

MEDIA RELEASE

New Safety Assurance for Food Establishments (SAFE) framework to provide better food safety assurance

The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) will be implementing a new licensing framework for food establishments, called the Safety Assurance for Food Establishments (SAFE) that will provide better food safety assurance to consumers. This was first announced at the Committee of Supply Debate 2020¹.

2 Under the SAFE framework, food establishments that have demonstrated good track record of food safety assurance and have in place capabilities and systems to ensure better food safety standards will be eligible for longer licence durations and higher award tiers. The framework is expected to be implemented from 1 January 2023 onwards, and will apply across retail and non-retail food establishment. An estimated 23,000 food establishments will come under the framework.

3 The SAFE framework will replace the grading schemes and is now focused on food establishments' food safety track records. Currently, food establishments are graded either 'A', 'B', 'C' or 'D' based on an annual snapshot assessment of the premises' food safety performance. Once the SAFE framework is implemented, food establishments will be distinguished by 'Bronze', 'Silver' or 'Gold' awards. Food establishments that have a good track record (i.e. no major food safety lapses over a period of time) as well as are able to fulfil the Food Hygiene Officer (FHO), Advanced FHO and Food Safety Management System requirements will qualify for either the 'Gold', 'Silver' or 'Bronze' awards, which correspond to a 10, 5, or 3- year licence duration. Please refer to Annex A for more details².

4 Individual food establishments will be notified next year of their award tiers based on their track record of food safety assurance. Food establishments will be

¹ SFA announced at the Committee of Supply Debate 2020 that we would be introducing an integrated licensing framework for all food establishments (i.e. across retail and non-retail food establishments).

² Food stalls (within coffee shops, hawker centres, food courts and canteens) are part of the SAFE framework and will be given Gold, Silver or Bronze awards based on their track records of food safety assurance (i.e. no major lapse). Their licence durations will be dependent on the tenancy agreement period.

given sufficient time to implement the necessary requirements (e.g. adopt Food Safety Management System (FSMS), appoint Advanced FHO) to attain the desired award tier upon implementation of the framework in 2023.

5 To support and complement the framework, SFA has implemented a training framework comprising four levels known as the Food Safety Courses (FSC). The breadth and depth of the curriculum increases as trainees progress through the levels. Please refer to Annex B for more details.

6 “The new SAFE framework takes into account the ongoing performance of food establishments, compared to an annual grading audit which provides a snapshot reflection of a food establishment’s food safety and hygiene standards. This is a better representation of the food establishment’s consistent efforts in food safety assurance and can enable consumers to make better informed choices,” said Dr Tan Lee Kim, Director-General, Food Administration and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, SFA. “Ensuring food safety is a joint responsibility. Even as SFA puts in place a regulatory system and enabling environment to ensure food safety, the food industry must also play an active role in maintaining good food safety standards. SFA has engaged industry associations when developing the SAFE framework and have taken their feedback into consideration. We will continue to work closely with the industry for the smooth implementation of the SAFE framework, so that we can maintain consistently high food safety standards in Singapore.”

Issued by the Singapore Food Agency

25 October 2021

Annex A

There are three categories of food establishments (see Tables 1 and 2 below). Food establishments in Category A and B (i.e. involving significant or moderate food handling practices) that a) put in place capabilities and systems (such as appointing Food Hygiene/Adv Food Hygiene Officers and adoption the FSMS) to strengthen their food safety assurance and b) demonstrate good track record of food safety assurance will be eligible for longer licence durations and awarded with higher award tiers. Food establishments in Category C (i.e. involving minimal food handling) that demonstrate good track record of food safety assurance will similarly be eligible for longer licence durations.

Category of food establishments	Criteria for licence duration & Award tier			
	<i>1-year licence (No award)</i>	<i>3-year licence (Bronze)</i>	<i>5-year licence (Silver)</i>	<i>10-year licence (Gold)</i>
<p><i>Category A</i></p> <p>Food establishments that are involved in significant food handling practices with higher food safety risks (e.g. preparation, processing and storage of food under temperature-controlled conditions)</p> <p>E.g. Caterers, restaurants, food manufacturers</p>	<p>New licensees or <2 years without major lapse³</p> <p>Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)</p>	<p>2 years without major lapse</p> <p>FHO</p>	<p>5 years without major lapse</p> <p>FHO</p> <p>FSMS</p>	<p>10 years without major lapse</p> <p>Advanced FHO</p> <p>FSMS certified by an accredited Certification Body⁴</p>
<p><i>Category B</i></p> <p>Food establishments that are involved in moderate food handling and food storage practices with lower food safety risks</p> <p>E.g. Bakeries, food shops, cold stores</p>	<p>New licensees or <2 years without major lapse</p>	<p>2 years without major lapse</p>	<p>5 years without major lapse</p>	<p>10 years without major lapse</p>

³ Examples of major lapses include causing a foodborne outbreak, being convicted in court for offences against SFA's regulations, or a suspension of the licence.

⁴ A recognised FSMS under the SAFE framework include SS 444, SS 590, ISO 22000, FSSC 22000 and BRC Global Food Standards (BRCGS). A requirement of the Gold Tier is that the FSMS is certified by a Certification Body, which is:

1. Accredited by Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC) for ISO 22000, SS 590 and SS 444; or
2. Accredited by accreditation bodies who are signatories of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) multilateral recognition arrangement (MLA) for ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000; or
3. Accredited by BRCGS-recognised accreditation bodies who are signatories of the IAF MLA

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for licence duration and award tier for Category A and B food establishments

Category of food establishments	Criteria for licence duration			
	1-year licence	3-year licence	5-year licence	10-year licence
<p><i>Category C*</i> <i>Minimal risk</i></p> <p>Food establishments that are involved in minimal food handling and food storage practices that have negligible food safety risks</p> <p>E.g. Main operators of food courts, canteens, supermarkets</p> <p>*Category C food establishments are not given Gold, Silver or Bronze awards</p>		<3 years without major lapse	3 years without major lapse	5 years without major lapse

Table 2: Eligibility criteria for licence duration for Category C food establishments

Annex B

The Food Safety Courses (FSC) will comprise the following four levels:

Level 1 of the FSC covers basic food safety principles for food handlers. As these food handlers level up and take on greater responsibilities in the kitchen, they can upskill by taking up Level 2 of the FSC, which will equip them with the know-how to conduct food safety checks for their specific work areas.

Level 3 of the FSC will equip Food Hygiene Officers (FHO) with the knowledge to implement food safety pre-requisite programmes and basic principles of HACCP and Food Safety Management System (FSMS). The FHO may then upskill to become an Advanced FHO through Level 4 of the FSC, which will cover the implementation of FSMS and how to conduct broader food safety checks and internal audits.