



# FAQs for Food & Drink Renewal Inspections



## Q – Is there anything I need to tell/ ask the auditor beforehand?

A – Yes! If you need the auditor to bring their own kit (such as safety boots, coveralls, hair nets, etc) you must tell them. Equally if you are supplying kit, you may need to ask their sizes. If there are any unusual hazards or other requirements (such as food safety, biosecurity, etc) or if they need to bring their own lunch, please let them know. If your site is hard to find, directions are also always appreciated.

## Q – What if I need to cancel the audit?

A – To ensure an efficient service, our remote and site inspections are carefully planned, so please try and avoid cancelling. NB Cancelling may incur a fee - please refer to our published [fee sheets](#) regarding late notice cancellation policy and costs. We may also have to re-charge other costs we have incurred, including accommodation, travel and other expenses, as appropriate.

## Q – Who needs to be present / involved in the inspection?

A – You need to ensure that all relevant production, technical and financial staff are aware the audit is taking place and have made themselves available. If the audit is happening at a nominated sub-contractor site, and you will not be present, you must have nominated a representative in writing. NB- if we are unable to complete our audit this may result in non-compliances, and we may have to visit again at an additional cost.

## Q – How long will the inspection take?

A – The length of an audit varies tremendously depending on the complexity of the operation, size of the site, whether product is handled, how organised your systems are and whether problems are encountered. Whilst some can only be a few hours long, we always advise to allocate the full day.

## Q – What will the auditor need to see?

A – The auditor will need to view all parts of the site and will ask to see a selection of key documents\* that demonstrate compliance. They will also chat to you and your staff about your practices. Wherever possible (& as relevant), auditors need to see organic product being processed.

\*Documents or other records that may be relevant include, but are not limited to:

Purchase orders	Recipe specs / MIPS	Purge records	Pest control records
Sales invoices / databases	Pick lists/BOMs	Cleaning records & procedures	Quality Manuals
Goods In records	Production records	Residue tests /COAs	Training records
Stock takes	Delivery/ despatch notes	Label artwork	Suppliers' organic certificates
Warehouse management system data	Non-GM/flavouring declarations	Packaging specifications	Certificate of Inspections (for goods you have imported)

[NB Not all the above will be relevant to your operation and some may not be necessary]

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### **Q – What is the auditor looking for?**

A – Your auditor will be assessing your operation against the required standards. Our standards are available on our [website](#), and you are strongly advised to familiarise yourself with them. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our Certification Team (0117 914 2411 / [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org)), who are always happy to help.

### **Q – I've heard mention of traceability and Input-Output exercises – what are these?**

A -These two exercises will form a large part of your audit. They need to be completed within a reasonable timeframe (typically 3-4 hours, and always by end of the audit), or you will receive a non-compliance.

The traceability exercise follows a particular batch of product back from when you sold it, through production (if relevant), back to when you purchased it (or it's component ingredients). You will need to show documentation that evidences each 'step', and which shows a clear link to the one before and the one after (such as by linking PO codes, batch numbers, dates, etc).

The Input-Output exercises, takes a certain product (and its component ingredients) and using various data (such as stock takes, purchase and sales figures, production records, etc), it looks to show that over a period of time, you only sold what should have been possible based upon what you bought/ had in stock.

### **Q – What happens if the inspector finds a problem?**

A – This depends on how serious the problem is! The auditor can raise a number of 'actions', such as requests for information, or minor or major non-compliances. We always try to close out minor issues on the day, however with both minor and major issues you have 30 days in which to tell us what your corrective action is.

Very occasionally a very serious issue is encountered which has directly affected the organic integrity of the product (such as the use of a non-permitted ingredient). These will result in the issuing of a Critical non-compliance – and could ultimately result in your licence being suspended or even terminated – thankfully these are rare though, so don't panic!

### **Q – What happens after the audit?**

A –Afterwards, the inspector will write up your report and within a few days it will appear on your portal. If you have any actions arising, these will also be detailed on the portal, and you must respond to them as required.

Occasionally we may need to revisit to ensure corrective action has been implemented, e.g. where a large number of non-compliances were raised. These 'follow-up' audits will usually carry a fee.

If you have any questions following the audit or need help with accessing your portal, please contact our Certification Team (0117 914 2411 / [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org)).

### **Q – Who else gets to see the audit report?**

A – The information gained at the audit remains confidential; Soil Association Certification will not share this information with anyone other than our accreditation bodies and other Certification Bodies as detailed in your contract.