Assured Meat Processing Standard (AMPS)

Property of and administered by the Association of Independent Meat Suppliers - AIMS

Audited by KIWA PAI

SCHEME PROTOCOL

Assured Meat Processing Standard - Protocol

Introduction

The Standard has been written specifically for medium and small independent businesses involved in the slaughtering and further processing of red and white meats.

The Standard has 3 main principles to ensure and maintain product safety, legality and quality.

The Standard itself has been divided into a core module applicable to all sites and then additional voluntary modules relating to specific processes or meat types handled or processed.

Module	Who's it for	What's Included
Core Module	For all abattoirs, processing and cutting plants	Senior Management commitment, HACCP, GMP, Personnel, Hygiene
Additional Modules	To be carried out in conjunction with core module	
Animal Welfare	Abattoirs including poultry abattoirs	Lairage operations, slaughter and livestock collection ex-farm by abattoir own transport
Pork Quality	Plants wanting to display the Quality Standard Mark	Pork production
Pork Sausage	Plants producing pork sausages	Pork sausage production

The Standard is designed to offer confidence in the systems and procedures implemented and is subject to an annual verification audit by an approved Certification Body.

Rules

Members who sign up to the Standard are agreeing to conform to the Standard at all times to remain in certification.

Certification in only awarded if the Core Module of Standard is met. Additional Modules cannot be certified as standalone certification. This is verified annually by independent Standard approved assessors who meet the specified criteria.

The Standard is due to be reviewed in its entirety on a four year cycle, however there may be changes made at any time, for example in response to new or amended legislation. Any changes or "authorised amendments" will be communicated.

The Standards are additional to any statutory requirements. Adherence to them will not provide exemption from current legislation and you must comply with all relevant legislation.

Any false or misleading statement made on the application forms, during verification assessments, or in any other communication may lead to suspension or withdrawal of certification and even exclusion from future participation.

Application

A separate application is required for each separate site, where sites have separate Approval Numbers. Where companies outsource any of the processes, those sites must be registered and certified in their own right.

An application form will be sent for completion which will request basic company information relating to number of processes and species handled, size of site, personnel numbers and HACCP studies.

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By signing and returning the application form you agree to be bound by the Standard and rules.

A formal quotation will be provided and payment will be requested prior to audit.

A new application form will be required to be completed annually.

Verification Assessment Duration

A typical verification audit will be one day (8 hours) with an expected 2 hours added for each additional module. However, this is dependent on a number of factors and can be more or less time.

The Certification Body shall indicate the approximate duration of the verification assessment. The calculation for the audit duration is based on the following:

- Number of processes carried out
- Number of species handled
- Number of employees
- Size of the site
- CCPs identified through the HACCP study
- Additional modules

Other factors that are taken into duration calculations may include

- Complexity of processes
- Number of product produced
- Labour intensity of process
- Communication difficulties (e.g. language)
- Previous non-conformities identified

Sites that have other 3rd party food safety certifications (e.g. BRC Global Food)

Where sites have 3rd party certification to an accredited food safety standard, such as BRC Global Food, this will cover a number of the requirements of the core module. There are some meat industry specific requirements that will still need auditing and these are indicated by grey shading in the core module. Where there are combined BRC/AMPS audits, the core module audit duration will typically be reduced to 2-3 hours. Details of the certification will be noted in the audit report.

During the verification audit the duration may be amended due to difficulties experienced during the assessment and the quality of the site preparation.

Prior to Assessment

Information will be requested prior to the verification assessment to enable the auditor to familiarise themselves with the site and plan the audit. This will include as a minimum

- Hours of work
- Processes likely to be in taking place on day of assessment
- CCPs information
- Plan of the site

Assessment

Assessment visits will follow a standard format:

- Opening Meeting
- Assessment Activities
- Preparation of findings and any non-conformities
- Closing Meeting

Each of these stages is described below.

Opening Meeting:

The assessor needs to check that information provided is correct. This must be done at the very start of the visit so that any changes to the programme can be planned. The assessor will explain the audit plan and how the assessment will be carried out.

It is important that senior management attend the opening meeting.

Assessment Activities:

The assessor will make a detailed examination of the site including where relevant the livestock, processes and products. This will be carried out by visiting and observing the site operations taking place at the time of the audit. Whilst it is appreciated that not all processes may be taking place at the time of the assessment it is important that there is evidence that the operations stated in the application form and scope of the assessment are carried out at the site.

The assessment will be split between time in the facility (30-40% approximately) and time examining documentation (60-70% approximately).

The purpose of the assessment is to ascertain compliance of the site with the Standard requirements. If the assessor finds that you do not conform to one or more of the requirements of the Standard this will be highlighted as the assessment progresses.

Where an AMPS audit is undertaken at the same time as an accredited 3rd party food safety certification audit (e.g. BRC Global Food), then only the meat industry specific grey shaded clauses of the core module will be audited. The other non-core modules will be audited in full regardless of whether a site has other 3rd party food safety certification as these modules are industry specific. If an AMPS audit is undertaken at a different time to a 3rd party food safety certification audit, then any non-conformances identified that have a food safety risk (e.g. incorrect temperatures) will be noted in the AMPS report.

Preparation of Findings:

Assessors will prepare a Non-Conformance and Corrective Action Plan Report.

Any non-conformance needs to be categorised according to its significance. – the following guidance is applied to decisions regarding the classification of non-compliances:

Critical – where there is a major risk to food safety, traceability or animal welfare or failure to comply with relevant legislation. (The certification body head office and Standard owner will be informed immediately if a critical non-conformance is raised at a previously certificated site).
Major – where there is a substantial failure (little or no evidence) to comply with a requirement of the Standard.
Minor – evidence that a clause of the Standard has not been fully met - but on the basis of objective evidence the conformance of the product is not at risk.

Closing Meeting:

At the end of the assessment a closing meeting will be held. Senior management must be involved in this meeting and the purpose of the meeting is for the assessor to present their findings and to explain any non-compliances identified against the requirements of the Standard.

Non-conformances

A non-conformance graded as critical will result in no award of certification to the Standard or suspension for already certified sites until the site has been re-audited and shown to comply.

Failure to rectify major or minor non-compliances within 28 days of the assessment will result in no award of certification to the Standard or suspension for already certified sites until the site has provided satisfactory evidence that they have been corrected.

The Certification Body will also reserve the right to suspend your certification in the case of a large number of such non-compliances or in the event of the same non-compliance being found on successive assessment visits.

Once your certificate is suspended you must rectify the non-compliances within 3 months of the date of suspension otherwise membership to the Standard will be revoked.

You can only regain certification by following the procedure for a new applicant.

Certification

Certificates are only granted if a site complies with all of the applicable requirements of the Standard.

The decision to award certification to the Standard is taken during a technical review undertaken by the Certification Body once they are in receipt of the assessor report, non-compliances and corrective actions. The decision and awarding of any certification will be made no later than 42 days after the assessment visit.

The scope of the certification shall state the range of site activities (e.g. slaughter, cutting), species handled and any additional core modules. Abattoirs must have the welfare module included with the core module. Where the welfare module includes collection of livestock ex-farm using transport operated by the abattoir, this shall be identified in the scope of the audit.

Only activities that are included on the scope of the certificate and applicable to the locations assessed may be claimed.

Certificates are not transferable and remain the property of the Standard owner and the Certification Body.

Additional Modules shall be included on the main certificate.

Unannounced Assessment Visits

A site who is already a member of the scheme and has already had an announced assessment visit can request an unannounced assessment. An unannounced assessment may take place between month 9 and 12 of the assessment visit.

The protocol will be exactly the same with the exception of the GMP factory inspection being undertaken immediately after the opening meeting and within 30 mins of the assessor arriving on site.

Any certificate awarded will identify that the assessment was carried out unannounced.

Termination of Membership, Withdrawing of Certification

If a site is suspended and do not take the necessary action to rectify the non-compliances within 3 months your certificate will be withdrawn.

The Standard owner and the Certification Body reserves the right to bar future applications or specify particular conditions for re application.

The Standard owner and the Certification Body reserves the right to refuse/terminate membership and withdraw any certificate when it considers that it is necessary to do so to prevent the Standard or the Standard owner being brought into disrepute.

Complaints and Appeals

If there is a complaint about the application process, charges, or are dissatisfied with how an assessment has been conducted and/or the outcome of a certification decision, you may lodge an appeal firstly with the Certification Body. Such complaints should be made in writing within 14 days.

All complaints will be investigated and dealt with fairly in accordance with the Certification Body appeals procedure.

Following the appeals process if there is still a dispute, appeals can be made to AIMS who will make the final decision on the appeal.

Prosecutions and Regulatory Sanctions

You must notify the Certification Body of any prosecutions brought, or likely to be brought with respect to any issues covered in the Standard, including food safety, traceability, animal welfare and relevant consumer protection legislation.

Notification should take place within seven days of the prosecution occurring, or enforcement investigations commencing.

Any information received will be investigated on a case by case basis and appropriate action taken.

Confidentiality

The outcome of any verification assessment is notified to AIMS who maintain a list of current approved sites.

The contents of the final copy of the verification report is made available to the site. During the Certification Body UKAS assessment the verification report may be viewed as part of the Certification Body activity audit.