

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

LRQA auditors:

# Experts in driving food safety

LRQA



**The food sector relies on assurance, not just to protect brands and businesses from prosecutions, health scares and recalls, but also to drive improvements and secure competitive advantage. The certification process helps organisations minimise risk, improve systems and processes, and delivers confidence for stakeholders throughout the food supply chain.**

With global supply chains becoming ever more complex in their structure and location, organisations need the highest levels of assurance to maintain a safe and sustainable food supply. Having skilled and knowledgeable auditors who are experts in your industry, who understand your business and its challenges, and help you continuously improve and achieve the highest standards, assurance and certifications, is critical for your business growth and reputation.


#### **Global consistency**

When working with multi-site businesses around the world, it is essential that auditors are calibrated to the same level to ensure consistency in audit delivery for industry or company-specific standards and assurance programmes.

For example, auditing against GFSI-recognised certification programmes – respected by retailers and buyers around the world – needs to be the same wherever those audits are taking place.


Calibration is fundamentally critical to an assessment process. Organisations need to be confident that their external auditors are calibrated in such a way that they deliver global auditor consistency, irrespective of the standard, scheme, or geographical location.

Across the assurance industry, certification bodies such as LRQA have been quick to react to increased demands from clients, based on the emergence and strengthening of global supply chains, and are using defined calibration systems to ensure consistency and auditor competency.

 At LRQA we are focused on making sure we have a consistent approach to auditing...

**Jan Kranghand**  
Food Centre of Excellence | LRQA



 Additionally, by using a trusted sector specialist like LRQA, a customer gets access to a far wider pool of knowledge and expertise than they could cost-effectively employ internally.

**Kimberly Carey Coffin | Global Supply Chain Director | LRQA**

Jan Kranghand, Food Centre of Excellence commented: “At LRQA, we are focused on making sure we have a consistent approach to auditing and that our global network of food safety auditors are calibrated accordingly.

By assessing auditors, both internally at LRQA and externally via accreditation bodies, we ensure that every auditor has strong baseline knowledge. This ensures confidence in the value of independent assurance, and the quality of auditing global standards, such as GFSI-recognised certification.

Another important consideration when looking for that consistency across the board is non-conformity grading. Consistency is often influenced by a lack of understanding of the reasons behind the assessment process. You will often find conflict when an organisation is looking for a clean slate at the end of the assessment, and an auditor therefore chooses the path that will bring the minimum resistance when grading the audit. Effective calibration will rectify or even eliminate a discrepancy like this.

Kimberly Carey Coffin, Global Supply Chain Director at LRQA explains: “There are two types of calibration exercises: generic internal calibration and customer participated calibration. Generic internal calibration enhances the skill of the auditors in consistent grading while customer participated calibration helps both the auditors and the customer understand the process and criteria set by all parties.


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## Auditing competency

At LRQA, we believe that auditor competency is based on food knowledge, sector specific experience, professional auditing expertise and the right tools.

We have teams who cover very specific areas of the food supply chain. For example, staff who are technical experts in areas like red meat, dairy, microbiology, environmental health, supply chain sustainability and ethical sourcing. We know budgets are stretched and we also know that talent is difficult to find. With around 500 food sector staff and associates, we can make the right resource available to customers for their individual projects.

Jan Kranghand, Food Centre of Excellence at LRQA explains: “We are committed to ensuring our auditors are not only highly trained and possess the required qualifications relevant to the food industry, but also have relevant practical and interpersonal skills and the latest industry knowledge.

 Our ‘Auditor Excellence Programme’ which is compulsory for all LRQA auditors, ensures we maintain auditor competency and consistency across the world.

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"It's important that auditors have the right blend of technical expertise as well as broader auditing skills and the right attitude, to help our customers complete successful audits. To achieve the best outcome, they need to be able to understand their client's business, and ensure the right processes are followed at every stage of the audit, from verification of documentation, records, reports, operating practices, and processing conditions.

"Organisations do not want an assurance company that just assesses, they want them to provide expertise and knowledge that gives them guidance about the practices, regulations, and compliance requirements needed to achieve their certifications."

## Technology enabled auditors

Fully connected and flexible systems provide a wealth of opportunities for continuous improvement in food safety culture, assuming the data gathered is interpreted efficiently, and the use of data underpins the assessment process. This is another area where auditor competency is critical to drive improvements for an organisation.

Assurance companies like LRQA have a role to play in the creation of safe, shared data platforms, to help the food supply chain analyse and contextualise its data. It also potentially gives all partners in the food supply chain a safer way to verify and share information and establish trust.

 Today, auditors need to be able to take data and turn this into meaningful insight and actionable plans for our clients.

**Kimberly Carey Coffin | Global Supply Chain Director | LRQA**



“Our clients have a sea of data and information around them. Our aim is to marry those two together and bring insight for our clients, interpreted by our sector experts to help businesses manage food safety more effectively.”

LRQA’s dedicated supply chain assurance management platform gives a fully transparent overview of your supply chain or your estate 24/7 on any device. From enabling improved transparency of audit outcomes and supplier risk status to effective non-conformance management, and business critical reporting, the platform ensures you have all the information you need, in one place, to effectively manage risk.

Additionally, using our food sector expertise combined with leading AI scanning technology, LRQA help businesses plan for and manage food safety challenges proactively, before they become a significant risk to consumer or brand.

As well as using industry-leading data platforms, LRQA was also one of the first to introduce remote auditing back in 2018.

Kimberly explains: “Over the last two years we have trained and upskilled our teams of auditors around the world to deliver digital audits that are thorough yet practical, and deliver the same value and outcomes expected from an on-site visit. Businesses experiencing our remote services have commended the safety, convenience, environmental benefits, and outcomes that they bring.

“Our increased focus on digital solutions enables us to deliver essential services during audits such as reviewing documentation, conducting interviews and site assessments.

This means that we can deliver the same services online that we provided before on-site and in person, easily and safely – and our customers see the same audit outcomes – increasingly with accredited certification – maintained by robust processes and technical expertise.”

Digitally enabled audits can be co-witnessed by multiple stakeholders within your business, who can also interact with auditors via a live stream, through secure, easy-to-use, online platforms to protect your information and the integrity of your audit.

## Summary

The responsibility for driving positive change across the food supply chain is not solely the responsibility of regulators, retailers, and manufacturers. Assurance providers have a vital role to play in bringing confidence to the stakeholders of assessment and certification.

With organisational objectives focused on delivering safe food, we take our responsibility seriously.

At LRQA, we are actively supporting change by having the mechanisms in place to effectively train our global food safety auditors, to ensure that their sector and technical expertise is maintained and enhanced.

In addition, at every step of the auditing process, we:

- Listen to your needs and expectations before making expert recommendations

- Create bespoke solutions for your business, using our leading expertise, capabilities, and technology
- Deliver the solution that works best for you; working with you to agreed KPI’s
- Improve our service by monitoring, assessing, and anticipating market issues, to keep your business and brand safe.



YOUR FUTURE. OUR FOCUS.

## About LRQA

Bringing together unrivalled expertise in certification, brand assurance and training, LRQA is one of the world's leading providers of food safety and assurance solutions. Working together with farms, fisheries, food manufacturers, restaurants, hotels and global retailers, we help manage food safety and sustainability risks throughout supply chains and have become a leading global assurance provider.

We're proud of our heritage, but it's who we are today that really matters, because that's what shapes how we partner with our clients tomorrow. By combining strong values, decades of experience in risk management and mitigation and a keen focus on the future, we're here to support our clients as they build safer, more secure, more sustainable businesses.

From independent auditing, certification and training; to technical advisory services; to real-time assurance technology; to data-driven supply chain transformation, our innovative end-to-end solutions help our clients negotiate a rapidly changing risk landscape – making sure they're shaping their own future, rather than letting it shape them.

### Get in touch

Visit [www.lrqa.com/uk](http://www.lrqa.com/uk) for more information

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