Global Costco Food Safety Audit Expectations V3.0

Frequently Asked Questions - Version 1.0 - August 2025

Question	Answer
Supplier Expectations **General Audit Requirements: Unannounced vs. Announced Audits** • Will the GFSI audit (IFS, BAP, FSSC, etc.) with Costco Addendum be required to be Unannounced? • Will the standard GDP or Packaging Audit we offer have to be unannounced like the Costco GMP to meet Costco requirements? • What audit window should be used for our private GDP/Packaging Audit/etc?	Costco will defer to the scheme owner on Announced / Unannounced requirements. **The Standard Costco GMP will remain Unannounced.** • No, we will defer to the GFSI scheme requirements. The Costco Addendum will follow the CPO's unannounced audit cycle requirements. • No, we will defer to the standard owner's requirement. Unannounced would only be required if specifically mandated by the standard owner's program (e.g. Eurofins GDP, AIB GDP, Merieux Packaging, NSF cGMP, and other acceptable private schemes). • We will defer to the standard owner's audit window. At minimum, Costco expects audits to be conducted annually.
Approved Audit Standards: Transition from CPO-specific Costco Modules to Costco Addendum • When will the Costco Addendum become auditable? • Is there a hard cut-off date for the CPO-specific Costco Modules? • What is the cost of the Costco Addendum?	The Costco Addendum is a single separate excel checklist that applies to the GFSI scheme where listed. The Costco Produce Addendum will be a separate checklist. • The Costco Addendum will become auditable starting **September 1st, 2025**. • The CPO-specific modules shall no longer be conducted beginning: **January 1st, 2026** • We are not setting a price for the Addendum. The CB may allocate 1-2 audit hours and charge their standard rate for additional audit time.
Re-Audit Criteria • If a site has a failure on the Costco addendum done with a certification audit, do they have to have a Costco GMP re-audit within 60 days? Or only if they fail the certification audit? • If a site has a failure on an Announced GDP or Packaging audit, is the re-audit required to be Unannounced?	*Costco Coordinator must be notified within 24 hours of a failed audit or critical finding.* • Typically, failure on Costco Addendum alone will not require a re-audit. If the certification audit does not meet Costco's Expectations, a re-audit will be required. • No, we will defer to the standard owner's requirement for a re-audit to be announced or unannounced. We would like the re-audit to be completed within 60 days of the original audit date.

Question	Answer
Critical Findings • Are the Costco-specific critical findings in the GMP and Addendum templates? • How should GFSI auditors address Costco-specific critical findings?	• Critical findings are covered in the GMP templates. Addendum does not specifically identify critical findings (many covered by GFSI schemes if the issue poses a significant risk to the product). • If a Costco critical finding is observed (and is not a critical finding under the GFSI scheme), notify your Costco coordinator.
Costco Audit Standards • Are blackout dates offered for the standalone Costco GMP? • What is the process to obtain approval from Costco for the Introductory Audit?	• Yes, the blackout date policy has not changed for the Costco GMP; it is strictly limited to non-production dates. • Suppliers should inform CB which Costco region item(s) are designated for, and the CB can reach out to the appropriate Costco regional food safety team.
Costco Required System Elements Foreign Material Detection • What is considered sufficient justification for the use of a particular Foreign Material device?	• Suppliers must justify their choice with documented scientific and technical evidence that proves the system's effectiveness in reducing contamination. Refer to Foreign Material Detection Justification Guidance for examples.
Audit Company Expectations **Audit Introduction Packet** • Will Costco supply a template release form for audit firms to use? Will this need to be signed by the Costco vendor? • What if a site refuses to sign an audit report release form?	• No, it will be up to the CB to work with their legal team to develop an appropriate release form. The release needs to be with the business entity that has the audit contract, and the release needs to grant permission for the CB to share the audit with Costco. • If a site refuses to sign a release, escalate to your Costco Coordinator.
Audit Duration - GMP • If a site is very large but only produces Costco products on a few lines, is it acceptable to only include those lines in the scope?	• As a general rule, the scope of the Costco GMP should include the entire facility, unless the areas/lines where Costco product(s) are made are completely enclosed.
Standard Operating Procedure - Audit Companies Using EFA **Preliminary GFSI Reports** Should a preliminary Costco Addendum report be uploaded?	• The preliminary GFSI report should be uploaded in EFA within 10 business days. A preliminary Costco Addendum is not necessary. The Addendum must be uploaded along with the Final GFSI results.

Foreign Material Detection Justification Guidance

Recommendations should originate from a qualified source and be properly documented. A verbal assertion such as "an expert advised us to do so" is insufficient. These justifications should be supported by scientific and technical evidence and a review of relevant data, such as product specifications, identified hazards, and historical complaints. The following would be considered suitable scientific and technical evidence:

- **Equipment Manufacturer Documentation:**
    - **Specification Sheet:** The technical document for the specific model, detailing its capabilities and limitations.
    - **White Papers:** Articles from the manufacturer explaining the best uses for their technology (e.g., "Why X-Ray is Superior for Inspecting Glass Jars").
    - **Commissioning Report:** A report from the manufacturer's technician after installation, confirming the machine is set up correctly and performing to specification for the supplier's products.

- **Third-Party Consultant Reports:** A formal, written report from a reputable food safety consultant or engineering firm that includes:
    - A risk assessment of the supplier's process.
    - A clear recommendation for a specific type of detection system, with a rationale explaining why it is the most effective choice.

- **Internal Expert Justification:** A formal memo or report authored by a qualified internal employee (e.g., lead engineer). The document should detail the risk analysis, the options considered, and the technical justification for the final decision. The employee's qualifications should be available for review

- **Peer-Reviewed Journals:** Articles from established food science and safety journals.
    - e.g., Journal of Food Protection, Food Control, Journal of Food Science.
    - A supplier might use an article comparing detection rates of different systems for their specific product (e.g., "A 2023 study in the Journal of Food Protection found that for low-density plastics in cheese blocks, hyperspectral imaging was more effective than X-ray, justifying our investment in this newer technology.").

- **Authoritative Textbooks:** Chapters or sections from well-regarded food processing and food safety textbooks.

- **Reputable Trade Publications:** Technical articles from respected industry magazines that focus on the science and engineering of food safety. e.g.,Food Safety Magazine, Quality Assurance & Food Safety (QA Magazine).