



## Questions & Answers (Q&A) - SGF Certification Tank Cleaning

**1. Q: Why SGF entered into this field of tank cleaning bulk containers?**

A: SGF was asked by its members (both packers of fruit juice products for consumers as well as semi-finished fruit juice products) to close the existing gap (cleaning stations) of control in the fruit juice supply chain and to ensure the safety and quality of these cleaning operations in the EU by a voluntary certification scheme.

**2. Q: Was there an immediate need for this request?**

A: On one side companies were losing trust in the proper cleaning of bulk containers (containers and tank cars) due to own experience of visually not clean bulk containers and on the other hand the growing uncertainty about cleaning bulk transport due to media attention and on the misperception of the meaning of an European Cleaning Document (ECD).

**3. Q: What was the misperception regarding the ECD?**

A: Tank cleaning stations are only allowed to issue an ECD (also called certificate) if they are a member of a national Member of the European Federation of Tank Cleaning Operations (EFTCO) and having an audit report (non-food related) of SQAS. SQAS is an audit organisations founded by and for the chemical industry) and do not provide a proper evaluation and certification decision. The misperception was that these ECD's were perceived as quality certificates while they are just a self-declaration of the cleaning station. In other words today good and bad cleaning stations may have a SQAS report and may issue an ECD but this is saying nothing about the suitability of the cleaning station and the quality of their services for food cleanings.

**4. Q: Are all cleaning stations not working according to what is necessary for foodstuff?**

A: Of course, also today there are very responsible and good equipped cleaning stations dedicated for food containers or having at least two completely separated cleaning lines where food and non-food (both feed and chemicals) are cleaned. However, there are also cleaning stations where food and non-food is cleaned at the same cleaning line with all risks of contamination involved.

**5. Q: Is the price for a proper cleaning for foodstuff containers an important issue?**

A: As a general rule the price of a cleaning is included in the transport price and amounts approx. 15-25% of the transport cost. As the price for transport (thus including cleaning) is a highly competitive issue in the market the chance of looking for the lowest price for cleaning is evident and can lead to using cleaning stations not appropriate for cleaning foodstuffs or a reduction in the necessary cleaning time.

**6. Q: Does the SGF certification scheme guarantee that SGF certified cleaning stations are suitable for this job and that cleaning results are always problem free.**

A: With the audit frequency of a yearly audit carried out by well trained and food specialised independent auditors an issued high or basic level SGF certificate clearly provides the following information:

- the cleaning stations complies with the min. requirements for the high or basic level and thus is capable of carrying out a foodstuff cleaning according to acceptable standards for management, organisational, HACCP, GMP, equipment, testing and monitoring, food defence.
- SGF Certification Scheme furthermore checks the performance of the cleaning stations by taking during each audit at random a number of cleaning orders and compares these with the actual cleanings. For this a cleaning stations must have a fully documented and available process data monitoring system.

Of course this all will not lead to a 100% guarantee that nothing can go wrong but it ensures that the cleaning station is aware of what is necessary, that the own activities will be assessed and that there are consequences when not in accordance with the requirements. If the cleaning station is not performing well the SGF certificate will be withdrawn and this will lead to less cleanings for food/fruit juice customers.

**7. Q: How will SGF ensure the quality of the whole audit process?**

A: SGF has outsourced the whole audit process to a professional certification body familiar with both food requirements as well as cleaning stations. At the moment this is only AJA Registrars GmbH in Speyer Germany for stand-alone SGF certification audits or for audits in combination with a SQAS audit. AJA is a part of an international operating organisation with a head office in the United Kingdom. AJA is an accredited certification body for many ISO Standards (incl. ISO 22000-Food Safety) and also for SQAS (tank cleaning). AJA is working with IRCA registered auditors, qualified for the job and specially trained for the SGF audit checklist. The qualified auditors are assigned by AJA to a cleaning station and will be replaced by another auditor after a cycle of 2 x 3 years in order to ensure independence.

**8. Q: What resources will be needed in order to obtain a SGF certificate?**

A: Here we can differentiate between internal resources need to prepare the internal organisation for certification and resources directly linked with the whole certification process. Internal resources very much depend on the state of the art of the internal organisation and cannot be generally indicated. External resources can be expressed as the obligation to become an Extra-Ordinary member of SGF (membership fee € 300 per year) and the usual cost for an assessment and certification process whereby the audit itself is possible in one day. A binding contract with price quotation must be made with the certification body.

Please contact us in case of further questions:

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