

## **FAQs on SAFE framework (updated on 26 Oct 2022)**

### **[General]**

#### **1. Why was there a change in SAFE's implementation timeline? *[New]***

In view of feedback received from the industry and to allow more time for the industry to prepare for the transition, the SAFE framework will now be implemented in Jul 2025. Food establishments will now have more time to meet the requirements (e.g. adopt Food Safety Management System (FSMS), appoint Advanced Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)) to attain the desired award tier. SFA will in the meantime continue to engage the industry on the framework and work with them to implement it.

#### **2. Are there any updates or changes to the SAFE framework? *[New]***

SFA will engage the industry on the SAFE framework and will provide an update when ready.

#### **3. What is SAFE?**

The Safety Assurance for Food Establishments (SAFE) framework is a new licensing framework to provide better food safety assurance to consumers.

Under the framework, food establishments will be eligible for longer licence durations and higher award tiers if:

- They have demonstrated good track record of food safety assurance (i.e. no major food safety lapse over a period of time); and
- They have in place capabilities and systems to ensure better food safety standards (e.g. appointment of Advanced Food Hygiene Officer, implementation of Food Safety Management System)

#### **4. How is SAFE better than the existing framework?**

Under the existing framework, on-site assessments of SFA-licensed food establishments are carried out annually to determine their grade based on food safety standards, which is a snapshot assessment of their food safety performance.

The SAFE framework provides a better representation of the food establishments' consistent efforts in ensuring and maintaining food safety. 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. For example, premises under Category A (food establishments involved in significant food handling practices, such as caterers) would be required to implement the accredited Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and to appoint a trained Advanced Food Hygiene Officer (FHO) to assist putting in place, monitor and maintain proper food safety assurance measures/systems in order to achieve a Gold award.

**5. Are food farms under the SAFE framework?**

No, the SAFE framework is not applicable to those issued with a farm licence.

**6. What will happen to food establishments which were on board the voluntary Food Hygiene Recognition Scheme (FHRS)?**

The SAFE framework will supersede the FHRS. All licensees on the FHRS will transit to the SAFE framework.

**7. How will food safety oversight be maintained without an annual grading?**

The licensee of the food establishment is responsible for ensuring that food is produced/prepared in a safe manner and is fit for consumption. This includes compliance with:

- Requirements stipulated in the Environmental Public Health Act (Cap 95), Wholesome Meat and Fish Act (Cap 349A) and the Sale of Food Act (Cap 283)
- Licensing requirements, such as engaging trained food handlers and putting in place systems and infrastructural designs to mitigate risks of food contamination during production, preparation, packing, storage, and transportation of food.

SFA will continue to ensure food safety and public health through regulatory checks of food establishments. In addition, under the SAFE framework, SFA will closely monitor food establishments in the higher risk category (food establishments involved in moderate to significant food handling practices, such as food manufacturers and caterers) to ensure that they have appropriate Food Safety Management System (FSMS) plan in place.

The SAFE framework will also put in place additional requirements on food establishments in addition to physical checks by SFA:

- Food establishments in Category A (high-risk) must appoint a trained Food Hygiene Officer (FHO) who will assist the licensee to put in place, monitor and maintain a proper food safety system. The FHO will also educate and remind food handlers to adhere to good food safety practices and personal hygiene during food preparation.
- Food establishments in Category A must also have FSMS and accredited FSMS in place to qualify for the Silver and Gold awards respectively. The FSMS is a preventive approach towards identifying, preventing, and reducing foodborne hazards to ensure that food is safe for consumption. The implementation of accredited FSMS must be overseen by an advanced FHO or an accredited third-party certification body.

## **[Award/Licence Tiering]**

### **8. How will I know my award status? *[Updated on 26 Oct 2022]***

SFA will notify licensees of their final award status closer to the rollout of SAFE. Meanwhile, we encourage licensees to begin updating their records (i.e. food handler, FHO/Advanced FHO, and FSMS/Accredited FSMS-related documents, including the relevant certifications\* of their staff) through GoBusiness, as these will continue to form part of the requirements for SAFE, even though the rollout date has changed. The award status will be based on the documents received in the system as well as the licensee's track record.

\*For licensees looking to qualify for Accredited FSMS. The certificate of the individual who has passed Food Safety Course Level 4 or WSQ Apply Food Safety Management System for Food Service Establishments or Lead Auditor course (IRCA certified) must be uploaded.

### **9. What happens to the award and licence duration when there is a major lapse detected at the food establishment?**

As the SAFE framework is based on the licensee's track record, the licensee's award will be downgraded by one tier in the event of a major lapse. Once issued with a new award tier, licensees will be given a new licence duration and will be required to pay the corresponding licence fee. For example, a Gold award licensee will be downgraded to a Silver award in the event of a major lapse. The licensee will be given a new licence duration and will have to pay for a new Silver award licence fee. There will be no refund of the Gold award licence fees paid by the licensee earlier.

### **10. Does downgrading of food establishments take effect at licence renewal?**

Food establishments will be downgraded as and when any major lapse is established.

### **11. For licensees in the 'No Award' tier, if there is a major lapse, will there be further downgrading?**

No, the licensee will remain on the 'No Award' tier. However, this will impact licensees who may wish to attain the next award tier (that is, the Bronze award) as the licensee will need to have a good track record of two consecutive years with no major lapse to qualify for the Bronze award.

### **12. As a consumer, how do I interpret the different award tiers in terms of food safety assurance?**

Food establishments with the Gold, Silver and Bronze awards are those that have had no major lapses\* for 10, 5 and 2 years respectively. New licensees and food establishments with a track record of less than 2 years without a major lapse do not have an award.

Awards are given to food establishments in Category A and B (i.e. those with significant or moderate food handling practices), and food stalls. As food establishments under Category A are involved in significant food handling practices

with higher food safety risk, award holders have to comply with additional requirements as tabled:

<b>Award</b>	<b>Additional Requirements</b>
Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FSMS certified by an accredited Certification Body</li> <li>• Advanced Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)</li> </ul>
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Safety Management System (FSMS)</li> <li>• Appointed FHO</li> </ul>
Bronze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointed FHO</li> </ul>

\* Major lapses include causing a foodborne outbreak, being convicted in court for breach of SFA's regulations, or a temporary suspension of the licence.

**13. Does the SAFE framework include hawker stalls? Can they qualify for Award and longer licence tenure as well?**

Yes. Cooked food stalls in NEA-managed hawker centres are also eligible for Gold, Silver or Bronze Award, which is dependent on their track record for food safety assurance. However, their licence tenure will continue to be tied to the length of their tenancy agreement.

**14. How much would a 3/5/10 year licence cost? Will it result in cost savings over the long run?**

Licensees who are awarded longer licence duration will pay a proportionately lower annual licence fee. More details will be made available at a later date.

**15. Can the licensee decide whether or not to take up the longer licence tenure if they are eligible?**

Yes. Eligible licensees who move to the next licence tier would be eligible for longer licence tenure (3/5/10-year). Alternatively, they can choose to remain on their current licence tier, although they would not be accorded with a longer licence tenure.

**[Major Lapse]**

**16. What constitutes a major lapse?**

Major lapses include food handling/preparation practices resulting in a foodborne outbreak, being convicted in court for offences against SFA's regulations, or having their licence suspended.

Licensees may have their licence suspended in the following circumstances:

- a) Suspension under Points Demerit System (PDS)\*
  - If a licensee accumulates 12 demerit points under PDS, the licence will be suspended. (4 points will be given for major offences; 6 points for serious offences)
- b) Direct suspension due to severe non-compliances
  - E.g. Severe pest infestation, illegal alteration to premises, production during renovation or unapproved trade activities, recalcitrance, etc.

c) Links to mass gastroenteritis incidents

\*Details of PDS could be found in the link: [www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/overview](http://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/overview)

**17. Is there any change to the current PDS system? Will licensees have their award downgraded due to offences under the PDS system?**

There is no change to the current Points Demerit System (PDS). SFA will suspend the licence of a food establishment when it has accumulated 12 demerit points within a 12-month period.

Under the SAFE framework, the licensee's award will also be downgraded when the licence is suspended.

The current PDS system is only for retail food establishments (e.g. restaurants and food stalls at hawker centres and coffeeshops). SFA is developing the PDS system for non-retail food establishments (e.g. food manufacturing establishments).

**18. Will the licence be cancelled if there is a conviction in court for offences under SFA's legislations?**

A conviction by the court is not a prerequisite for the suspension or cancellation of a licence. SFA will assess the severity of the situation (refer to SN 15(b)) before invoking any suspension of licence.

The Director-General, Food Administration has the power to suspend or cancel a licence if there is a breach of licensing requirement or condition, or contravention of any provision of the Environmental Public Health Act (Cap 95), Wholesome Meat and Fish Act (Cap 349A) or the Sale of Food Act (Cap 283).

**[Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)]**

**19. Which types of food establishments require a Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)? How many FHOs are required at each establishment?**

Currently, retail food establishments that are involved in large-scale food preparation or have multiple food stalls are required to appoint a trained FHO\* for each licensed premises. These include restaurants (housed in two or more adjacent units in private and HDB shophouses or with kitchen area exceeding 16m<sup>2</sup>), caterers, canteens, and food courts.

From 1 January 2023, all food establishments in Category A (i.e. caterers, food establishments permitted to cater, restaurants, central kitchens, food manufacturers, slaughterhouses, and abattoirs) will be required to appoint a trained FHO.

\*Trained FHO – The appointed FHO is required to pass the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3, which will equip them with knowledge on FSMS and on conducting food safety checks. FHOs who have previously passed the “WSQ Conduct Food and Beverage Hygiene Audit Course” or have been trained under the FHO course conducted by the Singapore Environment Institute (SEI) will continue to be recognised by SFA.

**20. Which food establishments are required to have an Advanced FHO? Is it mandatory for food establishments to have an Advanced FHO?**

Category A food establishments intending to attain a Gold award under the SAFE framework are required to appoint an Advanced FHO who have passed the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4.

An Advanced FHO can oversee up to 5 food establishments licensed to the same operator.

**21. With the change in the rollout date for SAFE framework , will the deadline for FHO requirements be shifted back too? [New]**

Food establishments will now have more time to meet the requirements of SAFE, such as appointing and training FHOs and Advanced FHOs. Notwithstanding, SFA encourages food establishments to appoint and train FHOs early, in preparation for the SAFE framework roll-out.

**[FSMS, Accredited FSMS]**

**22. What is the difference between a Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and an accredited FSMS?**

An accredited FSMS certification refers to an organisation's FSMS that is certified by a certification body, which is:

- Accredited by the Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC) for ISO 22000, SS 590 and SS 444; or
- Accredited by accreditation bodies which are signatories of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) multilateral recognition arrangement (MLA) for ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000; or
- Accredited by Brand Reputation Compliance Global Standards (BRCGS)- recognised accreditation bodies which are signatories of the IAF MLA

The list of FSMS certification currently recognised to have met the criteria for Category A food establishments is as follows:

- SS444
- SS590
- ISO 22000
- FSSC 22000
- BRC Global Food Standards

**23. How do I meet the FSMS requirement to qualify for the Silver award?**

The food establishment would have to submit a FSMS plan that is endorsed by an individual who has passed WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4, WSQ Apply Food Safety Management System for Food Service Establishments, or who has been awarded any FSMS certificate issued by Certification Bodies. The food establishment would also be required to implement the submitted FSMS plan.

**Additional info:**

*Support from Enterprise Singapore is available via [Enterprise Development Grant \(EDG\)](#) – The EDG covers up to 70% of qualifying project costs including consultancy, training, certification and equipment.*

**[Food Safety Course (FSC)]**

**24. How much will the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 1 to Level 4 cost? Will SFA pay for the courses?**

The course fees are determined by the training providers accredited by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG). Qualified trainees aged 21 and above may apply for subsidies from SSG. Members of the public who wish to reskill or upskill themselves to join the food industry may also use their SkillsFuture credits to cover the course fees.

**25. Is there a validity period for the WSQ FSC Level 1 and Level 2 (Food Handler) and WSQ FSC Level 3 (FHO) course certificates?**

The WSQ course certificates for WSQ FSC Level 1 and Level 2 (Food Handler) and WSQ FSC Level 3 (FHO) do not have a validity period. Food handlers are required to attend their first refresher training by the fifth year from their Basic Food Hygiene Course (BFHC) or WSQ FSC Level 1 course pass completion date, and their second and subsequent training every 10 years from the last refresher course pass completion date.

Details on training requirements can be found in the link: <https://go.gov.sg/info-fh>

**26. Where can I find the list of training providers for Food Safety Courses Level 1 to 4?**

The list of training providers for WSQ FSC Level 1 and Level 3 can be accessed here: <https://go.gov.sg/info-fh>

**27. I have previously passed the WSQ Apply Food Safety Management Systems for Food Service Establishments course. Do I still need to attend WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4 to be appointed an Advanced FHO?**

Supervisory personnel who have passed the WSQ Apply Food Safety Management Systems for Food Service Establishments will continue to be recognised by SFA and can be appointed as an Advanced FHO.

**28. If a staff has the relevant academic qualifications or competencies, would he need to complete WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3 and 4 to be appointed FHO and Advanced FHO respectively?**

To be appointed an FHO, the staff could opt to take the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3 Assessment-Only-Pathway (AOP) instead of attending the entire WSQ FSC Level 3. The assessment would include written and practical (mock-up inspection) assessments.

To be appointed an Advanced FHO, the staff could opt to take the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4 Assessment-Only-Pathway (AOP) instead of attending the entire WSQ FSC Level 4. The assessment would include written and practical (on-site inspection) assessments.

## **[Others]**

### **29. Are home-based food businesses subjected to SAFE framework?**

The SAFE framework will be implemented for all food establishments licensed by SFA. Home-based food businesses under HDB/URA's Home-based Business Scheme do not require a licence from SFA. Nonetheless, operators of home-based food businesses are strongly encouraged to adopt SFA's guidelines on good food hygiene practices. Persons who prepare food under this scheme are encouraged to attend the WSQ FSC Level 1.

### **30. What will happen to the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership?**

With the implementation of SAFE framework, SFA has discontinued the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership, which were previously administered by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority.

Accordingly, SFA has informed companies under both schemes that certification marks associated with the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership will be phased out by **Dec 2023**, after which the usage of these certification marks in product packaging, delivery vehicles and publicity materials will not be allowed.

### **31. How do the Food Safety Awards compare with the SAFE framework?**

The Food Safety Awards relied on the annual grading inspections which provided a snapshot of the food establishment's food safety performance.

The SAFE framework provides a better representation of the food establishments' consistent efforts in ensuring and maintaining food safety. 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. For example, premises under Category A (food establishments involved in significant food handling practices, such as caterers) would be required to implement the accredited Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and to appoint a trained Advanced Food Hygiene Officer (FHO) to assist in putting in place, monitor and maintain proper food safety assurance measures/systems in order to achieve a Gold award.

### **32. How will SAFE impact the criteria for participation in schemes and programmes under other agencies e.g., ESG's Tasty Singapore brand / VITAL's Government Demand Aggregation (DA) contracts?**

In view of the implementation of SAFE, the qualifying criteria for Tasty Singapore brand and the Government DA contracts are being reviewed. More details will be announced when they are finalised.

For further enquiries, you may submit your questions via the SFA feedback page here: [www.sfa.gov.sg/feedback](http://www.sfa.gov.sg/feedback)