Annex C: Accreditation

What has to appear on the certificate

The certificate must name the body that issued it, and must state that the body is accredited. The statement must name the accreditation body. A certificate that says only that it was issued under the certification body's own programme, or that makes no statement about accreditation at all, does not satisfy this requirement.

The statement is read as printed. Where a certificate carries an accreditation mark but no words, the mark alone is not a statement and the supplier is asked for a certificate that states the accreditation.

Which accreditation bodies count

The accreditation body must be a signatory to the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement for the relevant scope. The certificate is the evidence for this. Where the certificate states that the accreditation body is a signatory to that arrangement, the assessment takes the statement as printed and the requirement is met. Nothing is looked up and nothing further is checked.

An accreditation body the assessor has not seen before is not a reason to refuse a certificate and is not a reason to refer one. Accreditation bodies are national, there are a great many of them, and an unfamiliar name is the normal case rather than a warning sign.

Where there is a positive reason to doubt a statement, the quality manager is told and the case is referred under section 14 of the policy. A statement naming an accreditation body and the IAF arrangement is not by itself such a reason.

Why this rule exists

Accreditation is what makes a certificate mean the same thing wherever it was issued. Without it there is nothing behind the document but the issuing body's own assurance, which the organisation has no way to assess and no standing to rely on in an audit.

Recording a refusal on these grounds

A refusal under this annex is recorded against the document, not against the supplier's food safety performance. The supplier is asked for a certificate issued by an accredited body covering the same scope. Suppliers are often unaware that their certification body is unaccredited, so the request explains what is missing.