



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

Global Agriculture Information Network

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**European Union**  
**Market Development Reports**  
**Global Food Safety Initiative**  
**2001**

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**Report Highlights:**

**Thirty-eight mostly European retailers and food service companies are developing a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) which was launched in May 2000. The initiative is in response to recent food safety scares and intends to strengthen consumer confidence and minimize food safety risks.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Brussels USEU [BE2], E2

Thirty-eight mostly European retailers and food service companies are developing a Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) which was launched in May 2000. The initiative is in response to recent food safety scares and intends to strengthen consumer confidence and minimize food safety risks. A primary focus of the initiative is to develop a standardized system based on ISO 65 to certify suppliers of retailer-branded products. Certified suppliers would be eligible to use a GFSI logo on their products. Other priorities include building an international early warning system, promoting consumer education and encouraging cooperation among the food sector, governments and multilateral authorities. A draft guidance document regarding the certification standards is currently under review. The final document is expected to be published in September 2001 at which time a general organizational framework will also be established.

The Global Food Safety Initiative taskforce of 38 retailers represents 65 percent of food retail revenue worldwide. It is facilitated by CIES – The Food Business Forum, a global food business network of 250 retailers and an equal number of their suppliers, with the cooperation of the Food Marketing Institute. Links with other national and international trade organisations have already been established. Participating European Union retailers include: Ahold, Laurus and Albert Heijn (Netherlands); Asda Stores, CWS, Marks and Spencer, Sainsburys, Somerfield, Tesco and Waitrose (UK); Auchan, Opera and Carrefour (France); Delhaize (Belgium); Dunnes Stores and Superquinn (Ireland); Edeka, Rewe, Metro, Globus and Tegut Gutberlet (Germany); Esselunga (Italy); FDB (Denmark); ICA (Sweden), JMR and Sonae (Portugal); Kesko (Finland). Non-European Union participants include: Loblaw and Sobeys (Canada); Supersol (Israel); Woolworths (South Africa); AGWEST and Woolworths (Australia); COOP and SQTS (Switzerland); Albertson's (US).

The draft guidance document is under review until August 2001. The document provides information regarding key elements that must be present in a standard submitted to the GFSI for endorsement. Suppliers certified as meeting an endorsed standard will be able to use a GFSI logo or trademark. Some key components include: Quality Management Systems, document control, traceability and product analysis. An extensive list of good agricultural, manufacturing and distribution practices is also laid out. These include environmental standards, staff facility requirements, contamination risk minimization and waste management. Standards will also be required to incorporate a HACCP system based on Codex Alimentarius principles.

Other aspects of the GFSI include an early warning system and consumer education. An early-warning system pilot program is being developed to warn stakeholders about potential food safety crises. The pilot program will be run until October 2001, at which time a decision will be made whether or not to run it on a permanent basis. The consumer education aspect of the initiative, consisting of campaigns about kitchen hygiene and proper food preparation, will be developed at a later stage.

Participating retailers in the European Union Member States and third countries may be able to provide insight into the potential impact of the GFSI on US suppliers. The full

guidance document and other information regarding GFSI may be downloaded from the CIES website at: <http://www.ciesnet.com>.