,
- Feed transport, storage and transshipment organisations (service providers)
- Transport and transshipment service providers (logistical service providers) for fruit and vegetables and
- Storage companies of meat and meat products.

Small scale feed material production companies and mobile feed milling and mixing plant operators are registered by the certification bodies. The certification bodies conduct the audits at the locations and confirm eligibility to deliver into the QS scheme.

Transport, storage and transshipment service providers of feed, logistical service providers for fruit, vegetables, potatoes and storage companies of meat and meat products register themselves independently in the QS database. They choose a certification body in the QS database and conclude a written agreement for the participation with it. The certification body shall carry out the QS audit.

The rules for participation are also described on the QS websites www.q-s.de.

The participations of the above feed companies will also be outlined in the **guidelines Feed Sector, QS Inspection of Small Scale Feed Production Companies** and **QS Inspection of Mobile Feed Milling and Mixing Plant Operators**.



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3 Definitions

3.1 Explanation of Symbols

Reference to related documents are highlighted by the use of **bold text**.

References to other sections of the Guideline are indicated by ⇒ .

3.2 Terms and Definitions

⇒ Annex 5.1 General Terms and Definitions

Lists all of the general terms used within the QS scheme along with their definitions.

4 Related Documents

QS Documents see www.q-s.de/Downloadcenter

- Certification Guideline
- Guideline Coordinator Agriculture/Production.
- Monitoring programme guidelines
- Client oriented standards
- list of approved coordinators for Agriculture/Production
- list of approved certification bodies
- list of approved laboratories for the respective monitoring programs

5 Annexes

Annexes 5.1 to 5.2 are published as an extract.

5.1 General Terms and Definitions

5.2 Rules of Sanction Procedure



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Criterion/Requirement	Changes	Date of change
Annex 5.2 Documents in the Scheme Manual	Cancellation: This annex is no longer added as an annex, but published as a separate document "Explanatory Notes for the Scheme Manual".	01.01.2021
Annex 5.3 Style Guide for the QS Certification Mark	Cancellation: This annex is no longer added as an annex. The Style Guide is published as a separate document.	01.01.2021



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