Food safety scheme compliance/technical accreditation (FSSC/TA) are essential for food and drink manufacturing and processing businesses (FDMPBs) to ensure product safety, enable brand protection, and to evidence due diligence in compliance with UK food law.

Increasingly, FDMPBs select bespoke 3rd party accredited schemes, developed to meet industry requirements and relativate specific schemes, rather than generic ISO certified schemes. Compliance with such privately operated schemes is often a prerequisite to supply schemes, rather than generic ISO certified schemes developed to meet industry requirements and rationalise retailer parties accredited standards.

The Welsh Government has identified that to enable growth of the Welsh food and drink sector in line with their action plan, of 30% growth to £2bn by 2020, it is the need to support FDMPBs in Wales to achieve and maintain FSSC/TA. Although previous research identified the majority of FDMPBs in Wales are small/medium sized enterprises, leading data detailing the FSSC/TA of FDMPBs in Wales are currently lacking.

The aim of the study is to establish the extent of food safety compliance and technical accreditation (FSSC/TA) in Welsh FDMPBs, including the drivers, barriers and support to enable Welsh FDMPBs to obtain/maintain FSSC/TA.

**Methods**

A mixed methods research approach facilitated completion of the study. Ethical approval was granted from Cardiff Met. (SREC reference: 7720).
- Online self-complete questionnaires were completed by Welsh FDMPBs (n=90) to identify FSSC/TA status.
- A series of focus groups (n=7) were conducted at locations in North and South Wales with: Stakeholders - Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), food industry Press, environmental health officers, retailers and scheme owners (n=19).
- FSS auditors/mentors (n=4).
- Welsh FDMPBs with FSSC/TA (n=20).
- Welsh FDMPBs without FSSC/TA (n=17).

**Results**

Completion of the study has given a broad overview of food safety compliance and technical accreditation in the Welsh food and drink manufacturing and processing industry. The study has established significant associations between company size and FSSC/TA, barriers to obtaining and maintaining FSSC/TA and desirable support mechanisms have been identified.

**Significance of study**

- Significant associations were determined between sector, size and FSSC/TA in Welsh FDMPBs.
- Cumulatively, the potential barriers that exist for FDMPBs in Wales to obtain and maintain FSSC/TA have been identified. The key time and costs required to develop food safety management systems, the limited availability of skilled staff that are knowledgeable and technically experienced, and the lack of visibility and information available from FSS owners.
- The research has identified the support required for Welsh FDMPBs to overcome the barriers to obtaining/maintaining FSSC/TA. Such data may inform the development of support mechanisms to enable increased uptake of FSSC/TA and accelerate food sector growth in line with Welsh Government aspirations.

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**References**


**Figure 1.** Participant quotes relating to time, cost and resource barriers.

**Figure 2.** Participant quotes relating to knowledge and skill barriers.

**Figure 3.** Participant quotes relating to communication and access to information barriers.

**Figure 4.** Participant quotes relating to training costs. Shortage of technical graduates was a major discussion point (see Figure 4).

**Figure 5.** Participant quotes relating to communication and access to information barriers.

**Figure 6.** Participant quotes relating to visibility from scheme owners (Figure 6).

**Figure 7.** Participant quotes relating to drivers for FSSC/TA.

**Figure 8.** Participant quotes relating to barriers for FSSC/TA.

**Figure 9.** Participant quotes relating to Food safety system will improve the profitability of the business.

**Figure 10.** Participant quotes relating to the support mechanisms perceived to be the most beneficial and necessary to assist FDMPBs to implement and maintain FSSC/TA for training (68%), support for the implementation of FSSC/TA documentation (64%), on-site support by means of technical coaching (32%) and pre-audits (44%) (Figure 10).

**Figure 11.** Participant quotes relating to communication and access to information barriers.

**Figure 12.** Participant quotes relating to the support mechanisms perceived to be the most beneficial and necessary to assist FDMPBs to implement and maintain FSSC/TA for training (68%), support for the implementation of FSSC/TA documentation (64%), on-site support by means of technical coaching (32%) and pre-audits (44%) (Figure 10).