



REGULATORY REFERENCE

IFS Food Standard

International Featured Standards Food, version 8 (mandatory since January 2024)

GLOBAL · IFS MANAGEMENT GMBH · BERLIN · PRIVATE STANDARD
RECOGNIZED BY GFSI

May 13, 2026

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JURISDICTION IFS Management GmbH · Berlin · private standard recognized by GFSI	TYPE Certification	CATEGORY Food safety
DARWIN PRODUCTS Captia · Tracium	LAST OFFICIAL UPDATE April 15, 2023	DOCUMENT VERSION v1.0.0 · 13/05/2026

1. What is it?

The **IFS Food Standard** (*International Featured Standards Food*) is a private food safety and quality certification scheme issued by **IFS Management GmbH** from Berlin. It is recognized by the **Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)** and required by major European retail chains from their suppliers as a condition for supplying private-label or third-party-branded products. The current version is **IFS Food v8**, published in April 2023 and mandatory for every audit since **January 1, 2024**. Certification renews annually.

2. Who does it apply to?

Covered actors:

- Food manufacturers and processors.
- Sites packing private-label products for retail chains.
- Plants processing both private-label and third-party-branded products.
- Suppliers exporting to the European Union when the retailer buyer demands it.

Covered products: processed foods of every category, as well as partially processed products (meat, dairy, bakery, canned goods, frozen, beverages, condiments, ingredients, etc.).

Markets: globally recognized standard. Dominant adoption in **Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Poland**. Other European and export markets accept it as equivalent proof against other GFSI-recognized schemes (BRC, FSSC 22000, SQF).

Scope by exclusion: certification applies to the **production site**, not to the product. A single corporate group must certify each plant independently. Commercial offices, no-transformation warehouses, and pure distribution operations are not in IFS Food (sister schemes exist: IFS Logistics for distribution, IFS Broker for intermediation, IFS PACsecure for packaging).

3. Key requirements

The standard is organized into **5 chapters** that contain all auditable requirements.

IFS Food v8 chapters

Chapter	Focus	Summary
1	Senior management responsibility	Commitment, food safety policy, management review, food safety culture.
2	Food safety and quality management system	HACCP plan, documentation, record control, specifications, formulas.
3	Resource management	Personnel hygiene, training, work clothing, sanitary facilities.
4	Operational processes	Customer agreement, raw material specifications, supplier control, traceability , foreign-material control, storage, transport.
5	Measurements, analyses and improvements	Internal audits, inspections, control of non-conformities, recalls and withdrawals , corrective actions.

The 10 KO (Knock-Out) requirements

Each KO is critical. **A single major non-conformity on any KO causes automatic audit failure** and the loss of certification, regardless of the overall score.

ID	Clause	Requirement
KO-1	1.2.1	Senior management governance and commitment.
KO-2	2.3.9.1	Monitoring system of each critical control point (CCP).
KO-3	3.2.2	Personnel hygiene.
KO-4	4.1.3	Customer agreement.
KO-5	4.2.1.3	Raw material specifications.
KO-6	4.12.1	Foreign material risk mitigation.
KO-7	4.18.1	Traceability.
KO-8	5.1.1	Internal audits.
KO-9	5.9.1	Recall, withdrawal and incident procedures.
KO-10	5.11.3	Corrective actions.

Certification levels

Final score	Level	Outcome
< 75% or KO failure	no certification	Audit failed.
75% – 95%	Foundation Level	Certified with room for improvement.
> 95%	Higher Level	Exceptional compliance.

Audit

- **Frequency:** **annual** recertification.
- **Modality:** scheduled or **unannounced** (the unannounced variant is valued by buyers as stronger evidence).
- **Minimum duration:** at least **50% of the total audit time must be on-site** in production areas. Reducible to one third when processes are simple, with a minimum of 1.25 total days.
- **Mandatory presence:** the most senior manager must attend both opening and closing meetings.

4. How does Darwin cover it?

Captia captures production events in plant and field; **Tracium** anchors records to the immutable ledger. Together they support the auditable requirements as

follows.

- **KO-7 Traceability (4.18.1): Captia** generates Traceability Lot Codes for every production event and links them to raw materials, work-in-progress and finished product; **Tracium** persists and signs each lot on-chain, enabling bidirectional traceability evidence to the auditor.
- **KO-9 Recalls and withdrawals (5.9.1):** a lot-keyed query in **Tracium** returns the full affected-product tree in seconds; **Captia** centralizes the record of withdrawal actions and communication with customer and authorities.
- **2.x HACCP: Captia** structures HACCP plans per production line, records CCP monitoring and retains auditable evidence (thermograph readings, inspection records, corrective actions) in the ledger.
- **4.2 Raw material specifications (KO-5): Captia** maintains a versioned catalog of supplier specifications, linked to the received lot and to the COA (Certificate of Analysis).
- **4.1 Customer agreement (KO-4): Tracium** records commercial agreements and their changes immutably, generating audit-ready evidence of what was agreed and when.
- **5.1 Internal audits (KO-8): Captia** schedules and records internal audits, findings, action plans and closure.
- **5.11 Corrective actions (KO-10): Captia** assigns and tracks corrective actions with deadlines, owners and closure evidence.
- **General documentation:** relevant files (specifications, supplier certifications, plans, procedures) are archived in **Captia** with version history and signature of the approver.

Areas not yet covered in V1 (transparent):

- **Physical site aspects** (infrastructure, pest control, metal detection, equipment validation) require traditional systems and operational controls; Darwin records the evidence but does not perform the physical control.
- **Personnel training** and **food safety culture** are the client's responsibility; **Captia** records attendance, evaluations and e-signature but the content is provided by the client.

5. Sanctions and consequences of non-compliance

Unlike a government regulation, IFS does not impose fines. The consequences are **commercial and reputational**.

Certificate loss:

- Without a current certificate, the plant **cannot supply major European retailers** that demand it as a contractual condition.
- A failed audit triggers a remediation period; during that period the plant falls outside the certified scheme.
- Re-audits carry additional cost and consume commercial time.

Commercial risk:

- Buyers requiring IFS include Carrefour, Lidl, Metro, Aldi, Edeka, Rewe, Auchan, among others. Without certification, products do not enter.
- A level drop (from Higher to Foundation) usually triggers commercial review by the buyer.
- In European tenders IFS Higher Level is preferred over Foundation Level.

Reputational risk:

- The public IFS database exposes certification status (certified, suspended, revoked). It is consulted by buyers before issuing purchase orders.

6. Timeline

- **2003:** IFS Food v1 published.
- **2007:** IFS Food v5; first GFSI recognition.
- **2014:** IFS Food v6 published.
- **2017:** IFS Food v6.1 minor update.
- **October 2020:** IFS Food v7 published, mandatory from July 2021.
- **April 2023: IFS Food v8 published.**
- **January 1, 2024: v8 mandatory for every audit.** v7 certifications stop being issued.
- **2026 (expected):** possible doctrines and intermediate clarifications.
- **2026 to 2028 (expected):** typical cycle suggests IFS Food v9 publication.

7. Official source and updates

- **Primary source:** [IFS · Food Standard](#)
- **Full IFS Food v8 text (PDF):** [IFS Food v8 Standard · April 2023](#)
- **Audit checklist guideline:** [IFS Food v8 Audit Checklist Guideline](#)
- **IFS Doctrine** (binding clarifications): see News section on [ifs-certification.com](#).

- **Public certificate database:** [IFS Database](#)
- **Last official update verified:** April 15, 2023 (v8 publication).
- **Darwin doc version:** 1.0.0.
- **Darwin doc date:** May 13, 2026.

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All-in-One Digital Product Platform

Traceability, compliance and operational efficiency for food and agro-industrial supply chains.

From origin to market. From traceability to trust.

Traceability is now market-access infrastructure

Food supply chains must demonstrate origin, process, compliance and evidence. Pressure converges from regulators, global buyers, consumers, brands and higher-value markets.

Regulators

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Buyers

visibility and response

Consumers

trust with evidence

Markets

origin, quality and access

Darwin covers the full traceability cycle



AI LAYER Intelligence applied over traceable data: inconsistencies, gaps, risks, alerts, queries and audits.

What it solves

- Fragmented data across field, plant, logistics and customers.
- Slow audits and traceability rebuilt after the fact.
- Gap between market requirements and operational reality.
- Low digitalization at producers and rural areas.

What it enables

- **Comply better:** structured, auditable and verifiable data.
- **Operate better:** fewer errors, rework and manual load.
- **Sell better:** demonstrable origin, quality and sustainability.
- **Include better:** producers connected to higher-value chains.

Multi-standard compliance

Capture once, structure correctly and reuse the data for regulatory, commercial and operational purposes.

FSMA 204

CTEs / KDEs

EUDR

DDS and deforestation

Certifications

GlobalGAP, BRC, organic

Private standards

retailers and buyers

One platform, different value cases

● Producers

evidence and market access

● Exporters

control and compliance

● Retailers and brands

risk, recalls and claims

● Certifiers

audit-ready evidence

● Industry bodies

sectoral standardization

● Governments

inclusion and markets

Rollout: Discovery, Pilot and Go-live

Differentiators: traceability at the core · capture at origin · interoperability · verifiable evidence · all-in-one modular · AI on top of real traceability.

01 Discovery

02 Pilot

03 Go-live