



QCS AQUAPONICS GAPs FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

FAQs

1. Do I need this certification?

Great first question! This is a voluntary certification; thus, only you can decide according to your own objectives and needs. If you are motivated to show your buyers that you care about sustainability, minimizing food safety risks, and continuous improvement, obtaining this certification is an excellent option.

2. What is the timeline of certification?

This varies according to each individual situation. However, if you meet all certification requirements, from the time QCS receives a signed service contract and payment the timeline should be less than 45 days.

3. What do I need to have ready for my initial (first time) audit?

You must have conducted a self-assessment to check compliance with the standard before the day of the audit. You may download and use the self-audit checklist available at our website.

You must have documents and records available on-site demonstrating compliance with the standard for at least the past 60 days on the day of the audit.

You must schedule your audit at a time when all of your production processes including harvesting may be audited for the products you want to certify.

4. What should I do if I do not comply with all of the requirements in the self-audit?

You should take corrective actions to bring your operation to a level of compliance where you think you will at least meet the minimum acceptance criteria as stated in the standard document. Doing this will improve your chance to obtain certification when you schedule a formal on-site audit.

5. When do you need to come out for an audit? If I harvest multiple crops at different times, do you need to come during each crop's harvest period?

If your harvest process is different for your different crops the answer is yes as we must audit all of your production processes initially. For a renewal audit there may be some flexibility on a case-by-case basis.

6. Can I coordinate organic and this certification to be audited together and renewed together?

Yes, we will do everything possible to accommodate your needs.

7. How do I apply for this Aquaponics certification?

You may download the application form as well as other informative documents from our website. Fill out the application and return it to qcs@qcsinfo.org. A QCS representative will send you the cost estimate and the service contract agreement once the application is received and checked.

8. *How long is the validity of the certificate?*

The certificate is valid for 12 months from the date of the certification decision. Let's say your on-site audit was conducted on August 15th, 2014, and the review of your file and positive certification decision was made on August 27th, 2014. In this case, your certificate would show a *valid from* date of August 27th, 2014, and a *valid to* date of August 26th, 2015.

9. *Can I contact QCS with questions on what my operations should do to meet the compliance criteria?*

No, QCS is a third party certification body and we cannot help you in that regard as we must maintain complete independence and impartiality throughout the certification process. This brings integrity, trust, and recognition to your certificate. However, if needed, you may seek advice elsewhere (e.g. consultants, growers associations, etc.).

QCS is an ISO Guide 65 accredited certifying agent. QCS cannot provide consultation services to our clients, other than to ensure compliance with the QCS Aquaponics GAPs Food Safety Standard.

For additional information contact:

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