Seafood Processing Standard – Low Acid Canned Foods Module

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Global Seafood Alliance Certification Standard

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A Introduction

Low Acid Canned Food (LACF) processing has unique attributes that require adherence to specific guidelines to ensure the control of associated food borne pathogens such as *Clostridium botulinum* and *Listeria monocytogenes*. The purpose of the LACF module is to provide clauses that facilities shall be audited against during the Global Seafood Alliance (GSA) Seafood Processing Standard audit, for facilities that process hermetically sealed (canned and/or pouched) seafood. The clauses stated within this module reflect global industry best practices, international scientific data, and global regulatory guidance. This module shall be audited in combination with the Core Seafood Processing Standard 6.0.

B Scope

A low acid food is any food with an equilibrium pH of greater than 4.6 and water activity greater than 0.85 sealed in a hermetically sealed container and receives a heat treatment for the purpose of achieving commercial sterility, normally stored under non-refrigerated conditions. Examples include canned or pouched seafood.

C Clause Requirements

LACF1 Facilities that produce shelf-stable acidified foods and low-acid canned foods in hermetically sealed containers, canning, retorts, aseptic processing, and product formulating systems (including systems wherein water activity is used in conjunction with thermal processing) shall demonstrate their compliance with regulations of the country of production and the country of export to control these processes. A copy of the relevant regulatory guidance that was applied shall be maintained.

LACF2 Operators of the processing systems detailed in LACF1 (including container closure inspectors) shall be under the supervision of a person who has successfully completed the prescribed course of instruction (Better Process Control School) approved by the regulatory agencies for giving instruction appropriate to the preservation technology involved in the country of production and, if required, the country of export.

LACF3 For low acid foods, the scheduled process developed by the Process Authority shall be validated for use under the conditions for achieving and maintaining commercial sterility.

LACF4 The LACF process controls of scheduled processes including, but not limited to, heat distribution, heat penetration studies, and process validation shall be conducted at a minimum every 5 years or if there are changes to the process or retort configuration, by a recognized Process Authority. Annual retort surveys shall be conducted and be approved by a competent Process Authority.

LACF5 The facility shall have regular sampling and visual inspections for metal, glass containers, and pouches if used, including can teardown inspections, in place to identify closure defects. The frequency of inspection shall be based on a risk assessment with a minimum of 1 container every 4 hours from each container closing station. Results shall be recorded, and corrective actions taken as required.

LACF6	Container cooling water shall be chlorinated or otherwise sanitized as necessary with adequate contact time for cooling canals and for recirculated water supplies. The facility shall ensure, per regulatory requirements, a measurable residual of the sanitizer employed at the water discharge point of the container cooler. Records of monitoring sanitizer residual levels of cooling water discharge shall be kept.
LACF7	Container cooling water shall be of low microbial content with an aerobic plate count of less than 100 cfu/ml or comply with applicable regulatory requirements, whichever is stricter. Frequency of testing shall be determined by risk assessment. Records shall be kept of its microbiological quality.
LACF8	Reviewers for records of LACF product and HACCP must have a high level of training specific to these food safety areas, for example, completion of the US FDA Better Process Control School course or equivalent.
LACF9	For aseptic processing and packaging systems, the facility shall have in place equipment, container, and closure sterilization procedures to ensure commercial sterility. Accurate documentation of pre-sterilization shall be available.