

## **BRCGS Standard for Storage and Distribution – Issue 4**

The BRCGS Standard for Storage and Distribution was initially developed and published in 2006, Issue 4 of the standard, which was published in November 2020, shall become effective for all audits conducted from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021 .

In 2006 BRCGS introduced the Standard for Storage and Distribution to complement the suite of global standards covering the production of food, packaging and consumer products. This Standard allows the chain of product certification to be completed, from primary processor to manufacturer, and from manufacturer to retailer (or food service company in the case of food) or the final consumer (for e-commerce). In response to demand, the Standard has been translated into many languages to facilitate implementation of the Standard across the world.

Issue 4 has been developed by a multi-stakeholder group including retailers, food service companies, industry trade associations, independent experts and certification bodies, and builds upon the experience of the previous issue. In revising the Standard, BRCGS has attempted to develop the requirements to ensure that they are robust enough to meet current industry needs. Where applicable, the requirements have been aligned with those that feature in the other BRCGS standards to ensure consistency and confidence throughout the entire supply chain.

The Standard is designed to reflect best practice and facilitate a process of continual improvement through well-designed risk-based product safety management systems. The objective is to ensure that the quality and safety of products are maintained during their storage and distribution (and where subject to other activities such as wholesale, contracted services, etc.), and that customer confidence is upheld through audit and certification.

In many countries the storage and distribution of products, in particular food products, is controlled through legislation. This Standard is based on best practice and is not intended to replace the requirement of any legislation that requires a higher standard for a specific industry sector. In countries where the principles of due diligence apply, certification to the Standard may provide part of a due diligence defence.

### **Scope of the Standard**

The Standard has been developed to cover all activities which may affect the safety, legality, quality and integrity of the products stored and distributed, and of any additional contracted services that may be offered by storage and distribution companies.

The Standard may be applied where the company requesting certification has legal title to the products and where legal title is held by a third party. These products may be branded, private label or unbranded.

The Standard does not cover other important requirements applicable to the operation of a storage or distribution business – for example, health and safety, environmental concerns or ethical issues.

## Scope of applicable company operations

The Standard sets out requirements for companies primarily providing storage and distribution of products. Where a company provides one of the services covered by the specified additional voluntary modules at a storage or distribution site, this may be included within the scope of its audit and certification process. The purpose of the Standard is to provide a certification scheme that ensures the quality and safety of products during their storage and distribution. To be eligible for the scheme, the company must be able to demonstrate that it directly manages and thereby controls those aspects of the Standard which are being assessed.

The storage and distribution operations to which the Standard may be applied can be at any point in the distribution chain from primary production to retail, subject to the restrictions on the scope of applicable products. For example, this could include distribution from:

- farm to processor
- primary processor to manufacturer
- manufacturer to off-site warehousing
- warehousing to retail depots
- retail depots to store
- store to final consumer (internet shopping).

Note that distribution networks, such as couriers, postal distribution services and pallet networks or less-than-load type operations, are not included within the scope of this Standard except in section 12 (e-commerce) where these operations can be used to complete the final mile delivery.

## Scope of applicable products

The Standard is designed primarily for the storage and distribution of packaged products which are, by their nature, largely protected from physical contamination. The scope of products covered by the Standard is as follows.

### Food

Only permitted food products shall be received into storage and released into distribution without any further preparation, sorting or processing. Where such additional operations take place, the facility shall be certificated using the Global Standard for Food Safety. Permitted products include:

- packaged food products
- food products and ingredients stored and distributed in bulk by road only (e.g., flour, oils, sugar syrups, wine)
- loose food products that are limited to:
  - open boxes and trays of fruit and vegetables
  - trays of raw fish/crustaceans/other sea food
  - carcasses of meat.

A permitted exception to this rule is where the main activity of the site is storage and distribution, and this includes a small amount of order-picking from trays of fruit and vegetables to smaller quantities to fulfil customer orders (e.g., for food service customers) without any further preparation (including cutting or trimming) or processing

## **Packaging materials**

These include pre-packed and bulk packaging materials for later conversion to food and non-food use. Where any conversion or other operation that changes the nature of the incoming packaging materials is undertaken, the facility shall be audited against the Global Standard for Packaging Materials.

## **Consumer products**

These include pre-packed products manufactured for the consumer market (e.g., general merchandise, personal care and household) to be sold by retail, or similar products supplied to the food service industry.

The Standard applies only to packaged products. 'Packaged' in the context of consumer products is intended to include packaged individual items, bound or shrink-wrapped palletised materials, and items packed in bulk bags as used, for example, for building materials.

## **Benefits of using the Standard**

Adoption use and certification to the Standard provide a number of benefits in terms of the operation of the business, customers and marketing. The benefits are as follows:

- The Standard is internationally recognised, providing a report and certification that can be accepted by customers in place of their own audits – reducing time and cost.
- The comprehensive scope of the Standard, covering areas of quality, hygiene and product safety, provides a benchmark for best practice in the storage and distribution industries
- When effectively adopted, the Standard can reduce damage, waste and therefore costs to the business.
- The accredited audit provides greater credibility and recognition when certification is achieved. • Certificated sites may appear in the BRCGS Directory (open to the public) providing recognition of their achievements and the use of a logo for marketing purposes.
- The Standard addresses part of the 'due diligence' requirements of both the certificated company and the customers using its service.
- Ongoing surveillance and follow-up corrective actions after an audit help to ensure that a self-improving quality, hygiene and product safety system is established.

## **Some Key Changes from Issue 3**

- Introduction of the requirement for 1 x unannounced audit every 3 years. (GFSI requirement)
- Blended audit approach options
- BRCGS may make audit reports and certificates available to customers of site or the authorities (upon agreement).
- Voluntary modules undertaken but not adopted will be a permitted exclusion, however, this will not impact the sites ability to use the BRCGS logo.

- If a grade C or C+ (with two major non-conformities) or D or D+ is awarded, the closure of non-conformities will require a site visit within 28 days of the audit.
- Introduction of consequences of not allowing an unannounced auditor to access site, including immediate suspension of certification.
- For a blended audit, the remote audit must take place prior to the on-site audit.