

Artisan Cheese Maker Level I Audit

Purpose:

To develop and agree upon a Level I (Basic) food safety standard for cheesemakers, primarily artisan/farmstead to be used by retailers.

Background:

Retailers are working in collaboration with local artisan cheese makers to develop minimum food safety standards. The minimum Level I (Basic) standard includes regulatory requirements and adds additional food safety criteria. The Level I criteria can be used as a first step towards a GFSI benchmarked standard (similar categories). HACCP was included in the Level I (Basic) for cheese makers.

Audit:

The initial audit *will not* be scored and the emphasis for the initial audit will be placed on the corrective actions required to correct the deficiencies. Subsequent audits (6-12 months) will be scored and a score of at least 75 is required to receive an ‘acceptable’ score (the acceptable score may increase over time). The audit criteria that are designated as ‘critical’ for food safety and a deficiency in any of these criteria will automatically score the audit as ‘unacceptable.’ Cheesemakers participating in a Level I audit should receive no critical deficiencies (*this includes the initial unscored audit*). **All deficiencies** require corrective actions to be submitted within 30 days of completion of the audit that address the root cause and include a timeline on implementation of the corrective actions. Critical deficiencies must be corrected before accepting product from a supplier.

The audit will be freely available for designated auditing companies to use and will be ‘owned and maintained’ by the Retail Consortium. The audit results should be adequate for all retailers and allow a cheese maker to be audited once (in a given time period) and use the results for multiple retailers (once certified, accepted everywhere). An audit to a GFSI benchmarked scheme can take the place of the Level I audit.

The Retail Consortium has and will continue to partner with the Innovation Center for US Dairy® on our artisan/farmstead supplier food safety training and education programs.

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