



Remote Activities for Audit Process Guidance

In compliance with the requirements outlined in [GFSI 2020.1](#), SQFI has updated our audit policy to allow for remote activities using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) during the audit process, **effective June 25, 2020**. This approach will allow the auditor to focus on a risk-based approach to the audit. Sites and Certification Bodies (CB) interested in using ICT for the audit process must follow the SQFI policy in conjunction to the guidelines and best practices laid down in the [IAF MD 4:2018-IAF Mandatory document for the use of information and communication technology \(ICT\) for auditing / assessment purposes](#).

Steps to Implement the Revised Audit Process

The revised SQF Audit Process Policy allows for remote activities to be conducted for all *SQF Codes*, including the *SQF Fundamentals Program*, and all audit types except for unannounced audits. Remote activities can only account for up to 50% of the audit duration; a minimum of 50% of the audit still needs to be held on-site. The on-site audit needs to be conducted within 30 days of the remote activity barring extenuating circumstances. This timeline can be extended following an extenuating circumstance by contacting your CB.

All current and prospective SQF Sites across all FSCs are eligible to apply for a portion of the audit to be done via remote activities. Sites must apply through their CB. CBs will grant approval after conducting a feasibility assessment to assess the risk and ability to conduct any part of the audit remotely.

The audit process using remote activities will follow the below steps:

- Step 1: Determining the feasibility of using ICT methods with the site.
- Step 2: Planning and scheduling the audit.
- Step 3: Using ICT to collect audit evidence from a remote location.
- Step 4: Conducting the onsite audit.
- Step 5: Close out the audit.

Proper Guidance for Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

As part of the audit process, relevant guidance and training for the use of ICT are to be available and the Site and the CB will need to mutually agree on the procedures, schedules, and selected ICT technology before starting the audit process. Additionally, the CB will inform the Site of all requirements prior to the start of remote activities to allow for sufficient preparation.

Revised Guidance Timeframe – COVID and Beyond

The revised policy is for immediate use and will remain in place beyond the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and is applicable going forward. However, this does not change the overall objective of SQF Audits. Audits and the subsequent reports will continue to follow processes laid down in Part A of the *SQF Code*.

Full Revised Policy Access

For more information about the remote activities policy and examples of remote activities, please read the [full revised policy manual](#).