

# Would you like to save money on your annual Freshcare audit?

Jane Richter, TERES Farming

Frequent readers of this journal will be familiar with me in my role as Communications Manager for the Berries Australia managed project *MT18020: Facilitating the development of the Australian berry industries*, where I produce this quarterly industry journal, The Burst e-newsletter and manage the industry website [www.berries.net.au](http://www.berries.net.au).

In my spare time, I also wear another hat as one half of a small family horticulture farm in the Glass House Mountains growing Spray-Free fresh ginger. With my husband, we produce about 30 tonnes of fresh ginger each year in a hybrid-hydroponic growing system that we have developed ourselves.

As a small farm, I am acutely aware of the compliance costs involved in running a business in the fresh food industry in Australia, and like many readers of this journal, I am always looking for ways that I can reduce the cost burden whilst still ensuring that I meet my responsibilities to produce safe fresh food for Australian consumers to enjoy.

When I received the cost proposal for my Freshcare Food Safety & Quality (FSQ4.2) audit this year, I was startled to see how much the costs had increased in the six years since we were first certified. This prompted me to do some investigation to see if I could reduce the cost burden at all and when I started digging, I was very pleased to discover a few facts that I didn't know:

- You do not have to stay with the same Certification Body each year
- There are eight different Certification Bodies who are authorised to carry out Freshcare FSQ4.2 audits

- The prices charged by the different companies differ significantly – I found a difference of over \$1000 in cost from the most expensive to the most affordable
- You can contact all of the Certification Bodies through a simple form on the Freshcare website to request a quote specific to your farm business circumstances from each company to enable you to easily compare

There are a number of factors that will affect the cost of your FSQ4.2 audit; travel distance to your farm business, how many crops and sites your business covers, and how well prepared you are – these have a significant impact on the overall cost as essentially you are paying based on the time taken to complete the audit onsite and the time taken to complete the report.

The Freshcare FSQ4.2 standard meets the latest market requirements and international standards, with FSQ4.2 achieving benchmark to the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). This ensures continued access to markets around the world for Australian produce. Being GFSI compliant also means that the audit must run for at least four hours, although part of the on-site audit time can be used by the auditor to start their final report.

## Did you know?

Certification Bodies may also offer a discounted rate in the first year of audit to new customers so shopping around and ensuring that you are fully prepared in advance of your audit date are the ways to get the best available deal for your farm. And it could save you up to \$1000 so it's worth investing a little time for your next audit.

### Please Note:

- It is important to note that Certification Bodies who audit the Freshcare Standards are independent businesses to Freshcare, this ensures the integrity and quality of compliance processes.
- Freshcare has no influence over the specific fees charged by Certification Bodies for undertaking an audit.
- The Freshcare fee structure is fully transparent – for the Food Safety and Quality – On Farm (FSQ4.2) standard, the Annual Certification Fee charged by Freshcare is \$200 + GST (2022-23 Program Fees).
- The Freshcare certification fee is a pass-through charge only, currently captured by the Certification Body on behalf of Freshcare and should be clearly itemised on any quotes provided by a Certification Body.

## How can I easily get multiple audit quotes?

Visit [www.bit.ly/Freshcare-Audit-Quote](http://www.bit.ly/Freshcare-Audit-Quote) and complete the simple form. You can select as many of the available Certification Bodies as you choose. Each Body will then contact you to get further information; they may require a copy of your previous audit report and proof of Freshcare training completion, for example. In my experience, each of the Bodies requested information in a slightly different format and it took about 15 minutes to complete each information request.

## Who are the authorised Certification Bodies?

### AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd

NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) has been a Freshcare approved certification body since 2020. NCO offers certification for the On Farm and Supply Chain Food Safety & Quality Standards and the Environmental Code of Practice. NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) is a fully-owned subsidiary of the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA), and provides certification services to the organic industry, in Australia and internationally. You do not need to be an organic farm to use this audit option for FSQ4.2.

08 7231 7700  
[info@ncocertifiedorganic.com.au](mailto:info@ncocertifiedorganic.com.au)  
[www.ncocertifiedorganic.com.au](http://www.ncocertifiedorganic.com.au)



### SAI Global Pty Ltd

SAI Global Pty Ltd, a global provider of integrated risk management solutions, quality assurance, and property services, helps organisations to proactively manage business risk to create trust and achieve business confidence, growth, and sustainability. Their Assurance services division has a global reach with locations across Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

1300 360 314  
[assurance@saiglobal.com](mailto:assurance@saiglobal.com)  
[www.saiassurance.com.au](http://www.saiassurance.com.au)



### AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd

AUS-QUAL™ is a national service provider across a number of Agriculture and Horticulture sectors. AUS-QUAL provides a range of certification services and is accredited by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ) to certify quality management systems against the (ISO 9001-2015) and Food Safety programs (HACCP).

1800 630 890  
[ausqual-freshcare@ausqual.com.au](mailto:ausqual-freshcare@ausqual.com.au)  
[www.ausqual.com.au](http://www.ausqual.com.au)



## Merieux NutriSciences Certification

Merieux NutriSciences focus on the provision of Certification Services to the Food Industry globally, offering services that are on time, transparent and all encompassing. MXNS is a subsidiary of Merieux NutriSciences and has been established to provide the food industry with a meaningful choice of certification body for independent second and third-party recognition against a range of national and international product and management certification standards.

03 8878 2122  
certification.au@mxns.com  
www.merieuxnutrisciences.com/au



## BSI Group ANZ Pty Ltd

BSI offer a broad range of food safety certification and risk management services to help all organisations in the food supply chain achieve compliance and industry best practice to grow their business. BSI are a food safety and certification provider with extensive auditing capacity and the capability to conduct integrated audits for a wide range of food safety standards across the entire food and beverage supply chain – including GFSI-recognised standards.

1300 730 134  
info.aus@bsigroup.com  
www.bsigroup.com/en-AU



## SGS Australia Pty Ltd

SGS offers food safety management systems audits against various international standards, ranging from COLES, WQA, SQF, HACCP, BRC, ISO, FSSC, RSPO, UTZ, along with many others. SGS offers the Australian agribusiness community extensive experience in auditing on-farm management systems, a national and regional network of qualified food safety auditors, a unique ability in providing a single integrated audit covering several standards/codes, a service delivery program that understands the needs of rural producers, and an audit process that adds value to your system.

(08) 9373 3500  
www.sgs.com.au



## ACO Certification Ltd

ACO Certification Ltd (previously Australian Certified Organic) is Australia's largest certifier for organic and biodynamic produce and has over 2000 certified operations within its certification system.

ACO has been providing Freshcare certification services to fresh produce businesses for over 10 years, and are accredited by IOAS to provide Freshcare Food Safety & Quality – FSQ4.2 certification services. You do not need to be an organic or biodynamic farm to use this audit option for FSQ4.2.

07 3350 5706  
info@aco.net.au  
www.aco.net.au



## Sci Qual International Pty Ltd

Established in 1991, Sci Qual International Pty Ltd was one of the first certification bodies to be accredited by JAS-ANZ. Fully Australian owned and operated Sci Qual has auditors located nation-wide, who all have first-hand experience in the horticultural industry. Sci Qual provides a cost-effective service, specialising in Multi Program Certifications.

07 5499 3377  
contact@sciqual.com.au  
www.sciqual.com.au



**For more information about Freshcare  
please visit [www.freshcare.com.au](http://www.freshcare.com.au)**



The opinions expressed here are those of the author. Information about the Certification Bodies who are authorised to provide Freshcare Certification is provided for your information only. An individual farm business must choose its own Certification Body and this article does not seek to recommend any specific Certification Body in preference to another.