

## FAQs for Exporters for Auditing Organisation Recognition (AOR) Programme Funding Support

### Eligibility Conditions

#### 1) Who is eligible to apply for the funding support?

Only SFA-licensed exporters applying for Export Health Certificate (EHC) under health certificate type “export of food products” are eligible to apply for the funding support under the Auditing Organisation Recognition (AOR) Programme.

#### 2) How do I know which classification of food establishment does my company belong to?

- a. The classification of food establishment is based on the business trade description stated on your SFA’s Food Establishment Licence.
- b. If the business trade description stated in your licence has the following keywords, your establishment will be classified as a Meat and Fish Establishment.
  - Meat
  - Fish
  - Seafood
  - Surimi
  - Central Kitchen\*
  - Ready-meal\*
  - Light meals\*
  - Cooked meals\*
  - Cooked Food\*
  - Dim Sum\*
  - Pau\*
- c. If the business trade description stated in your licence does not include any of the above terms, your establishment will be classified as a Processed Food Establishment.

*\*Unless otherwise stated as vegetarian/ vegan/ plant-based meat/ sub-products listed does not contain meat*

**Export Audit under Auditing Organisation Recognition (AOR) Programme****3) When will SFA discontinue the export audits?**

- a. From 1 Sep 2024: for all establishments manufacturing meat and fish products.
- b. From 1 Jul 2025: for all establishments manufacturing processed food products.

**4) Who will be responsible for the export audits once SFA discontinues conducting the export audits?**

- a. The SFA's recognised AOs will conduct the export audits of the food establishments in lieu of SFA. The AO will charge a commercial fee.
- b. The valid "passed" audit report provided by the SFA's recognised AOs must be submitted as a supporting document to SFA for each application of EHC under health certificate type "export of food products" with effect from 1 Jan 2025.

**5) How do I know if my company's export audit is due for renewal?**

You may check from your company's last export audit letter issued by SFA **OR** the valid "passed" audit report issued by the recognised AOs.

**6) How long is the validity of the export audit letter issued by SFA or export audit report issued by the recognised AOs?**

The validity is 12 months from the date of audit.

E.g. If the audit is conducted on 21 Aug 2024, the report will be valid until 20 Aug 2025.

**7) The export audit conducted by the recognised AOs is more than one man-day. How do I count the validity of the export audit report?**

If the export audit is conducted for more than one day, the validity of the export audit report will begin from the last day of audit.

E.g. If the audit is conducted on 20 and 23 Aug 2024, it will be valid until 22 Aug 2025.

**8) What is the estimated cost of engaging the recognised AOs to conduct the annual export audit?**

SFA does not prescribe the fees to be charged by the AOs. The pricing is different and set by each AOs. The cost is also based on the size of your establishment. You may wish to contact the AOs directly to request for more information.

**9) Can I engage the same AO which certifies my establishment's Food Safety Management System (FSMS) to audit my establishment for the export audit?**

You may engage the same AOs with the following conditions:

- a. Only SFA's recognised AOs under the AOR programme are allowed to conduct the export audits of the food establishments in lieu of SFA. The list of recognised AOs can be found via <https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-information/recognition-programmes/auditing-organisation-recognition-programme>.
- b. The recognised AOs shall ensure that appointed auditors conducting the premise audit are not conducting similar certification (E.g, FSMS) audits for the same food establishment.

**10) My company holds multiple SFA's food establishment licences. How will I be audited for the export audit?**

The export audit will be conducted based on each SFA's licence establishment. A valid "passed" audit report is required to be submitted as a mandatory supporting document for each application of export health certificate from each SFA's licence establishment.

**11) My company holds multiple SFA's food establishment licences. Can I combine the export audit report of the food establishment into one report?**

No, you cannot combine the export audit reports into one report. Each SFA's food establishment (with different licence numbers) shall be issued one export audit report.

**12) How many days is required for the audit by the recognised AOs at my premise?**

The number of man-days required for the audit is dependent on the size of your premises. You may contact the AO directly to find out the number of man-days required.

**13) What happen if my audit letter/report validity expires, or my establishment do not have a valid “passed” audit report?**

SFA will not be able proceed with the issuance of the EHC as a valid export audit letter (issued by SFA or recognised AOs) is one of the mandatory supporting documents for each EHC application.

**14) When do I have to attach a valid export audit letter issued by SFA or a valid “passed” export audit report issued by the recognised AOs for each export health certificate application?**

This requirement will take effect from 1 January 2025.

**15) As I do not have export now, I do not wish to engage the AO for audit. If I want to export later, can I then arrange for the audit?**

You may arrange for the audit later when you intend to export. However, if the date of invoice, date of audit and date of payment made to the recognized AO did not fall within the qualifying funding period, your company will not be eligible for the funding support.

**16) My company is a classified as a meat and fish establishment. My company conducted the audit on 3 Sep 2024 and in the next year, my company conduct the audit on 31 Aug 2025. For the audit conducted on 31 Aug 2025, can I claim under the second funding period?**

The qualifying period for the application of claim for each funding period will be based on the date of audit. Each licence is eligible to apply for only one claim per qualifying period based on the classification of your establishment.

**17) My company is EU-registered on TRACES. Will SFA conduct another audit based on EU requirements?**

SFA will not conduct another audit based on EU requirements as the audit report issued by the AOs will be sufficient. The company must inform the engaged AO that they are listed under TRACES NT. The recognised AOs will conduct the export audit based on EU's requirements. SFA will only conduct the annual EU water testing at your premises.

Companies who fail to engage the recognised AOs to conduct the export audit based on EU's requirements annually (calendar year) will be delisted by 31 Dec of the same year.

**18) My company intends to export to a country which requires establishment listing with the foreign competent authority (e.g. GACC China, DVS Malaysia, etc), will the audit report from the recognised AOs be sufficient?**

The audit report from recognised AOs will not be sufficient. The foreign CA may require SFA to conduct an inspection using a specific checklist and hence, SFA may need to conduct another round of audit.

**19) My company had engaged recognised AOs for the audit, but the audit fails. Is my company still eligible for the claims?**

Only the issuance of a valid “passed” report by the AO is eligible for the funding claim. The cost incurred from a failed audit and thereafter the issue of a “failed” report by the AO will be rejected by SFA.

**20) In the event where the outcome of the first audit is unsuccessful (i.e. without a valid ‘passed’ report), can my company engage a different AO for subsequent audits?**

Exporters are encouraged to close all the findings with the AO engaged for the first audit before engaging a different AO for subsequent audits.

**21) My establishment is Food Safety Management System (FSMS) certified. Can my company be exempted from the annual export audit?**

SFA had always been conducting unannounced export audit for companies applying for EHC since 2021. It is a prerequisite required to ensure that your establishment have the necessary food safety management systems in place to export food. This export audit will now be conducted by the recognised AOs in lieu of SFA. This is not an additional requirement.

**22) My establishment is classified as a Processed Food Establishment. The export audit letter issued by SFA expires before 1 Jul 2025. Will SFA conduct another export audit?**

Yes, SFA will conduct export audit at your premise before your export audit letter expires.

**23) My establishment is classified as a Processed Food Establishment. Can I engage the recognised AOs to conduct the export audit at my premise before 1 Jul 2025?**

No, you can only engage the services of the recognised AOs for export audit after 1 Jul 2025. Export audit reports of export audit conducted by the recognised AOs before 1 Jul 2025 will not be accepted by SFA and will not be eligible for the funding support.

**24) I have a valid export audit letter issued by SFA or a valid “passed” export audit report issued by the recognised AOs. Does this mean that all my EHC applications will be issued with an export certificate by SFA?**

No, the valid export audit letter issued by SFA or a valid “passed” export audit report issued by the recognised AOs is a prerequisite required to ensure that your establishment have the necessary food safety management systems in place to export food. Each EHC application will be subjected to evaluation by SFA before the issuance of export certificate. This is not a new requirement.

### **Funding Disbursement**

**25) What is the funding support period for each category?**

The funding support is in two phases and will be applicable to each category in the following qualifying period

- a. Establishments manufacturing meat and fish products
  - i. First funding period: 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025 (100% funding with a maximum cap of \$2,800 inclusive of GST)
  - ii. Second funding period: 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 (50% funding with a maximum cap of \$1,400 inclusive of GST)
- b. Establishments manufacturing processed food products
  - i. First funding period: 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026 (100% funding with a maximum cap of \$2,800 inclusive of GST)
  - ii. Second funding period: 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 (50% funding with a maximum cap of \$1,400 inclusive of GST)

**26) When will I receive the disbursement of the funding?**

The funding support will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis subject to the deliverables achieved and the complete submission of valid claim documents (i.e. invoice from AO, evidence of payment to AO and valid “passed” audit report from AO). Applicants are expected to receive the funding within 60 days from the date of complete submission of valid claim documents and final disbursement will be subject to SFA’s further screening and checks.

**27) How will I receive the funding?**

Payout can be via Paynow (UEN) or Bank Transfer. The preferred mode of payment can be chosen during submission of claims.

**28) I have a Vendors@gov account. Can the funding be received via Vendors@gov?**

No, you will not be able to receive the via Vendors@gov. However, your Vendors@gov must be active to receive the funding via Paynow (UEN) or Bank Transfer. SFA will contact you to reactivate your Vendors@gov account if it is not active.

**29) Who will receive the remittance advise on the disbursement in my company?**

- a. Companies with **no** Vendors@gov account: The remittance advise will be sent to the email address submitted in the AOR claim form to SFA.
- b. Companies with Vendors@gov account: The remittance advise will be sent to the email address stated in the Vendors@gov. If you would like the remittance advise to be sent to other email address, please log into the Vendors@gov account to change the email address.

**30) My company holds multiple SFA’s food establishment licences. How much/how many pay-outs will I receive?**

Each SFA licence is eligible to apply for only one claim per qualifying period based on the classification of your establishment. The classification is based on the business trade description stated in your SFA license. Any duplicate application submitted for each licence will be rejected by SFA.

**31) My company holds multiple SFA's food establishment licences. Can the engaged AO issue just one invoice for all the food establishment?**

No, the invoice should be issued separately for the individual food establishment. The individual invoice should be submitted when submitting claims for that establishment.

**32) My company holds multiple SFA's food establishment licences. Can I combine all payment and pay together to the engaged AO?**

No, the evidence of payment to the engaged AO should be for the individual food establishment. The individual evidence of payment should be submitted when submitting claims for that establishment.

**33) When must I submit the claim? Is there a deadline for the submission of claim?**

Upon completion of the audit, applicants must submit the scanned copy of the original claim documents, namely the invoice, evidence of payment to the AO and the valid "passed" audit report within 90 days from the date of audit. Any incomplete applications submitted (e.g. without a valid "passed" audit report or claim documents) will not be processed.

**34) Does the claim include GST?**

- a. GST can be claimed based on the amount reflected on the invoice.
- b. If your company is a GST registered company, please do not submit any further claims to IRAS.

**35) How can I submit the claim for the funding support?**

You may submit the claim via Form SG at <https://go.gov.sg/aorclaimform>. Please note that email submission and claim submission with incomplete documents will not be processed.