

IFS PACsecure version 3 Doctrine



VERSION 2

JULY 2025

ENGLISH

Foreword

This document provides additional clarification to the IFS PACsecure Standard. The doctrine is available to certification bodies, certified companies and all other IFS users.

All changes are described in the content overview on the first pages. If no changes are marked, it means the content was already in the previous doctrine version. Please note that the comment "reworked wording" indicates a grammatical correction or improvement of the language. Any changes to the content are additionally marked. In the digital version of the doctrine, links allow users to search for specific clarifications.

The numbering of the individual topics in the table of content is made up of the standard section and the chapter (e.g. 1-2.2 means part 1 of the Standard, chapter 2.2). The application of newly introduced or adapted rules is always two (2) months after the publication of the relevant version, if not specified otherwise. In case of a new IFS Standard version, the rules apply from the moment the new version is applicable.

Certification bodies shall ensure that relevant certification body personnel are trained internally on the introduced changes according to their function within the certification body before the rules come into force.

Proof of this training shall be available on request. The duration of the training depends on the extent of the changes. IFS does not request any minimum length of time nor a specific tool to be used for the training as long as it is done face-to-face, online or by webinar (see part 3 of the Standard). Sending an email or a presentation in an email is not considered as a training.

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.1 MAKING A CONTRACT WITH A CERTIFICATION BODY

PART 1 – IFS PACsecure Certification Protocol

1-2 Before the IFS PACsecure Audit

1-2.1 Making a contract with a certification body

I) Rules about the use of interpreters during an IFS PACsecure Audit

In general, the audit shall preferably be carried out in the language of the production site. If this is not possible, it is mandatory to use an interpreter under the following conditions:

- The interpreter shall have a technical background or be an approved auditor for another product safety/quality standard.
- The interpreter shall be independent from the audited company to avoid any conflict of interest.
- 20 % of the total audit duration shall be added to ensure proper audit performance.

Note: In case of use of a professional interpreting service provider, IFS accepts that the respective interpreter doesn't have the required technical background. All further rules remain valid.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.1 MAKING A CONTRACT WITH A CERTIFICATION BODY

II) Auditor sharing

There are two (2) possibilities to share auditors between certification bodies:

1) Borrowing of auditors

For the occasional sharing of auditors, both certification bodies shall compose a short agreement concerning the lending/borrowing of the auditor. The agreement shall contain, at a minimum:

- day of audit
- name **and COID** of company
- name of shared auditor
- signature of both certification body managers of the IFS contracted certification bodies
- signature of a responsible person to IFS from both IFS contracted organisations.

2) IFS Certification Body Working Group

If certification bodies wish to share auditors more frequently, a short contract can be requested from the IFS Office in Berlin. This agreement allows two (2) or more certification bodies to work together by sharing one pool of auditors. The responsibilities for the audit, training of auditors, reviewing etc. are clearly separated. Only audit date and scope can be seen by the partner; company names are invisible.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.1 MAKING A CONTRACT WITH A CERTIFICATION BODY

III) Use of a technical expert within an audit team

In exceptional cases, e.g., when a certification body does not have direct access to an IFS PACsecure Auditor with a qualification in the scope required or cannot sign a short term contract with another certification body to access their auditors, IFS allows the following exception. Audits may be carried out by a team consisting of:

- an approved IFS PACsecure Auditor, and
- a technical expert.

The technical expert shall meet the following criteria:

- Have a contract with the certification body for which the audit is to be undertaken. The contract shall include clauses to ensure confidentiality and prevent conflicts of interest.
- Meet the criteria for work experience laid down in the IFS PACsecure Auditor qualification requirements (product scopes for IFS PACsecure version 3).
- Have taken part in a food hygiene and HACCP course, as defined in the IFS PACsecure Auditor Requirements or have demonstrable competence in these areas.
- Have taken part in the “IFS PACsecure Standard for Auditors” eLearning course.

The certification body shall also ensure the following requirements are met:

- Maintain evidence of the experience and qualifications justifying the person’s status as a technical expert. This shall be made available on request to the IFS Offices.
- The role of the technical expert within the audit team shall be clearly defined and the qualified IFS PACsecure Auditor shall be considered as the team leader. The technical expert must be accompanied during the whole audit by the IFS PACsecure Lead Auditor. The benefit for the IFS PACsecure Auditor is that this audit performed with an expert can be used as evidence when applying for a scope extension.
- The technical expert shall appear on the IFS PACsecure Audit Report in the audit overview.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.2 SCOPE OF THE IFS PACSECURE AUDIT

1-2.2 Scope of the IFS PACsecure Audit

I) Which IFS PACsecure Standard version shall be applied in some specific situations?

In case the audit starts on or after 1 July 2024, IFS PACsecure version 3 Audits are possible.

In case the audit starts on or after 1 October 2024, IFS PACsecure version 3 is mandatory.

In case of unannounced IFS Audits, if the audit window starts on or after 1 October 2024 then the audit shall be performed according to IFS PACsecure version 3.

In the case of multi-location companies, all sites shall be audited to the same version as that of the head office.

Exceptional situations where the IFS PACsecure version 2 can still apply are the following:

- Audit of multi-location companies with central management where the audit of the central managing site started before the 1 July 2024. If it is not possible to perform the central management audit according to version 3, all sites shall be audited according to version 2 too, also sites having unannounced audits where one or several site(s) has/have their audit window starting on or after 1 October.
- Follow-up audit when the “main” audit was performed according to version 2.
- Extension audit when the “main” audit was performed according to version 2.

The general admission of the aforementioned exceptional situations which permit the use of IFS PACsecure version 2 after 1 October 2024, shall terminate on 30 September 2025.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.2 SCOPE OF THE IFS PACSECURE AUDIT

II) Examples of how to write the audit scope

The audit scope shall include:

- the most characteristic processes that differentiate the product from others and which are not self-explanatory,
- the different types of products, in sufficient detail,
- the type of wrapping materials that are in contact with products,
- the intended use of products (primary and/or secondary packaging materials).

Some examples of correct (☑) and incorrect (☒) audit scope descriptions are:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Production of standard and coloured glass bottles in wide and narrow neck formats (melting, moulding by the press and blow for wide necks and blow-blow for narrow necks, and coating) packed in wooden pallets with cardboard sheets and wrapped in PE stretch film, to be used in alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
Note: the intended use described is sufficient to clarify that the product will be used as “primary packaging”.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sheeting, lithographic and flexographic printing, die-cutting and folding/glueing of folding cartons, packed in wooden pallets and wrapped in plastic stretch film, to be used as primary packaging in food/non-food industries and secondary packaging in non-food industries
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design & manufacture of rigid plastic packaging (Injection Stretch Blow Molding, Injection Blow Molding) and closures (Injection Molding). Products are intended to be used in the food and non-food industry
Note: The type of wrapping materials and intended use of products are missing. Also, certain activities of a production site are always part of the IFS PACsecure Audit and shall, therefore, not be mentioned specifically – “Design” shall not be included.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Laminating, converting and finishing of polyester, polyethylene, nylon, paper and/or compostable films to manufacture lidding film, shrink sleeves, heat and cold seal roll stock, and pouches as primary and secondary packaging in food and non-food industries”
Note: The scope of the audit shall not include references to claims – “Compostable” shall not be included.	

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.2 SCOPE OF THE IFS PACSECURE AUDIT

III) **Clarification about how to explain in the report special situations where the same or similar raw materials are bought than the product processed/converted by the audited production site.**

Example: A company manufactures corrugated cardboard containers and sheets.

If the audited production site produces corrugated cardboard sheets, which are also bought as raw material to produce corrugated cardboard containers:

- the situation shall be clearly explained in the report (company profile, additional information)
- it shall be stated that the finished product is made of corrugated cardboard sheets that are produced by the audited production site as well as purchased as raw material.

If the audited production site produces corrugated cardboard sheets, which are also produced on behalf of the certified site as partly outsourced processes:

- the sentence “Besides own production, the company has partly outsourced processes” shall be added to the certificate
- a description of the partly outsourced processes shall be given in the report.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.3 TYPE OF IFS PACSECURE AUDITS

1-2.3 Type of IFS PACsecure Audits

1-2.3.3 Follow-up Audit

I) Situations where a remote follow-up audit is acceptable

The certification body can decide to perform a remote follow-up audit based on a risk assessment and a proper documented justification. This justification shall be available upon request.

The IFS Split Audit Protocol and the Split Audit checklist for the relevant standard shall be used to decide which requirements can be audited remotely and which will need to be audited on site.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.3 TYPE OF IFS PACSECURE AUDITS

II) **Situations where it is acceptable to perform a follow-up audit in less than six (6) weeks**

The certification body can decide to carry out a follow-up audit earlier than six (6) weeks and as early as two (2) weeks after the last day of the main audit if it is based on a risk assessment and a proper documented justification. This justification shall be available upon request.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 2.4 IFS PACSECURE ANNOUNCED AND UNANNOUNCED AUDIT OPTIONS

1-2.4 IFS PACsecure Announced and Unannounced Audit options

1-2.4.2 Unannounced audit option

Clarification about the unannounced audit registration

An unannounced audit registration will be deactivated in the IFS Database if nothing has been uploaded within three (3) months of the last possible day of the audit time window, even if a calendar entry has been made. In case there was no calendar entry, **the registration is directly deactivated after the last day of the audit window.**

The certification body shall tick the box “Unannounced audit” in the IFS Database.

When the audit has been performed, the certification body shall provide the audit dates in the database, at latest, two (2) working days after the first audit day. This will ensure that the database users are informed that the audit has taken place and that the certification process is ongoing.

Note: In case the process is not followed accordingly, the certification body shall contact IFS Customer Support. It has to be considered that associated costs may apply.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 3.1 AUDIT DURATION

1-3 IFS PACsecure Audit Realisation

1-3.1 Audit duration

Rules to extend or reduce the audit duration

The minimum duration of an IFS PACsecure Audit shall be two (2) days (16 hours) without audit preparation and reporting time. However, in specific situations, the audit duration can be extended or reduced; in such cases, the following rules apply.

1) Rules to extend the audit duration

Due to the size of the production area

- If the production area is between 5000m² and 10000m², a minimum of four (4) hours shall be added (in addition to the two (2) days (16 hours)).
- If the production area is over 10000m², a minimum of eight (8) hours shall be added (in addition to the two (2) days (16 hours)).

Some examples of other factors which may lead to an extension of the minimum audit duration are the following:

- Initial audit – the auditor may require additional time, for example, during the opening and closing meetings.
- Number of production lines
- Complexity of the production/conversion processes
- Communication issues, e.g. language, ICT (in case of IFS Split Audit)
- Quality of production site preparation, e.g., documentation, hazard and risk management system
- Number deviations/non-conformities from the previous audit
- Issues during the audit that require further investigation
- Additional storage facilities, locations

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2) Rules to reduce the audit duration

In specific situations, and only in the following limited cases, the certification body may decide to reduce the minimum audit duration by 0,5 days:

- IFS Combined Audits: e.g. IFS PACsecure/IFS Logistics, IFS PACsecure/IFS Broker, under the condition that some parts are commonly audited for both standards.
- Multi-location companies, if some requirements have already been audited at the head office/central management site.
- Multi-legal entity production site: if the legal entities have different scopes at one physical location and a head office/central management has been appointed.
- For the main audit of a site where an extension audit shall be performed every year, due to seasonal products/processes.
- For sites where it was not possible to audit all processes during an unannounced audit and therefore an extension audit shall be performed later.

The certification body/auditor shall justify the decision for a reduction in the IFS Audit Report.

In case of exceptional circumstances, a maximal reduction of up to 0,75 days (6 hours) of the minimum audit duration can be applied. The application of this rule by the certification body shall be a case-by-case and risk-based decision, and the decision for a reduction shall be justified in the IFS Audit Report. Some examples of these exceptional circumstances are the following:

- Size of the site
- Scope of the audit
- Number of production lines involved
- Total number of employees
- If only **simple processes** are carried out at the site.

Note: "*Simple processes*" are limited to processes:

- in which the activities carried out do not significantly modify the products from their original input form (e.g. glueing, cutting, folding, sorting, marking, labelling and wrapping, etc.)
- where there is no control measure identified which is essential to control a significant hazard for product safety.

A combination of different reasons for reduction is not possible, even in the case of a combined IFS Audit.

The IFS Integrity Program will regularly review the justifications for audit time reduction, to ensure they are relevant and aligned with the above rules.

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 1 – 4.2 ISSUING THE IFS CERTIFICATE

1-4 Post IFS PACsecure Audit actions

1-4.2 Issuing the IFS Certificate

1-4.2.1 Scoring and conditions for issuing the IFS Audit Report and IFS Certificate

Situations where an audit is considered cancelled

An audit shall be considered cancelled if the audit is stopped before the IFS Audit Checklist is completed.

In the case of a cancellation, the following rule shall apply:

- Withdrawal of the current certificate (within two (2) working days)
- No new certificate is issued
- The audit does not count towards the “one (1) in every three (3) audits shall be unannounced” rule
- The audit does not count towards the “maximum three (3) consecutive IFS Audits by the same auditor” rule
- The audit does not count towards the minimum number of five (5) IFS PACsecure Audits per year as a lead or co-auditor
- The audit cannot count as witness audit
- A new initial audit may be performed after a minimum of six (6) weeks

The report shall be completed (until the point the audit was stopped), reviewed and uploaded to the IFS Database. In case of deviation(s) and/or non-conformities scored in the report, it shall be reviewed by the auditor before the next audit, together with the last certification audit report.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 3 – 2.6 CERTIFICATION BODY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IFS PACSECURE AUDITORS, IFS PACSECURE REVIEWERS, IFS PACSECURE IN-HOUSE TRAINERS AND IFS PACSECURE WITNESS AUDITORS

PART 3 – Requirements for accreditation bodies, certification bodies and auditors IFS Accreditation and Certification Process

3-2 Requirements for the certification bodies

3-2.6 Certification body responsibilities for IFS PACsecure Auditors, IFS PACsecure Reviewers, IFS PACsecure In-house Trainers and IFS PACsecure Witness Auditors

Clarification about training requirements for auditors and reviewers

All auditors and reviewers shall be trained on requirements of IAF MD4 (e.g., IFS Split audit training) and ISO/IEC 17065.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 3 – 3.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR IFS PACSECURE AUDITORS

3-3 Requirements for IFS PACsecure Auditors, IFS PACsecure Reviewers, IFS PACsecure Trainers and IFS PACsecure Witness Auditors

3-3.1 Requirements for IFS PACsecure Auditors

3-3.1.2 General requirements for auditors when applying for IFS Examination

Clarification about specific types of audits which are not accepted for a sign-off audit, witness audit and auditor scope extension

A multi-location production site cannot be used for a sign-off audit, because the checklist is not completely audited (central management processes).

Extension audits are not acceptable for witness audits or auditor scope extensions.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 3 – 3.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR IFS PACSECURE AUDITORS

3-3 Requirements for IFS PACsecure Auditors, IFS PACsecure Reviewers, IFS PACsecure Trainers and IFS PACsecure Witness Auditors

3-3.1 Requirements for IFS PACsecure Auditors

3-3.1.5 Maintenance of auditor's approval

Clarification on the maintenance of auditor approval in certain specific situations

Every year IFS PACsecure Auditors shall perform a minimum of five (5) IFS PACsecure Audits as a lead or co-auditor. This is applicable from the first full year following the approval as an IFS PACsecure Auditor.

In the following specific situations:

- In case the IFS PACsecure Auditor is also a manager for IFS within the certification body
- In case the product scope(s) the auditor has is/are in a specific country where there is a lack of customers
- In case it is in a specific emerging market

It is acceptable to perform at least one (1) IFS PACsecure audit and four (4) audits as Lead or Co-auditor according to GFSI recognised standards every year; nevertheless, certification bodies shall do the utmost to perform as many IFS PACsecure Audits per auditor as possible.

In case the certification body makes use of the above exceptional rule for one or more of their auditors, the certification body is obliged to notify the IFS Auditor Management latest one month before the expire of the current IFS Auditor Certificate. Thus, to ensure that the IFS Auditor approval will not be lost at the end of the validity of the current IFS Auditor Certificate.

In case of any other special situations, it is mandatory to contact the IFS Auditor Management for a case-by-case decision.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: AUDIT OVERVIEW (ANNEX 9)

PART 4 – Reporting, the IFS Software and IFS Database

4-1 Reporting

4-1.1 Minimum requirements for the IFS Audit Report: audit overview (ANNEX 9)

I) How is the COID managed for companies in some specific cases?

In the case of a **multi-legal entity site**:

- at one physical location **with the same scope**: one audit, separate COIDs, duplication of certificate and report.
The COIDs shall be mentioned in the audit overview of each audit report and linked in the IFS Database (visible for CBs only).
- at one physical location **with different scopes**: multiple audits, separate COIDs, separate reports and certificates.
The COIDs shall be mentioned in the audit overview of each audit report and linked in the IFS Database (visible for CBs only).
The audit duration shall be calculated separately for each COID.

All audits shall be performed by one certification body.

In the case of **multi-location sites**:

- separate COIDs are created for each site and linked in the IFS Database.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: AUDIT OVERVIEW (ANNEX 9)

II) When shall a new COID be created?

A new COID shall be created in two cases: change of the address and under specific circumstances, change of the legal entity.

If a production site **moves to a new address**, a new COID shall be created, and an initial audit shall be organised.

The certification history will be visible but remains connected to the original COID. The access rights to the report, action plan and audit comparison are transferred to the new COID.

The first audit performed at the new site is a first initial audit. The certification body decides whether the current certificate of the old site shall be withdrawn as soon as production stops.

If a company **changes its legal entity** and under the prerequisite that the new legal entity **has no contract** with the prior regulating data protection issues, a new COID shall be created, and the certification body evaluates the certification status. The certification history is invisible, but the old COID is provided. The access rights to the report, action plan and audit comparison are not transferred. It is recommended that the action plan of the prior audit is checked by the auditor. Especially in case of any product safety and quality management system deviation(s) and/or previous non-conformities.

Under the **prerequisite** that the new legal entity is **not in conflict with data protection rights**, the COID shall not be changed. In this case the certification body shall update the information in the IFS Database.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: AUDIT OVERVIEW (ANNEX 9)

	New address	New legal entity	
	new COID linked with old	not taking over rights* = new COID not linked	taking over rights* ≠ no new COID
New audit?	An initial audit shall be organised.	Certification body evaluates the situation.	Certification body evaluates the situation.
Certification history	Remains visible via the link to the old COID.	Is invisible, but the old COID is provided in the report.	Remains unchanged.
First audit after change	First initial audit	First initial audit	According to standard
Further information	Certification body decides whether the certificate shall be withdrawn when production at the old site stops. COIDs can only be linked once.	It's recommended that the action plan of the current site is checked by the auditor. Especially in case of any product safety and quality management system deviation(s) and/or previous non-conformities.	The certification body changes the information in the IFS Database, updates the information in the AXP file and on the certificate (to be sent to CS).

**The Regulation on the protection of undisclosed know-how and undisclosed information is valid in the European Union. In other parts of the world different legislation may apply.*

Note: If a CB creates by mistake a new COID for a company with an already existing COID, they shall contact IFS Customer Support.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.1 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: AUDIT OVERVIEW (ANNEX 9)

III) Which information of the report shall be translated in English?

The following information of the report shall be translated into English:

- Company profile (company data + audit data)
- Audit scope
- Partly outsourced processes
- Exclusions
- Overall summary of compulsory information
- Deviations and non-conformities

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.2 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: MAIN CONTENT (ANNEX 10)

4-1.2 Minimum requirements for the IFS Audit Report: main content (ANNEX 10)

Clarification about compulsory fields and additional information to be provided in the audit requirements

To align IFS PACsecure to all IFS Standards, there are modifications in some of the existing compulsory fields and additional information has been added to specific IFS PACsecure Requirements.

The compulsory fields shall lead to a more significant and descriptive IFS PACsecure Audit Report, even if the auditee fulfils nearly all IFS PACsecure Audit Requirements. The modified and additional content will give more precise information about the auditee. This will add value for every user/reader of the IFS Report. During an audit and even in the case of an A evaluation, the auditor is requested to provide, additional justification and/or further background information for these specific requirements for the audited production site.

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.2 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS AUDIT REPORT: MAIN CONTENT (ANNEX 10)

The compulsory fields modified or added in Annex 10 “Overall summary: Table of compulsory fields for specific defined IFS PACsecure Audit Requirements and Key Elements” are detailed in the following table:

Modified / Added	Part of the IFS Audit Report	N° of IFS PACsecure version 3 Requirement	Compulsory information to be added
Modified The requirement 4.3.2 is replaced by the requirement 4.3.5	Product development	4.3.5 4.3.2	Summary*
Modified In the compulsory information to be added, information related to the usage of recycled material, plant-based material, or functional additives is added	Special claims/ statements	4.2.1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are specific requirements from clients for claims: [yes/no]/ [list] • There are specific requirements from clients that certain treatment or manufacturing methods are excluded: [yes/no]/[list] • The company works with products that consist of, contain, or are produced from recycled material, plant-based material, or functional additives: [yes/no] / [list]
Added Alignment with IFS Standards.	Plant layout and process flow	4.8.2	Summary*
Modified The requirement 5.3.3 is replaced by the requirement 5.3.5, and the related compulsory information to be added is modified accordingly.	Process validation and control	5.3.5 5.3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company has printed information on products? [yes/no] • The company has critical information printed on products [yes/no] • If No: * Summary • If Yes: Products and type of critical information printed (ingredient list(s), allergens, identification code, other(s))

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.4 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS CERTIFICATE (ANNEX 11)

4-1.4 Minimum requirements for the IFS Certificate (ANNEX 11)

I) Clarification about head office/central management information on the certificate

The head office/central management name including its address shall be written on the IFS Certificate and indicated as such in case one of the below is applicable:

- The head office/central management is responsible for certain elements of the central management system and is audited for that, being part of the IFS Multi-location/Multisite approach.
- The head office/central management is not responsible for certain elements of the central management system but according to ISO/IEC 17065:2012 norm is the legal responsible “client” for the audit(s) of the processing site(s) and has a contract with the certification body.

CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 1.4 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IFS CERTIFICATE (ANNEX 11)

II) Clarification on the definitions of dates on the certificate

The **certificate issue date** is the original date on which the certificate was first issued.

The **date and place, called “Signature date”** is the most recent date the certificate was updated due to a significant change, such as in case of an extension audit or change in the scope.

Corrections, such as typographical errors shall not affect the signature date.

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CLARIFICATION ON PART 4 – 3 THE IFS DATABASE

4-3 The IFS Database

Form for extraordinary information to be filled out by the certification bodies

The following information shall be added in the description of the extraordinary information:

- Company (COID)
- Product (including private labels and/or brands)
- Date of recall/withdrawal
- Involved batches
- Reason of the recall/incident.

After ten (10) working days from the initial information in the IFS Database:

- Cause of the incident (if relevant with corrections and corrective actions taken by the company)
- The actions taken by the certification body. Especially with reference to the certification status of the company.

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In case of any queries regarding the interpretation of IFS Standards and Programs, please contact standardmanagement@ifs-certification.com

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