



CanadaGAP Audits Impacted by Extraordinary Circumstances (such as global pandemic)

Guidance for Certification Bodies

Updated March 2024

In March, 2022, GFSI released its current position regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its impact on carrying out audits against GFSI-recognized programs.

March 8, 2022 – Updated Statement on GFSI Position: <https://mygfsi.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GFSI-COVID19-Position-March-2022-Update.pdf>

Alternatives to On-site Audits

Please be advised that GFSI is not allowing for fully remote auditing. Based on the most recent communication from GFSI, fully remote and virtual auditing is not an acceptable substitute to on-site audits.

CanadaGAP's partially remote auditing option under TP-09-RM continues to be available.

Certificate Extensions and Risk Assessment

Under extraordinary circumstances, IAF guidance enables certification bodies to extend certificates for up to 6 months based on a risk assessment. The details provided by GFSI are as follows:

- Follow IAF ID3:2011, “Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting AB’s, CB’s and Certified Organizations”. [CBs have a copy]
- Relative to travel restrictions:
 - CBs must review if there is a possibility of using auditors from other regions, that have no travel restrictions, to audit sites.
 - For countries and/or regions where sites cannot be visited because of travel restrictions, and no auditors are able to reach the site, the following considerations are recommended to determine if an extension to their certificate can be granted:
 - The CB must fully demonstrate that there is no other possibility but to extend the certificate.
 - If an extension is granted, all decisions and procedures that led to the extension of the certificate, must be fully documented and based on risk assessments as indicated on the IAF ID 3:2011 document.
 - Continual re-evaluation by the CB of the certified site’s ability to accept an on-site audit should be maintained and an audit should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

- The certificate extension can last for a period of up to 6 months.
- Once the travel restriction has been lifted, audits should be rescheduled, and CBs should establish procedures to determine via a risk assessment the order in which the rescheduling of audits should take place.
- Certification Programme Owners (CPOs) should have a system in place to track for how long the certificate extension has been granted and to which sites.
- CPOs will be asked to submit their risk assessment for granting a certificate extension to GFSI for review.

CanadaGAP supports certification bodies granting certificate extensions to operations who are currently due for an audit. To meet the final point in GFSI's position (above), CanadaGAP will require CBs to provide a justification/risk assessment that can be supplied to GFSI. CBs are asked to provide an **overall** risk assessment in support of their policies, as each CB is working within its own protocols to ensure auditor and client safety.

CanadaGAP has requested that CBs ensure any certificates that are extended due to extraordinary circumstances include a code in the subject line of the email (e.g., EXTCOV19) to help CanadaGAP track those certificate extensions that must be reported to GFSI.

Requests for Extensions

If a certified company does not want to put their employees at risk of transmission of illness, they may ask voluntarily for the certification body to extend a certificate that will be expiring in the near future. The CBs will manage these requests as per the guidance provided above (i.e., develop criteria for risk assessment, ongoing communication/monitoring of the certified company).

Resumption of Regular Certification Cycle following Extensions

Operations that receive a certificate extension will revert to their regular certification cycle the following year (cycle).

We will continue to update this guidance as the situation evolves. Please contact the CanadaGAP office with any questions.

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