

Case study

Dr Schär

Innovating special nutrition.

Dr. Schär: Pioneering gluten-free excellence with BRCGS certification

Dr. Schär is a global leader in gluten-free food and special nutrition. Founded in 1922 in South Tyrol, nestled in the heart of the Alps, the family-owned company has always been guided by a mission to improve the lives of people with special nutritional needs. The Schär gluten-free brand, with more than 40 years of heritage, stands as a testament to their unwavering commitment and deep expertise in the field.

Now, with 18 locations across 12 countries and a dedicated team of 1,800 employees, Dr. Schär remains firmly rooted in its origins in South Tyrol. From this foundation, the company has grown to deliver over

200 products to more than 100 markets worldwide, continuing to innovate and meet the evolving needs of its global customers.

Dr. Schär was among the first sites to successfully complete a transition audit for Global Standard Gluten-Free Issue 4 which incorporated Section 8 featuring the Association of European Celiac Society (AOECS) requirements. Here we speak to Günther Augustin, Director of Global Quality Assurance at Dr. Schär about their experience.

Mastering the art of audit preparation

BRCGS certification is the cornerstone of Dr. Schär's commitment to quality and safety. Certificated to the Global Standard Food Safety since 2005, the company expanded its certification in 2021 with BRCGS Global Standard Gluten-Free. Günther highlights the significance of this achievement: "BRCGS has the best offer when it comes to gluten-free certification that fully meets the expectations of our customers. It strengthens our food safety system and gluten-free production, and ensures that our products meet the highest standards. It helps us make sure our brand stands out in the market, for all the right reasons."





The AO ECS trademark is the most recognised and trusted consumer-facing gluten-free trademark in Europe. Use of the AO ECS trademark is really important for Dr. Schär.

When approaching their transition audit in 2024, the team at Dr. Schär undertook extensive preparation to ensure they fully understood the new and updated requirements while equipping themselves with the necessary training to achieve compliance. “We started by attending a BRCGS webinar which gave really good insight into the upcoming changes. We then later attended a BRCGS training course to get a more comprehensive understanding of what was required”.

To further streamline their approach, the team developed an internal catalogue that clearly documented the differences between Issue 3 and Issue 4 requirements. This catalogue not only highlighted the changes but also included corresponding action measures: “This helped us to ensure every requirement was addressed systematically, and to put our preparation to the test, we conducted a lot of internal audits to give us a clearer picture of our readiness and where we still needed to improve”. Throughout their preparation, they relied on the Interpretation Guideline as a key reference tool, enabling them to clarify any ambiguities and align their processes accordingly.

This was supported by employee training sessions to ensure that every team member was familiar with the

updated requirements and their role in maintaining compliance. These training sessions emphasized practical understanding and collaboration, empowering staff to actively contribute to meeting the requirements. Altogether, their strategic and detailed approach demonstrated a strong commitment to excellence and compliance at every level of the organisation. As a result, the team at Dr. Schär felt the transition preparation was straightforward.

Efficiency, engagement and evolution

With certification to two BRCGS Standards, Dr. Schär saw significant advantages in the alignment of Issue 4 with Global Standard Food Safety Issue 9: “The harmonized structure, clauses, and requirements provided greater consistency and uniformity, making it easier to integrate, and to manage both standards simultaneously moving forward”. This harmonisation not only simplified the transition process but also enhanced operational efficiency for Dr. Schär by streamlining processes across the organisation.

The transition to Issue 4 also delivered additional benefits beyond harmonisation: “It fostered deeper engagement from senior management, which encouraged our leaders to take a more active role

in our certification preparation". In addition, the responsibilities of the gluten-free management system team leader were expanded, ensuring "more rigorous oversight and strengthening the overall process". These changes ultimately led to a more robust and effective food safety management system, benefiting both Dr. Schär and its customers.

Consumer trust is long tradition

Dr. Schär was one of the first companies to adopt Section 8 of the Global Standard Gluten-Free Issue 4 during their BRCGS audit. This optional section enables certificated sites to integrate AOECs requirements directly into their BRCGS audit, streamlining the process by reducing the need for multiple audits, saving both time and resources. Successfully incorporating Section 8 into the audit allows sites to use the AOECs trademark.

The AOECs trademark is the most recognised and trusted consumer-facing gluten-free trademark in Europe. Use of the AOECs trademark is really important for Dr. Schär: "We proudly display the AOECs trademark on all our product labels to ensure our consumers have complete confidence in what they purchase and use. As a trusted leader in gluten-free products, we understand how essential it is for our customers to rely on the quality and safety of our offerings. This is particularly crucial for individuals with celiac disease, whose health depends on strict adherence to a gluten-free diet. Consumer trust is long-tradition for us, and we are committed to delivering quality products to the gluten-free market".



Top tips for sites

When asked for her top tips for sites preparing for their first Issue 4 audits, Günther shared some valuable advice: "Start by attending as many BRCGS training sessions and webinars as possible to deepen your understanding of the new and updated requirements. For implementation, the Interpretation Guideline is an invaluable resource. We found the internal catalogue we produced really useful for organising our approach to implementation as it included a comparison of requirements and then listed action measures to make sure we didn't miss anything. Lastly, don't underestimate the importance of conducting thorough internal audits and self-assessments - it makes a big difference!"

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GLUTEN-FREE CERTIFICATION**

