

AB Requirements in relation to managing the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The current pandemic of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) may impact the ABs ability to complete the scheduled CB onsite assessments. These situations include events preventing access to the CB or to locations where witness activities are necessary or the general ability of the CB to operate.

As a result of the Coronavirus, onsite assessments might need to be postponed or implementation of alternative assessment methods such as remote assessments or desktop reviews of documents could be utilized.

It is expected that ABs in conjunction with the CBs operating under their accreditation, establish a suitable course of action to ensure the continued integrity of the FSSC 22000 Scheme.

Following discussions internally and with other Stakeholders, in particular the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Coronavirus position paper dated 13 March 2020, the Foundation FSSC 22000 has decided to grant an exception in the case of the Coronavirus where this is preventing ABs from travelling to organizations in affected areas/countries. In all cases, the AB shall have documented procedures and keep records of the activities mentioned below.

The Foundation FSSC 22000 requires ABs of its licensed CBs to undertake the following actions:

- a) Follow IAF ID3:2011 *Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CBs and Certified Organizations*, available at www.iaf.nu.
The risk assessment by the AB shall as a minimum include the criteria as listed in section 4 of IAF ID3:2011. Based on the information obtained from the CB as referenced in section 4 of IAF ID3, the AB may prioritize the subsequent planning and scheduling of assessments. The AB shall maintain documented information and make this available to the Foundation upon request.
The outcome of the risk assessment could lead to the suspension of or scope reduction of the CB accreditation and if so, the Foundation shall be informed as soon as possible via email to info@fssc22000.com.
- b) Initial accreditation and extension to scope: during the period when onsite CB office assessments are not possible, applications for initial accreditation and scope extensions may be accepted and document reviews may be conducted at the discretion of the AB. However, the initial accreditation and scope extension process can only be finished when onsite CB auditor witness assessments have been successfully conducted (see below).
- c) Surveillance assessments: risk assess the situation of the CB and take appropriate action. This could lead to a postponement of the surveillance activity within the calendar year or making use of remote assessments using ICT (see below for more details on the remote assessment).
- d) Re-accreditation assessments: an accreditation cycle shall never exceed five years (ISO/IEC 17011 article 7.9.1) however a CB accreditation certificate validity extension is allowed following a documented risk assessment and a successful remote assessment using ICT (see below for more details on the remote assessment).
- e) Witnessing of CB auditors: it is always the preference that AB witnessing an auditor should be done as part of an onsite visit, but in the case where the activity is affected by the Coronavirus e.g. it is not possible for the AB assessor to travel to the site, then a remote assessment may be considered if suitable ICT is available, including live video and the objectives of the assessment can still be achieved. Where remote technology is not available or not feasible, the witness assessment shall be postponed for 3 months.
- f) Remote assessments: these shall follow IAF MD4:2018 *The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for auditing/assessment purposes* and IAF ID12:2015 *Principles on Remote*

Assessment (available at www.iaf.nu) where the AB decides to utilize this method of assessment and special consideration shall be given to the following:

- Risk assessing the CB to determine the viability of conducting a remote assessment including, but not limited to, an ICT test scenario and the performance history of the CB. When a remote assessment is deemed feasible, a follow-up onsite assessment might be required in addition to the remote assessment depending on the outcome of the risk assessment and/or the remote assessment;
 - Considering the ability of the CB to participate in a remote assessment including availability of a CB representative, the forum and technology to be used and the accessibility of the CB and CB clients' documentation especially in the case of CBs operating across several countries or critical locations;
 - Assessing the emergency preparedness and response to the impact of the Corona virus on the CB, their resources and planning activities.
 - The duration of the remote assessment shall be appropriate to the complexities of the CB and sufficient to adequately cover the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1, ISO/TS 22003 and the FSSC 22000 scheme.
 - In all instances where the remote technology utilized is not functioning properly or preventing/hampering a robust assessment, the assessment shall be aborted, and suitable follow-up actions determined. Where the AB and CB are unable to arrange suitable follow-up actions within 3 months of the remote assessment, the certificate shall be suspended.
 - When major non-conformities are identified at the CB, the Foundation shall be informed, and the report shared with the FSSC Integrity team.
 - The report shall identify that a 'remote assessment' has been performed.
- g) When the AB has not been able to assess FSSC 22000 licensed CB's, the Foundation shall be informed including any actions taken to resolve the situation.
- h) The Foundation has issued a separate set of requirements for CBs to follow specifically related to the Coronavirus (COVID-19). In principle the CB shall follow AB guidance, where applicable, and in cases where this conflicts with the FSSC 22000 specific requirements, the AB shall contact the Foundation to resolve the issue.