

Global Food Safety Initiative

GFSI and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in food safety supply chain for third party audits: learnings and challenges



A Quick Recap



- GFSI's core purpose is as a benchmarking and harmonisation organisation responsible for the 'what' – not the 'how' – of food safety.

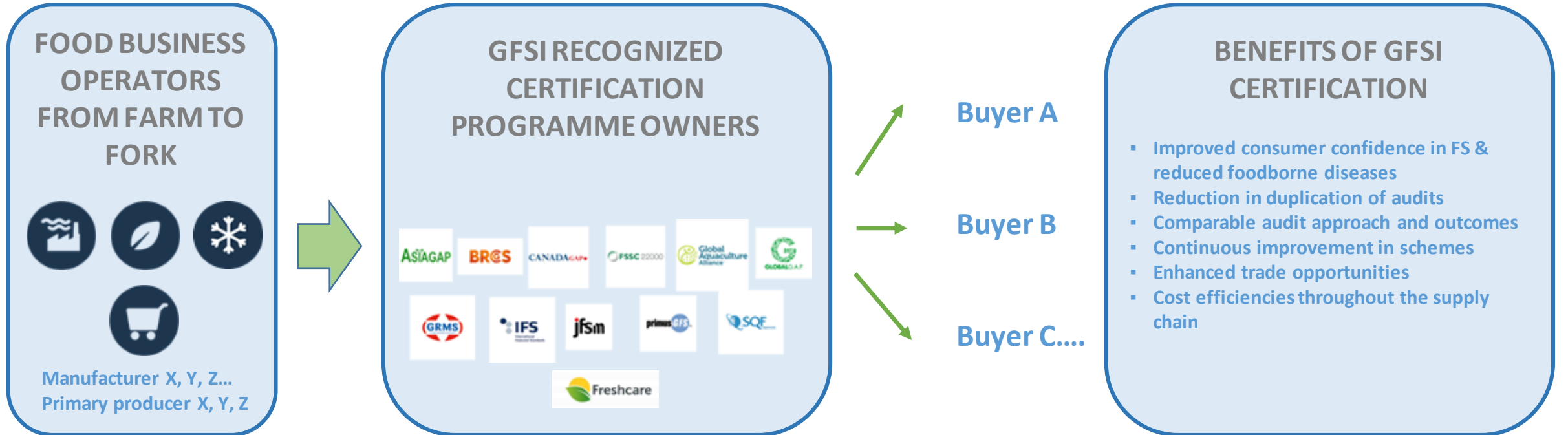
GFSI does...

- ✓ recognise and oversee food safety certification programmes based on the GFSI Benchmarking Requirements;
- ✓ bring together food safety experts within a global network;
- ✓ drive global change through multi-stakeholder projects on strategic issues; and
- ✓ enables knowledge and insight sharing to help raise the bar for food safety globally.

GFSI does not...

- ✗ make policy for retailers, manufacturers or food safety certification programme owners;
- ✗ undertake any accreditation or certification activities;
- ✗ own any food safety programmes or standards, or undertake training; and
- ✗ have any involvement outside the scope of food safety, such as animal welfare, the environment or ethical sourcing.

The GFSI model: benchmarking for harmonization



GFSI- enabling the global trade of safe food



By focusing our work on 3 strategic priorities;

- benchmarking and harmonisation
- capability building
- public-private partnerships

Our vision is for a world in which:

- consumers can have confidence that the food they purchase daily is safe to eat and feed their families;
- everyone involved in every step of the process of getting food from the field to the plate understands their responsibility in protecting the food's integrity and safety;
- companies and governments around the world set aside differences to work together for a safe global food supply;
- small and local producers and food facilities can grow their business by ensuring their products meet international safety standards, giving them access to new markets;
- food safety inspectors have consistent and expanded independence, skills, and objectivity;
- unnecessary audit duplication is removed and there is a common understanding of a good food safety system; and
- the many systems and processes that provide controls and assurance on food safety are efficient and don't unnecessarily duplicate each other.

**We believe this vision
will enable the
industry to safely
build trust – with
consumers and
partners along the
supply chain.**

Use of ICT in food safety audits -Background

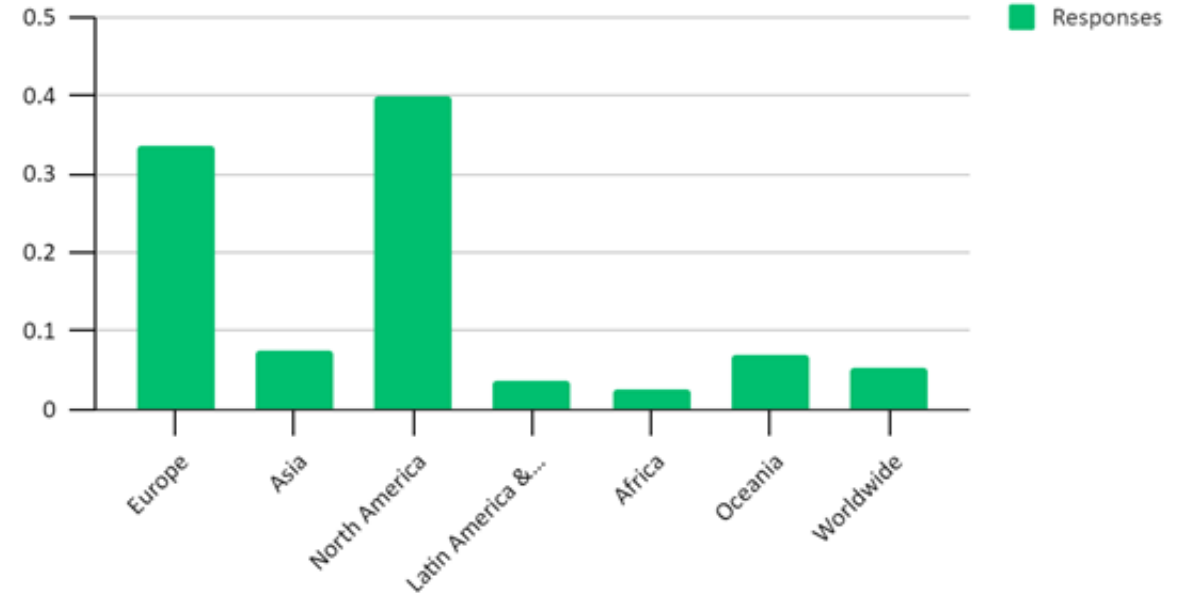


- Pre-COVID GFSI had begun exploring the potential uses of ICT in third party food safety audit protocols
- In the immediate face of the pandemic GFSI was being heavily lobbied by stakeholders to automatically 'recognise' fully remote audits
- GFSI was concerned about having no scientific evidence base to support that change - protecting consumers by assuring the efficacy and integrity of third party audits was critical to maintaining trust and confidence in the GFSI ecosystem
- GFSI issued a call for evidence whilst supporting businesses by:
 - extending certificates following a risk assessment
 - convening a task and finish expert group to consider changes to the GFSI benchmarking requirements to accommodate the use of ICT
- GFSI amended the BMRs within 4 months of the start of the pandemic to enable 'partial' use of ICT in audits undertaken against a GFSI recognised programme in a 'blended' approach

GFSI latest survey on use of ICT

- Survey ran from October 2021 to May 31st 2022 to assess the impact of Version 2020 of GFSI benchmarking requirements' among the business community:
 - 760 respondents: 400 FBOs who have answered and completed the questionnaires
- Since January 2020
47% of FBOs had experienced a fully remote or GFSI recognized blended audit vs 79% who had never experienced one before January 2020

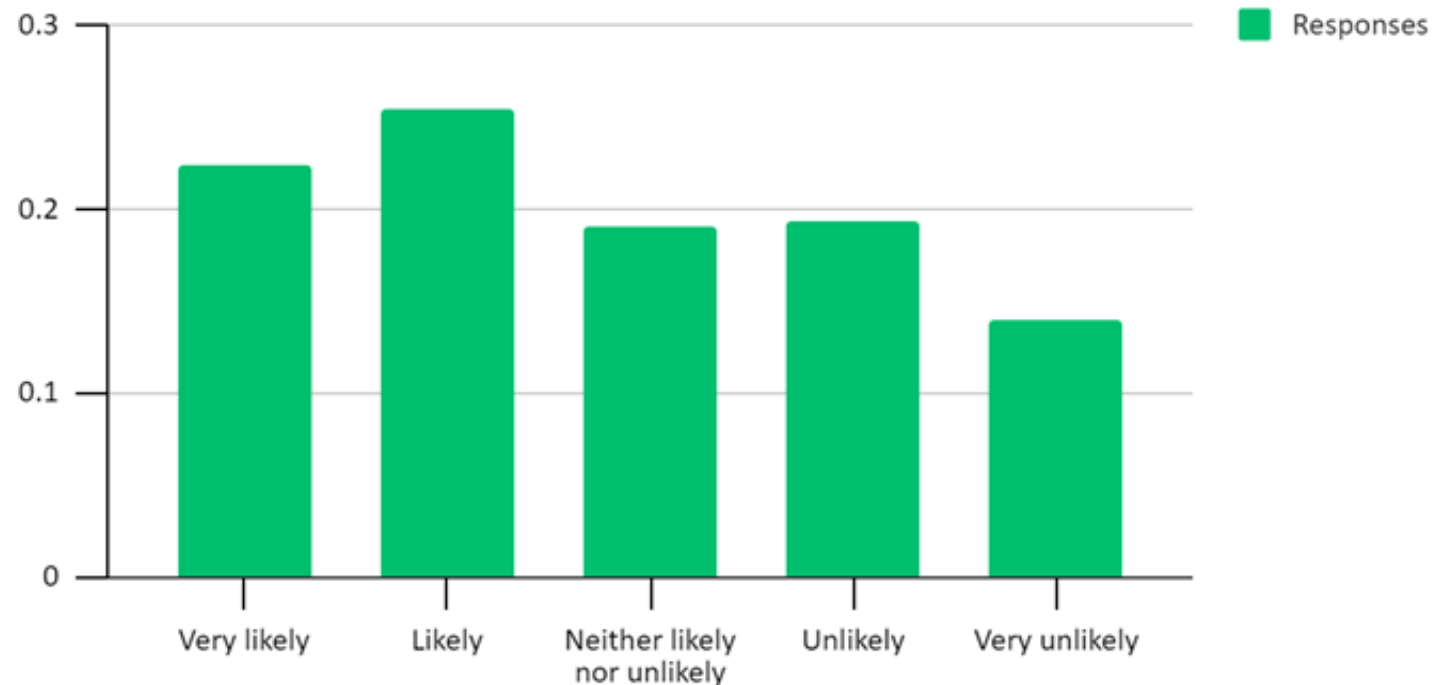
Please confirm your main region of operation



GFSI latest survey on use of ICT

- 73% of the FBOs respondents said the use of ICT in audits for remote assessment purposes was important
- In their view,
- 48% said the use of ICT will impact positively the food safety outcomes of certified FBOs,
- 16% said use of ICT will impact negatively on food safety outcomes
- 23% said use of ICT would have no impact of food safety outcomes

If you are offered the opportunity, will you choose for part of your next audit to be carried out using Information and Commu...



GFSI latest survey on use of ICT



PROS

- **Auditor Preparedness:** Requires more preparation from the auditor
- **Less audit fatigue:** Requires less logistics, travel and audit time
- **Environmental Impact:** Less travel = less environmental impact
- **Costs:** Less costly
- **Flexibility:** Maximizes flexibility for short harvest windows

CONS

- **Critical Factor Assessment Lacking:** Visual, hands-on assessment not possible. Food safety and company culture difficult to assess and encouraged for manufacturers and farms
- **Technology Investment Required:** Technology not fully developed or compatible with manufacturer capabilities. Cost incurred
- **Corporate IT Policies:** Confidentiality and interoperability with exchange of data
- **Human resources:** Lack of skill and training and transition to use of ICT

Current Learning from GFSI



There are clear pros and cons to the use of ICT in food safety audits. Consistent audit protocols and ensuring that both the auditor and auditee are competent and able to benefit from a remote or partially remote approach is critical. Process and scope of the use of remote assessments and on-site assessments needs to be established based on the advantages and benefits for each tools:

- Blended audits are demonstrably efficacious if used smartly: remote audits can be safely used for documentation review, pre- preparation of the auditor on the context and environment of the site
- On site audit needs to be used for the advantages of '*boots on the ground*' verification activities for critical food safety aspects: mobilizing senses, understanding working culture, food safety and corporate culture, in-person interactions with staff, learning/coaching/understanding exchanges in an audit
- The use of ICT is the future, COVID-19 helped accelerate the pace at which GFSI would consider the evidence base
- GFSI will keep monitor constantly the use of ICT in audits activities undertaken by GFSI recognized certification programme owners (CPOs) and delivered by Certification Bodies

Thank you, Contact Us!

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Collective action and engagement across the entire supply chain is critical to our success, so we welcome those who wish to engage and partner with us, as we seek continuous improvement in food safety management practices throughout the supply chain and help ensure safe food for people everywhere.

