



## **IAF and Foundation FSSC MLA AGREEMENT**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The **Foundation FSSC** is the scheme owner of the world-wide operated FSSC 22000 Scheme, from now on referred to as “the Foundation” which has sought and received endorsement of their FSSC 22000 scheme version 5 , from now on referred to as “the Scheme” as a sub-scope of the IAF MLA in accordance with IAF PL3 and this Agreement.

1.2 The Scheme requires Certification Bodies (CBs) operating in its FSSC 22000 Scheme version 5 or higher to be accredited by an Accreditation Body (AB) that is a signatory to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) with a main scope of management system certification (IAF MLA signatories).

1.3 The Scheme sets voluntary standards for the certification of the field of food safety and quality management system certification. The Scheme outlines the requirements for the audit and certification of food safety management systems (FSMS) or FSMS and Quality Management Systems (QMS) for organizations in the food supply chain. The Scheme is owned and managed by a not-for-profit foundation based in Gorinchem, The Netherlands. The Scheme has been benchmarked and recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) since 2010. Currently, there are around 24,000 FSSC 22000 certificates registered worldwide accessible on its website [www.fssc22000.com](http://www.fssc22000.com).

1.4 The Foundation contracts at the time of this Agreement with over 130 CBs Worldwide under the Scheme, the supervision of which is carried out by the ABs that are IAF MLA signatories.

1.5 The FSSC 22000 certification process is performed by more than 1,500 auditors. Requirements for the professional competence of personnel auditors are defined in Part 4, section 3 of the Scheme requirements for Certification Bodies.

1.6 The Foundation delegates the responsibility of supervision of the CBs it contracts with to the corresponding IAF Accreditation Bodies, noting that harmonization of criteria applied by the different ABs is increasingly important to ensure consistency of that supervision.

1.7 The Scheme provides the standard and framework for independent, recognized 3rd party management system certification of animal farming, food manufacturing, production of feed, biochemicals, packaging (materials), transport & storage, catering and retail/wholesale organizations based on ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/TS 22003.

1.8 The **International Accreditation Forum (IAF)** is the world association of conformity assessment accreditation bodies in the fields of management systems, products, services, process, persons, validation and verification and other similar programs of conformity assessment.



1.9 IAF is responsible for the harmonization and continuous improvement of the accreditation practices of its members with the ultimate goal to ensure sound technical competence of accredited CBs and V&VBs (Verification and Validation Bodies) and to support its IAF MLA.

1.10 The IAF MLA is established and maintained on the basis of the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 through regular peer evaluations and is the tool by which IAF contributes to the elimination of technical barriers to trade and to promoting the free circulation of certificates issued by accredited CBs.

## **2. Administration and Cooperation**

2.1 Both IAF and the Foundation by means of this formal Agreement, have decided to develop and maintain a close cooperation between the two organizations to ensure harmonization in the accreditation practices performed by IAF members for the Scheme and to cooperate in the continuous improvement of the Scheme with the final goal of assuring the highest level of competence in the Scheme's accredited CBs.

2.2 IAF and the Scheme version 5 or higher shall comply with the respective requirements of IAF PL3 IAF Policies and Procedures for Expansion of the Scope of the IAF MLA, operating and administrating in an open, non-discriminatory and transparent manner, avoiding conflicts of interest or limitation on the acceptance of CBs or ABs other than relevant technical considerations.

2.3 The Scheme version 5 or higher will be open to all CBs that are accredited by IAF MLA signatories. The ABs will be signatory members of the IAF MLA for Management Systems (ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/TS 22003) and have agreed to implement the requirements between the Foundation and IAF (MoU). A list of IAF ABs that have agreed to implement the MoU shall be maintained on the Foundation website.

2.4 The Foundation will only work with IAF MLA signatories and who have agreed to implement the MoU. The Foundation will stop working with an AB that is no longer a signatory to the IAF MLA or has not implemented and maintained the MoU.

2.5 Both IAF and the Foundation shall appoint a liaison person of each organization to act as contact persons.

## **3. Information Exchange**

In order to achieve such goals both organizations have agreed upon the following:

3.1 The Foundation shall inform the IAF of the following:

- a) Changes to the Scheme that may impact compliance with IAF PL3;
- b) Any revision/extension of FSSC 22000 after version 5 standards/documents
- c) Outcomes from any AB workshop held by the Foundation on the Scheme;
- d) Feedback the Foundation may have regarding the IAF MLA signatory ABs;
- e) Change in the status as GFSI recognized scheme



3.2 IAF shall inform the Foundation of the following:

- (a) When an IAF MLA signatory with a sub-scope of the Scheme version 5 or higher has been suspended or had their IAF MLA signatory status withdrawn;
- (b) Any general or technical questions regarding the interpretation of the Scheme standards/documents;
- (c) Changes in policy, procedure or documentation that may have impact on the IAF MLA and Scheme sub-scope;

#### **4. Mandatory Interpretation of FSSC 22000 Documents**

4.1 The Scheme documents shall be prepared using the FSSC 22000 Scheme Development Procedure for the setting and revision of Scheme documentation. This shall include a stakeholder consultation phase comprising of comment submissions by interested parties each lasting a specified timeframe with feedback being provided to organizations that made the comment.

4.2 The IAF will be included as a stakeholder and invited during any stakeholder consultation period of the Scheme revision process.

4.3 The review period for the Scheme normative documents shall be 3 years. The Scheme normative documents shall be available free of charge (at least to IAF MLA signatory ABs) from version 5 onwards on the Foundation FSSC website.

4.4 The Foundation will provide new draft Scheme version document(s) with a gap analysis and proposed transition plan for implementation of the new version documents to IAF as soon as a technically sound new version is available in order to make sure, that the new scheme version continues to comply with the requirements of IAF PL3. The Foundation accepts the process to be followed according to IAF PL3 for IAF MLA sub-scope inclusion of new versions of the Scheme.

4.5 The need for the development of specific IAF application documents for inclusion of publicly owned standards/normative documents in the IAF MLA shall be proposed by the IAF Technical Committee and the need for additional preparation of peer evaluation by the IAF MLA Committee as specified in IAF PL3.

4.6 The FSSC 22000 Scheme version(s) endorsed as IAF MLA sub-scopes are included in the relevant IAF MLA status lists. After the end of the transition period to a new scheme version the old version will not be published as IAF MLA sub-scopes anymore.

#### **5. Implementation**

5.1 IAF and the Foundation shall each bear their own costs.

5.2 The FSSC 22000 scheme will be included as a sub-scope under the main scope of Management System Certification, ISO/IEC 17021-1. Those accreditation bodies currently providing accreditations to the Scheme will automatically have their MLA scope extended to include the FSSC 22000 scheme once this



agreement is signed, thus allowing for accredited FSSC 22000 scheme certificates to be issued.

The revision of the implementation of this Agreement is in the scope of the MLA Peer evaluation to the IAF Management System MLA signatories working in the certification scheme that have agreed to implement the MoU.

## 6. Confidentiality



6.1 IAF shall hold all Confidential Information in strictest confidence and shall only use it for the purpose for which it was provided and shall not disclose or make available any Confidential Information to any third party without the prior written consent of the Foundation.

## 7. Term

This Agreement shall commence from the original Date of Signing (12 March 2021) and, unless terminated earlier according to clause 8, continue for a period of 3 years.

## 8. Cancellation

This Agreement between the Foundation and IAF can be cancelled by either party in writing with a period of notice of three months.

International Accreditation Forum, Inc.	Foundation FSSC
 Emanuele Riva IAF Chair	 Aldin Hilbrands Director General

**Date of Agreement: 23 December 2021**