

# Brand Reputation through Compliance

Results that brands can trust

BRCGS Compliance Report 2021

**BRCGS**



25  
Celebrating 25 years  
Science for a safer world

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# Welcome to the BRCGS Compliance Report 2021

## Executive summary

# Welcome to the BRCGS Compliance Report 2021

What a year 2020 has been! These have been turbulent times for us all as we keep pace with the fast-changing impacts of Covid-19 on our businesses and make sure our staff and our entire supply chain are kept safe. I truly appreciate all the incredible work our team and our partners have done in the past year to deliver for our certificated clients.

BRCGS has had to react fast to changing circumstances, and in 2020 we accelerated work that was already underway to increase our range of audit format options. Building on the wealth of remote working experience in the wider auditing community, we are using our understanding of the opportunities and pitfalls to shape our future offering in this area.

Our own compliance team has also had to adapt significantly, with much of our site auditing now taking place remotely. Our key learning has been that communication and planning is the top priority for effective audits.

As with all industries with stretched resources, we have also had to focus on how more could be achieved with less. Specifically, we wanted to help delivery partners ensure they could carry out audits with a reduced pool of staff who were often unable to travel. To do that, we have adjusted our requirements, in some cases temporarily and always without compromising auditor quality, to ensure that resources could be used most

effectively. At the same time, we have worked with our international stakeholders such as accreditation bodies and GFSI to ensure their stringent requirements continued to be met.

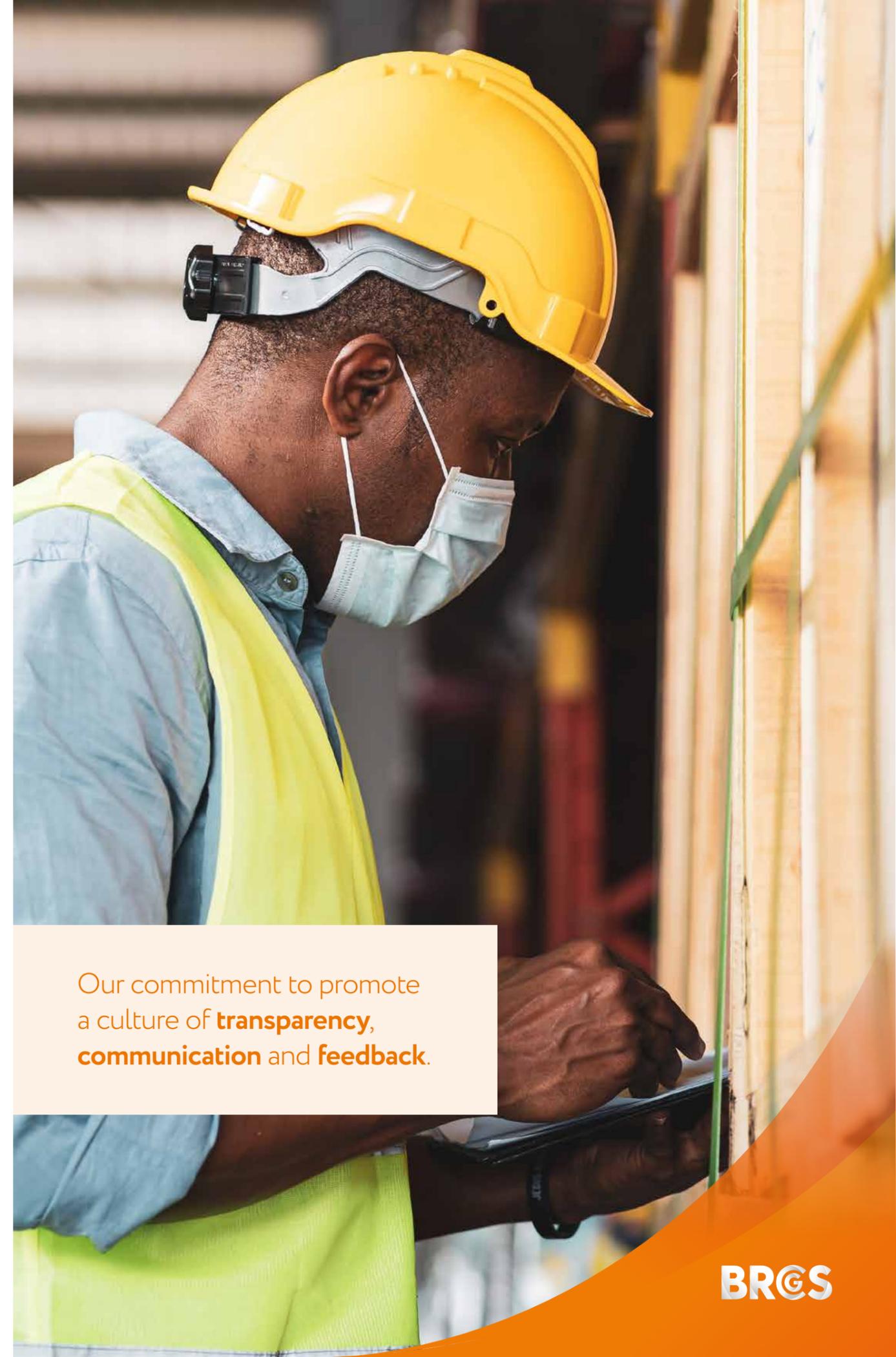
We have also had to reassess our risk-based approach as this year has undoubtedly created a shift in the risks of various auditing activities, and our team has adapted its operations as a result.

Against this backdrop, we have continued to develop new products for the supply chain market, widening our portfolio of global products with the full launch of two Standards: our Ethical Trade and Responsible Sourcing and Plant-Based programs.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary of working together as a trusted partner in providing assurance of safe, legal and high quality products within the global supply chain, we welcome you to our latest report. This will update you on the developments of the past year and more, as part of our commitment to promote a culture of transparency, communication and feedback. Our aim is to create more secure supply chains worldwide, using science for a safer world, while embedding integrity and high standards throughout the retail industry. I hope you find it an interesting and useful read.

**Karen Betts**

**Head of Compliance, BRCGS**



Our commitment to promote a culture of **transparency, communication and feedback.**



## Highlights from 2020

### How we responded to Covid-19

It's fair to say that everyone was affected by the pandemic in some way during 2020 – a year of great uncertainty with so many of us having to change how we lived and worked.

Here at BRCGS, we were acutely aware of these challenges and focused on creating agile processes that would equip our partners to adapt and respond. This included making sure we offered a framework for product safety, brand protection and consumer protection that still allowed Certification Bodies, auditors and sites to carry on working under the ever-evolving restrictions of Covid-19 in the country where they were based.

#### Comprehensive new content

Our main aims were to develop and monitor comprehensive content in response to Covid-19 that took into account the needs of auditors and the impact of the pandemic on sites – this was key to maintaining BRCGS requirements throughout the certification lifecycle.

Our Technical team found that the biggest challenges were around auditor resources and the fast-changing controls from key industry stakeholders such as GFSI that affected how sites could operate. Working to tight deadlines, the team developed brand new procedures which saw us working side by side with Certification Bodies and closely monitoring the results on site.

#### Introducing a 6-month certification extension

With on-site audits often not possible during 2020, in March we introduced a 6-month certificate extension for sites that allowed them to liaise with their Certification Body and complete a verified risk assessment to maintain their certification.

#### Tailoring our audit requirements

We also introduced a 'blended audit' option that allowed sites to take a technology-enabled off-site audit, with this remote process being followed by an on-site audit. This is available for all BRCGS GFSI benchmarked Standards (i.e. Food, Packaging, Storage & Distribution

and Agents & Brokers) and the Consumer Products and the Gluten-Free Certification Programs.

For those sites with strict travel restrictions or where it is particularly challenging for an auditor to visit, we created the fully remote audit option.

#### Covid-19 Hub

We provided clear and regular communication at a time of great uncertainty and changing circumstance. As well as regular webinars, we created a Covid-Hub to keep customers updated and to provide guidance, supporting information and technical content. We also worked to ensure continued access to essential training through [virtual platforms](#).

“The guidance that **BRCGS** has provided to Certification Bodies, in both document and webinar format, has been really detailed and very well structured. It has ensured **our global network has been kept fully up-to-date throughout the pandemic**, giving us the tools to guide our clients in navigating these difficult times.”

**Emma Hosking**, SGS UK, Certification & Business Enhancement Global Product Manager, BRCGS



# Compliance and Integrity

## The BRCGS compliance program

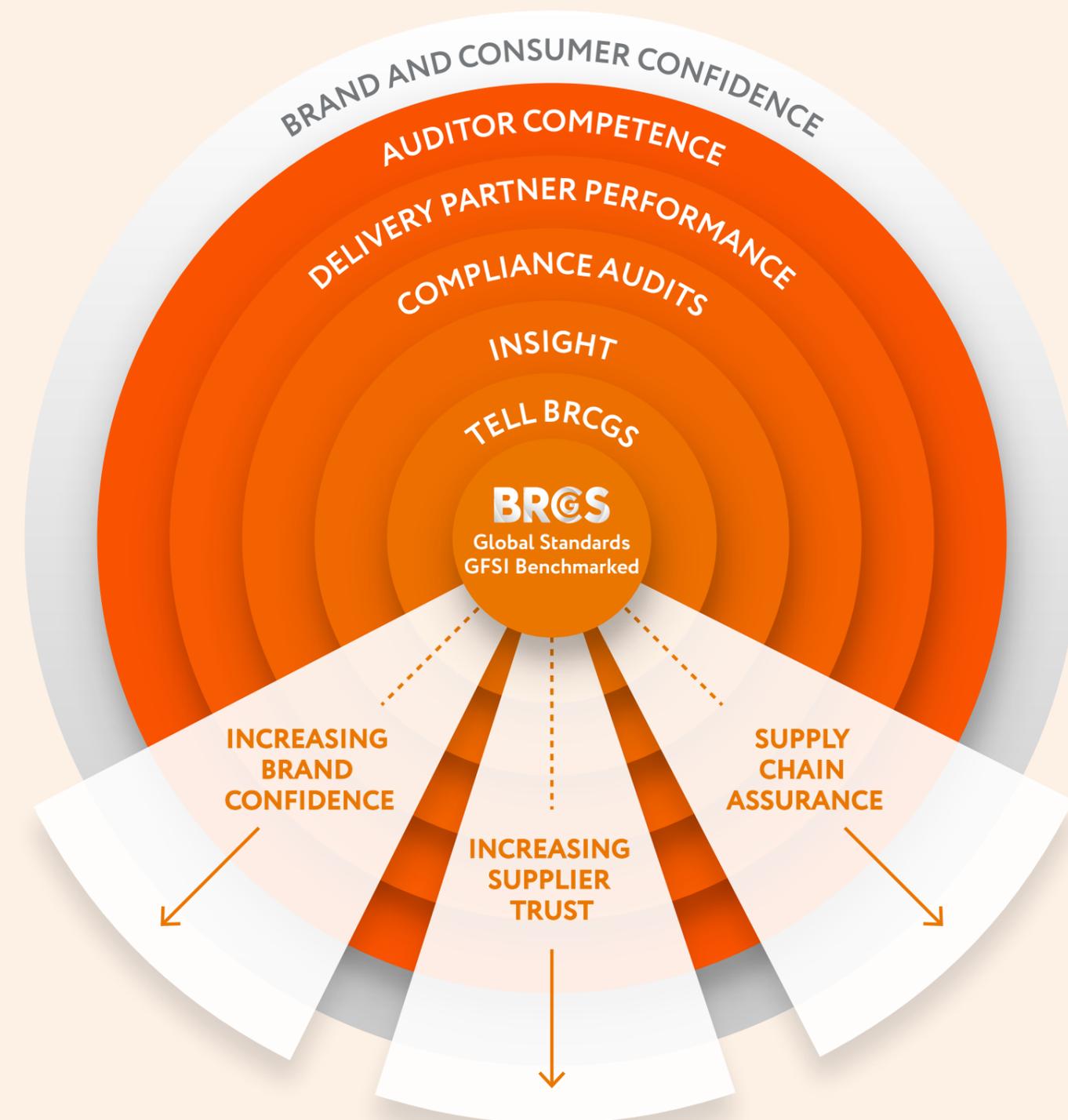
Our compliance program is a cornerstone of everything BRCGS does and stands for. It ensures that all of the global standards we champion – benchmarked by GFSI, SSCI and other leading bodies – are being met and can be trusted by brands and consumers alike.

### Our five pillars framework

We have a framework of compliance expertise and support that is built around our benchmarked standards and designed to ensure excellence throughout our network. Our five pillars of compliance are the key to driving increased brand confidence, supplier trust and supply chain assurance.

- 1 Tell BRCGS**  
A global confidential system for reporting audit issues.
- 2 Insight**  
A digital analytical tool for site benchmarking and managing performance (new version coming soon).
- 3 Compliance Audits**  
A global team of 23 people auditing the auditors.
- 4 Delivery Partner performance**  
Across a set of KPIs, that gives customer choice by grade.
- 5 Auditor competence**  
Based on qualifications, training, experience and exams.

✓ Our compliance program is comprised of five layers:



# Compliance and Integrity

## Increasing brand confidence

→ Increasing Brand Confidence

Increasing Supplier Trust



### 01 / 07 Global Standards GFSI Benchmarked

- Written by global experts to reflect the changing industry, technology and consumer needs
- Easy to understand, prescriptive language for easy global application
- Not open to interpretation
- Multi language availability
- GFSI benchmarked



### 02 / 07 Tell BRCGS

- Anonymous reporting system to capture any dissatisfaction with the audit process that could impact areas of compliance
- Available in multiple languages



### 03 / 07 Insight

- Analytics platform providing supply chain intelligence through dashboards, reports and benchmarking data
- Improve site and supplier performance



### 06 / 07 Auditor Competence

- Comprehensive requirements for registered auditors
  - Formal qualifications in auditing
  - Formal qualifications in Hazard Analysis (HACCP)
  - The right experience of the product and its associated technologies
  - Completion of BRCGS mandatory training courses



### 05 / 07 Delivery Partner Performance

- Robust approval system for Certification Bodies (CB) to ensure select group of delivery partners
- Office audit programme of CBs and their global partner offices
- KPI-based performance reviews every six months, with publicly available star ratings



### 04 / 07 Compliance Audits

- Internal team of 23 to carry on BRCGS compliance audits:
  - visits to CB head offices and certificated sites
  - witness audits
- 87 compliance visits across 22 countries in 2020
- 32 witness audits

← Increasing Brand Confidence

← Increasing Supplier Trust



## Compliance and Integrity

### Increasing brand confidence (Continued)

#### Our Compliance auditors

Respected throughout the industry, our auditors ensure that BRCGS protocols are consistently maintained and followed throughout the supply chain. With travel restricted and sites closed, remote working was the order of the day for much of 2020 within our Compliance team. This meant that Compliance auditors previously used to travelling the globe to monitor Certification Bodies, sites and auditors spent most of their time carrying out desktop reviews and remote audits and working to support our delivery partners by performing witness audits.

Meet the team virtually and learn more about how our team ensures that certification standards and other BRCGS requirements are met [here](#).

### A closer look at remote auditing

We spoke to Jon Revell, our Compliance Audit Trainer, to find out how sites are adapting to remote audits.



Q&A

**Jon Revell**  
Compliance Audit Trainer

#### Can you give us an idea of how the new remote approach has impacted your work?

The remote audit process was a bit of a culture shock to sites as much as it was to auditors. Many had not used the technology before, although of course it's been talked about many times over the years. The old saying 'improvise, adapt, overcome' sums up rather well the change in the process.

Whether it's remote or on-site, there are two aspects to every audit that must be carefully considered to ensure that it is a true reflection of the site: the documentation and the factory standards.

Initially, some companies were afraid of releasing their documentation to an auditor based elsewhere. However, providing there are measures in place to protect security, this fear was reasonably easily overcome.

Secondly, as an auditor for too many years, I was quite sceptical about how video observation of facilities would work out, given that auditors will lose most all their senses except sight when viewing remotely. A video presentation will not replace a walk-through of the facility to get a full experience of the culture of the company and its staff through its operational practices, but it does afford some understanding of the process and overall standard of construction, equipment, housekeeping, hygiene and operating standards.

# Compliance and Integrity

## A closer look at remote auditing (Continued)



### What are your 'Top 5' remote auditing tips for sites and Certification Bodies?

#### 1. Be prepared

With the remote approach, preparation by the auditor is more intensive around the pre-audit review of documentation. It's important to understand pre-audit submissions, review the previous report and understand the process so you can request the right information beforehand.

Although there are lots of similarities between on-site and off-site audits, remote document review generally requires information specified by the auditor to be uploaded to a document portal. Scanning (rather than photographing) and uploading documents can take some time, so auditors need to make sure the company is aware before audit day of exactly what information will be required. Inevitably, further documentation will be requested on the day, so access to a scanner is recommended.

#### 2. Make sure site IT is compatible with Certification Body systems

As compatibility can be an issue, the company needs to make sure the IT team is on hand at the start of the day to help with any technology troubleshooting.

Video streaming can be poor when internet bandwidth is not the best, and wifi can make this problem worse. If there could be a problem, it's a good idea to request a wired connection to LAN (ethernet) or router ahead of time so there aren't delays on the day. You also need to check in case the company firewall has internal controls on screen-sharing that need to be resolved.

#### 3. Test technology in advance

Arranging a dry run before the big day is a big plus if it's possible. The audit-day time constraints on the auditor are tough enough without the pressure of IT problems! It also means the client and auditor have a chance to break the ice before the audit day.

Many sites experience live streaming problems due the 'Faraday cage' effect that steel-framed factories present. To get around this, the company can upload pre-recorded videos requested by the auditor or present them via a shared screen.

If live streaming is possible, the noise in the plant can reduce two-way communication and the auditor loses control over where the camera is pointing. A solution can be a team approach to the filming involving two or more people, with a camera operator and the quality manager using separate devices.

“Arranging a **dry run** before the big day is a **big plus** if it is possible.”

On an audit, typically we all sit around a table, which works well. However, placing a laptop in the middle of a large table to allow everyone to join in does not work so well, particularly with the tiny microphone not being great at picking up sound and meeting rooms often being echoey. Moving auditees closer to the microphone may cause social distancing issues, so it's better to have everyone logged into the audit platform with headphones and individual microphones.

#### 4. Get familiar with videoconferencing

Throughout the pandemic, the use of videoconferencing has really developed, and everyone is now much more familiar with these systems. Ideally, Certification Bodies should have their own platform (Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, Skype, Zoom etc.) that the auditors are trained in and familiar with, knowing how to resolve issues on the day of the audit, rather than have an alien system. Not knowing how an unfamiliar platform works adds immense pressure to the auditors' already high stress levels!

#### 5. Put a plan in place for poor Wi-Fi areas

As I said earlier, live streaming the factory visit may not be possible due to Wi-Fi problems, so pre-recording of videos of the production facility can be the answer. However, national privacy laws need to be considered and you must be sure that the video will give as good a presentation of the site as a physical walk-through.

It doesn't have to be 'Hollywood' standard, but things like nauseating rapid panning from one side of the factory to another are to be avoided! Focusing in on details that an auditor would typically view during a physical audit should be the key aim, and the process flow diagram in the HACCP is a great starting point to plan the video.

“**Pre-recording** of videos of the production facility can be the answer.”

Experimenting with different recording technology is recommended, preferably avoiding the portrait style videos if possible, to enable you capture sufficient detail. A digital camera may be better than a camera phone and should make it easier to transfer videos to computer.

# Compliance Auditing Programme

## 2020 compliance activity

As well as 87 compliance reviews in 2020, our team also carried out 32 witness audits and supported the Certification Bodies whenever they requested advice on best practice. Witness audits play a crucial role in confirming auditors can apply their expertise and knowledge, and that they possess the personal characteristics expected of a skilled auditor. Auditors should be ethical, logical, analytical, calm and able to communicate with personnel at all levels.

Our data shows that the top non-conformities in witness audits have been related to completed audit reports, documentation and site inspections.

The data we collected from all our compliance visits allows our Standard Managers to identify where further guidance and support is required for auditors, Certification Bodies, sites and other stakeholders. We also use this information to identify risk-based compliance activities.

**Figure 1: Top 5 non-conformities in 2020 compliance reviews (Food Standard)**

The Food Safety Plan – HACCP	1	45%
Supplier and Raw Material Approval and Performance Monitoring	2	14%
Senior Management Commitment	3	13%
Chemical and Physical Product Contamination Control	4	10%
Management of Allergens	5	9%

**Figure 2: Top 5 non-conformities in 2020 witness audits**

Completed audit report	1	57%
Documentation, HACCP and QMS evaluation	2	49%
Site inspection	3	43%
Opening meeting	4	35%
Audit planning and preparation work	5	32%



“**BRCGS compliance audits are not re-audits** and focus on areas of concern. We use this information to design a **robust review** of the controls, **minimising** the potential for issues that will damage brands and **potentially** harm consumers.”

**Karen Betts**

Head of Compliance, BRCGS

87

compliance reviews in 2020

32

witness audits

22

countries

51

on-site

36

off-site

60%

of Certification Bodies involved

# Compliance Auditing Programme

## Our Certification Body partners

Building on our commitment to deliver the best for our Certification Body partners, most of which have been with us for over a decade, our focus in 2020 was on working collaboratively to develop our KPIs. This is part of our wider efforts to build our portfolio of audits, global reach and technical knowledge.

### Our new Directory

Our new Directory is a key resource, offering a comprehensive range of content exclusively designed for our Certification Bodies, partners and sites. It has been redesigned to streamline our processes and communication between all stakeholders.

Certification Bodies and approved training partners have access to a wide range of digital tools designed to help continuous improvement and drive-up customer assurance. The Directory's benchmarking tool, for example, can be used to measure performance against competitors and provides results in English, Mandarin, Spanish and Italian.

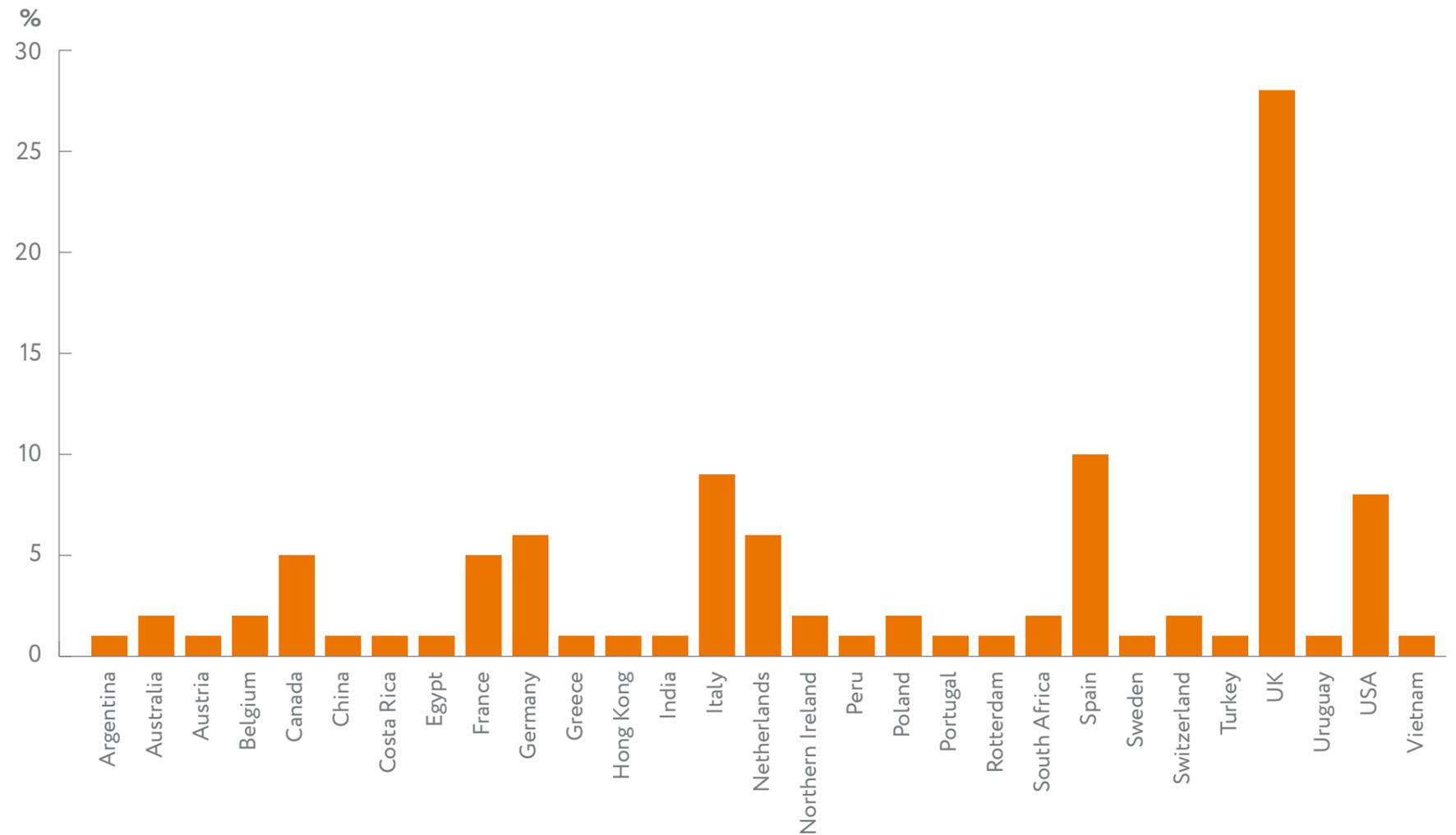
Certification bodies can also access technical support through the Directory – to build knowledge and help with audits. The Directory is also a great marketing tool for buyers searching for competent brands and sites searching for an approved Certification Body to carry out their BRCGS audit.

Go to page 20 to learn more about the Directory.

### The latest updates

All Certification Bodies receive our regular technical bulletins and attend our international calendar of Certification Body meetings and our annual Delivery Partners conference, either in Europe or the US. Due to the pandemic, we had to adapt our 2020 conference to a fully remote event and found that this allowed more Certification Bodies from around the world to attend, creating an even more positive experience for our partners.

Figure 3: Delivery Partners conference 2020 – global attendees

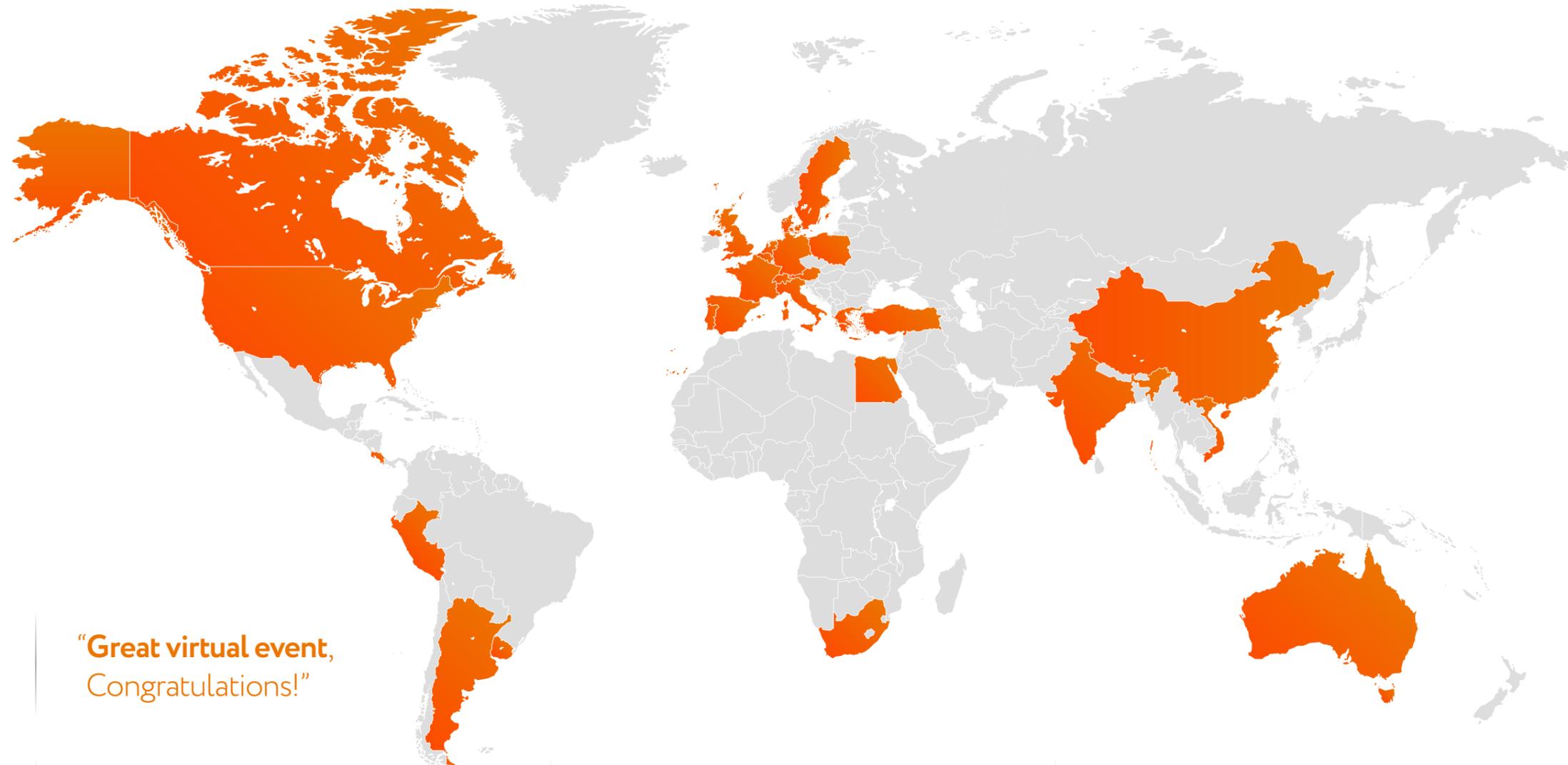


# Compliance Auditing Programme

## Our Certification Body partners (Continued)

✓ Countries the partner attendees were from.

Some feedback from our 2020 virtual conference



“I thought it was **really well executed** and a good opportunity to pick up with those you know on the attendees list.”

“Excellent day, **packed full of great information.** Thank you very much to everyone involved – speakers and organisers. Thoroughly enjoyed the whole event. Stay safe everyone!”

“Well done to everyone behind the scenes who organized this event. **Absolutely fantastic.**”

“**Great virtual event,** Congratulations!”

“Thanks to BRCGS team – **great format** for the event and **informative presentations!**”

“**Absolutely great** Virtual experience. Had a great day thank you to the team.”

“Thank you very much BRCGS for a **great and successful** event.”

“Congratulations to the BRCGS team for this **fantastic event.**”

“Well done all those involved today, great work, **excellent speakers** and **well organized.**”

“Thanks for this great event. **Interested until the end.**”

# Compliance Auditing Programme

## Certification Body Star Ratings – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Our Compliance team monitors our Certification Bodies' performance and rates them from one to five stars against BRCGS KPIs.

Our star ratings are based on the performance of a certification body's head office management of the BRCGS certification scheme – not on the work of individual auditors or audits. Our rigorous KPI process ensured that in 2020 all of our Certification Bodies had either a 4 or 5 star rating, which demonstrates the hard work and commitment of our delivery partners. We maintain transparency by posting the results on the BRCGS Directory.

100% ★★★★★  
of Certification Bodies were either a 4- or 5-star rating in 2020

79% ★★★★★  
5 stars

21% ★★★★  
4 stars

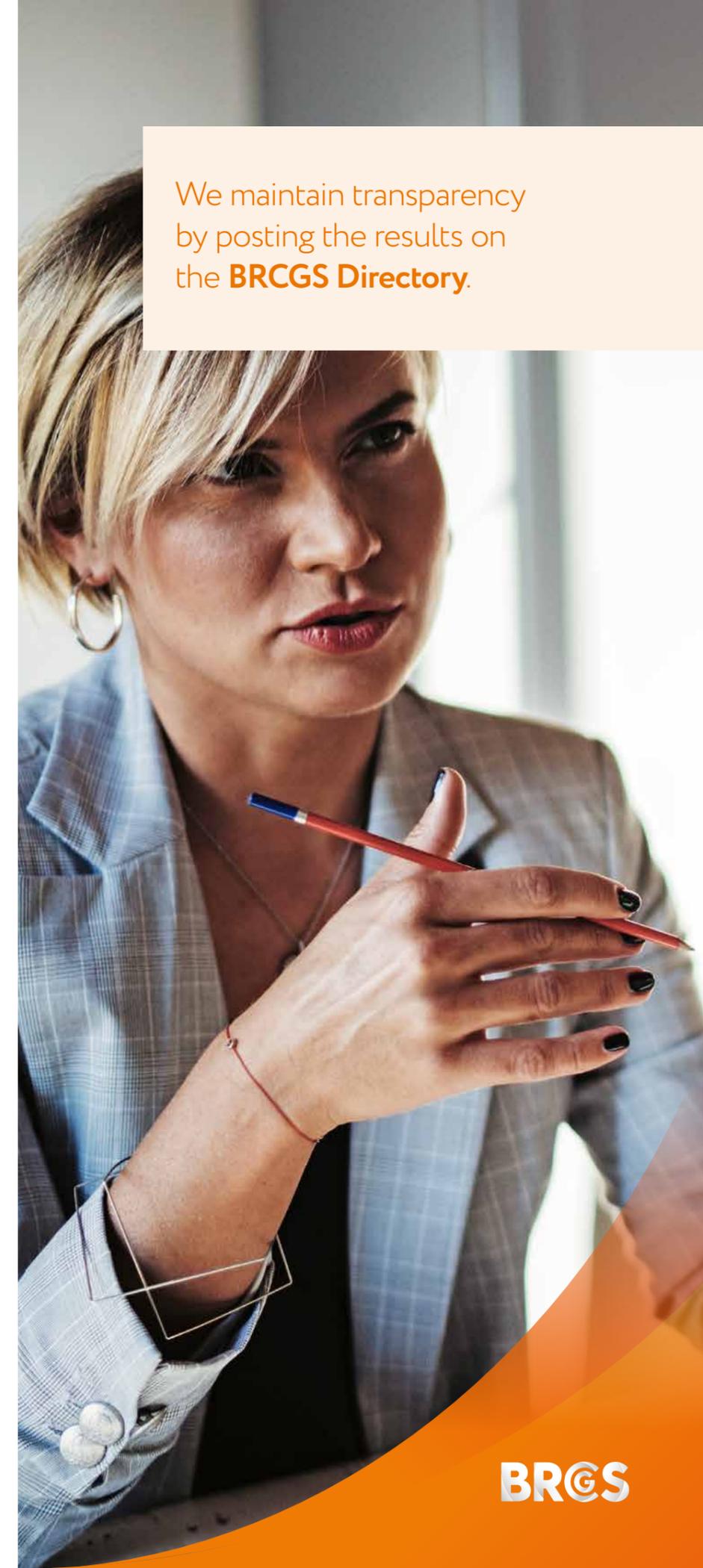
Our latest KPI 21 results showed that our CBs improved.

- All CBs were either a 4 or 5 star rating – 79% of CBs were 5 stars and 21% of CBs were 4 stars
- KPI 21 (Jan – Jun 2020) Only KPI with no 3 star ratings
- 20% increase in 5 star ratings compared to KPI 20 (Jul – Dec 2019)
- 13% increase in 5 star ratings compared to KPI 19 (Oct 18 – Mar 19)

Figure 4: Certification Body Star ratings

KPI period/year	Total CBs	Star Rating					
		0	1	2	3	4	5
KPI 21 Jan – Jun 2020	71	0	0	0	0	15	56
KPI 20 Jul – Dec 2019	66	0	0	0	9	18	39
KPI 19 Oct 18 – Mar 19	67	0	0	1	3	19	44

We maintain transparency by posting the results on the **BRCGS Directory**.



# Compliance Auditing Programme

## Certification Body Star Ratings – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

(Continued)

### Keeping standards high

When a new Certification Body is approved, we provide full training on our procedures and systems and carry out close monitoring to ensure our requirements are being met and high-quality audits are being delivered.

As part of this process, it is key that a new Certification Body understands our expectations along with BRCGS Standards and associated modules. Believing that improvement is continuous process, we constantly review our requirements to ensure we remain the best, and we are firm but fair in applying our rules, using penalties when necessary.

We monitor our Certification Bodies to ensure we only work with the highest-performing, most compliance-orientated partners. We measure their performance against KPIs and use advanced techniques to analyse the results and identify the root causes of any non-conformity and suggest actions which can prevent a reoccurrence.

### Welcoming new Certification Bodies

We are always expanding our network of Certification Bodies and are particularly keen to work with those who have expertise in our new Standards: Ethical Trade and Responsible Sourcing, Gluten-Free and Plant-Based. The application process is set out on the following page.

“Just to let you know that you have a **wonderful team of people** working with you. The communication with them is very effective. They are **polite**, very **professional** and very **punctual**. Happy to work with all of you.”

**Lazaros D. Karanikas**  
Executive Director of QMSCERT Ltd

QMS Cert Ltd is a Certification Body located in Greece that has been delivering BRCGS audits since 2018.

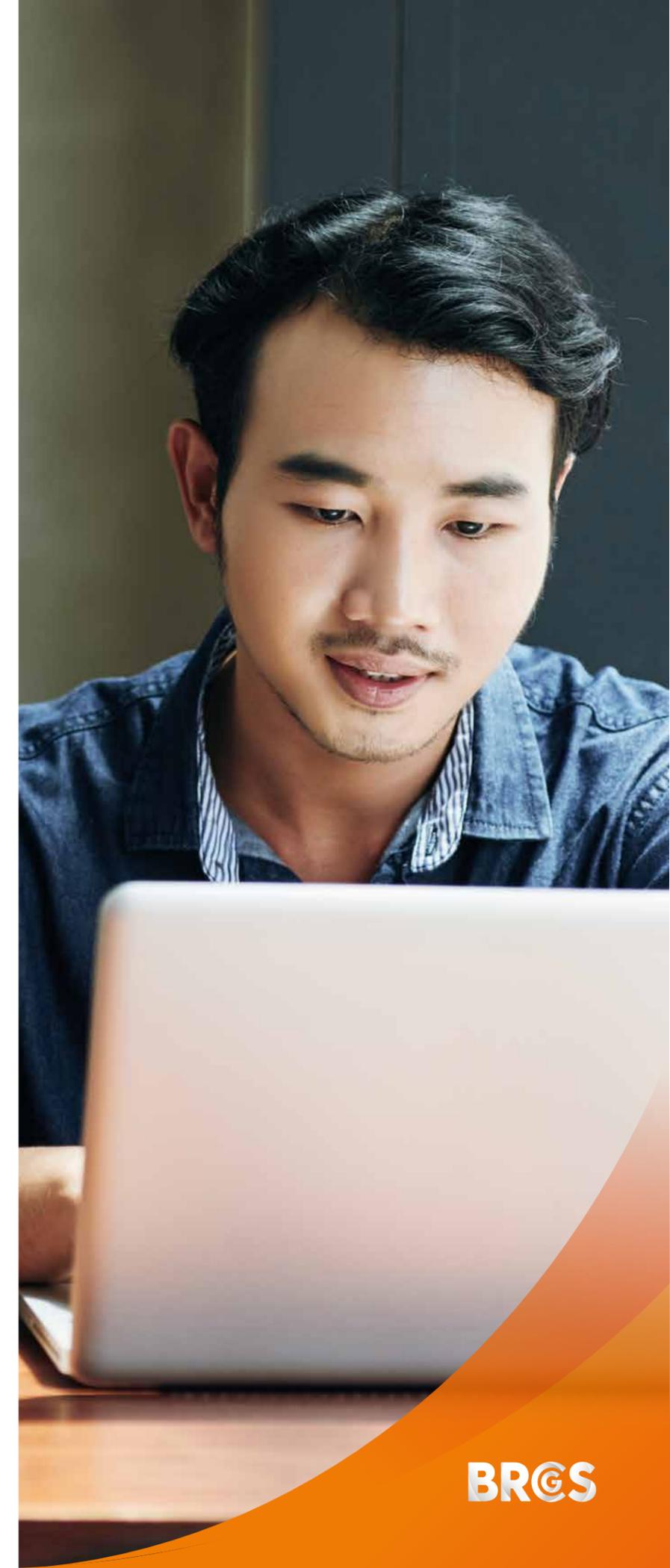


# Compliance Auditing Programme

## Certification Body Approval procedure

✓ Figure 5: Certification Body Approval procedure

- 01 Applicant Certification Body sends completed BRCGS008 registration form and business plan to [enquiries@brcgs.com](mailto:enquiries@brcgs.com) (15 working days).
- 02 BRCGS sends the following documents BRCGS004 Requirements Document, BRC009 KPI requirements and Framework Agreement with request for Certification Process, Auditor sign off process, £5 million Insurance and Accreditation Body application (5 working days).
- 03 Certification Body to send requested documents to BRCGS. Documents will be reviewed by BRCGS (15 working days).
- 04 Once approved, BRCGS sends an invoice to Certification Body for the registration fee.
- 05 Once payment is confirmed provisional registration granted and access details to the BRCGS Directory and myBRCGS. BRCGS inform Accreditation Body of provisional registration.
- 06 Certification Body to add details of any fully qualified auditors onto the system which are reviewed and validated by BRCGS (10 working days).
- 07 Once auditor registration is approved the Certification Body details will be added to [directory.brcgs.com](http://directory.brcgs.com) and can then begin to audit against the BRCGS Standard(s) for which they have registered.
- 08 Certification Body must have met all of the criteria specified in BRCGS016 Certification approval procedure (within 12 months).



# Compliance Auditing Programme

## BRCGS Schemes offered by Certification Bodies

### BRCGS Schemes offered by our Certification Bodies

We currently have 77 Certification Bodies internationally, and during the pandemic we welcomed new members from Greece, Poland, Portugal and the USA. Figure 6 shows the proportion of our various schemes that they offer.

### 2020 trends

While our Food standard remains the most popular, we saw significant growth in 2020 in the Gluten-free Standard and slight growth in the Consumer Products Standard and the Plant-Based Standard. We expect this trend to continue with consumers becoming ever more health conscious and the rise in popularity of 'free from' foods including gluten-free and plant-based options. At the same time, we believe that a growing public social conscience will drive high demand for our plant-based and ethical-led standards.

We have commercial representatives offering support in all growth regions – including India, Italy and China – and we have provided additional training of each of our compliance auditors to make sure they can provide appropriate cover for all schemes and countries.

CBs offering the Food Standard and Packaging Standard remained about the same and there was a slight rise in the Consumer Products Standard due to the increased production and awareness of personal protective equipment due to the pandemic.

### The global picture

BRCGS remains the world's largest third-party certification scheme, with the resources to offer high quality audits internationally from our broad standards portfolio. In 2020, our regions showing the fastest growth in the number of audits were Asia, North America and Latin America.

29,000

BRCGS audits in 2020

2200

auditors globally

Figure 6: Breakdown of certifications offered by CBs

	Food	PM	S&D	A&B	GFCP	CP	PB	ETRS
Total standards	71	39	38	25	12	11	2	1
<b>2020</b> % Certification offered	92	51	44	35	30	17	10	13
<b>2019</b> % Certification offered	92	54	49	41	16	15	0	0

Figure 7: Total number of audited sites- Global Distribution

2020	Food	PM	S&D	A&B	CP	GFCP	PB	Total 2020	Total 2019
Africa	419	80	15	1				515	554
Asia and South Asia	1907	472	37	5	81	13	0	2503	2421
East Asia	2218	603	89	40	311	6		3257	3033
Eastern European	1049	424	20	15	67	2		1572	1625
Europe	8084	1850	552	228	137	6	1	10818	11060
Latin America	1018	89	13		4			1123	1099
MENA	572	150	9	3	4			738	753
North America	2679	371	519	20	11	140	1	3686	3645
Oceania	551	11	29	15	3	4		608	617
Russia	17	79			2			98	97
UK	2441	611	874	265	96	3		4249	4480
ROTW	7	2		1				10	36

# Compliance Auditing Programme

## BRCGS Standards

### Protecting brands and reputations

BRCGS standards are renowned the world over for protecting brands and reputations and building trust in organisations. Our standards set out clear requirements that sites can use to maintain robust product safety management systems and demonstrate compliance with a high-quality, internationally recognised standard.

We guide and support our Certification Body partners every step of the way. From new members learning how to use our IT systems to established Approved Training Providers, we provide the support, resources, and global coverage they need to expand their product portfolio and grow with us.

### BRCGS is celebrating 25 years

This year we are celebrating our 25th anniversary. Since its formation in 1996, BRCGS has transformed into a global leading consumer protection organisation and looking forward, our mission is clear, to connect and protect the global supply chain. We look forward to celebrating with you throughout the year! Watch our journey [here](#).

### Covering the entire supply chain

Since launching the first issue of BRCGS Food in 1996, we have developed a diverse range of standards that caters to the whole supply chain. Our portfolio also covers social standards through our Ethical Trade Responsible Sourcing product. We work closely with accreditation bodies

and delivery partners to cover expanding needs and demographics and, with many materials translated into various languages, offer comprehensive to support our global community of stakeholders.

### Benchmarking against the best

Our standards cover an expanding universe of requirements from leading organisations and we work closely with global accreditation bodies and delivery partners to keep constantly evolving and improving. Our Food, Packaging, Storage & Distribution and Agents & Brokers programs are benchmarked against the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), and in 2021 we expect our Ethical Trade & Responsible Sourcing standard to be benchmarked against the Sustainable Supply Chain Initiative (SSCI), which is the equivalent to GFSI for Social Standards.

Figure 8: Suite of standards and key points



# Setting new Standards

## Our standards evolve in response to industry trends and consumer habits

Our set of Standards is evolving constantly to respond to emerging industry trends and consumer habits. This has seen us add to new programs in the past year, focusing on some of the faster-growing areas of our sector.

### 1. Ethical Trade & Responsible Sourcing Program

In 2019, BRCGS launched the Ethical Trade and Responsible Sourcing Program (ETRS) which is made up of a Global Standard and a separate ETRS Risk Assessment. We developed this certification standard to help suppliers to demonstrate that their goods and services are produced ethically.

#### A framework of principles

The resulting Global Standard's requirements span six principles, giving sites a framework on which they can build their own ethical trade and responsible sourcing management system. This enables them to ensure their legal obligations are fulfilled, their premises are safe, healthy and do not harm those working in or visiting them and that their staff's employment and human rights are respected, whether they are temporary or permanent.

#### Who is eligible for certification?

The ETRS Standard applies to food and non-food production sites where manufacturing and secondary processing/packing takes place, as well as storage and distribution or agent and broker facilities. It can also be used by businesses providing services to sites, such as labour providers or sub-contracted services including cleaning or pest control.

#### The two-stage certification process

The standard is now in its second issue and continues to offer sites the opportunity for certification through a two-stage Initial Certification Audit that is conducted by a BRCGS approved third party. Once certified, sites follow a three-year Audit Program made up of two annual surveillance audits in years 1 and 2 that confirm they are complying with all aspects of the standard. In year 3, sites have a recertification audit across the entire requirements of the Standard to reconfirm conformity and certification. For more details on the ETRS Global Standard and to register your interest in becoming certificated, please click [here](#).

#### ETRS Risk Assessment

The ETRS Risk Assessment is designed to be a diagnostic 'health check' against the five vital signs of ethical trade and responsible sourcing which are drawn from the Global Standard. It takes four hours and can be conducted as a part of a site's Product Safety Audit or delivered separately. The assessment is designed to identify the headline ethical trade and responsible sourcing risks on a site relating to labour standards, health & safety, human rights and corporate governance, although it does not raise non-conformities or require closure actions. On completion, the site will receive a 'Star Rating' where 5 stars indicates that the site is proactively managing its risks.

The ETRS Risk Assessment may be particularly helpful to sites that have not had a social audit before and have been asked to carry one out by a customer. This is because it will help them to understand what they need to do to prepare for an application to their Certification Body an audit against a social compliance standard like BRCGS's Global Standard. It also gives them evidence to show their customers that they have started to think about ethical trade issues and how they could improve. To find out more about the ETRS Risk Assessment, please click [here](#).

#### Guiding principles

ETRS is underpinned by the Ethical Trading Initiative's Base Code, the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights and four core International Labour Organisation Conventions relating to:

- Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining
- Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
- Abolition of child labour, including a minimum working age and the worst forms of child labour
- Elimination of discrimination across employment, occupation and equal pay



The new 'consumer value equation' which still pays attention to the traditional drivers of price, taste and convenience, but are increasingly influenced by "evolving" drivers such as health and wellness, social impact, experience and transparency.

Source: [Deloitte](#)

# Setting new Standards

## Our standards evolve in response to industry trends and consumer habits (Continued)

### 2. The Plant-Based Standard

The Plant-Based Global Standard is BRCGS' latest offering in our Free-From certification product range, with the first issue released in January 2020.

#### A Standard for changing times

Our Plant-Based Standard was developed in response to the shift in consumer purchasing behaviour that has led to rapidly growing demand for plant-based products. The industry has been challenged with meeting consumer demands while also protecting brand reputation and mitigating risk. The Plant-Based Global Standard is a unique certification in the market as it focuses on a management system approach to producing products free from materials of animal origin, providing certainty for industry and consumers alike.

#### What the Standard covers

The Standard is based on a comprehensive management system approach and provides a framework for manufacturers to assist them in the production of plant-based food. It includes operational criteria required to be in place to ensure that plant-based products are free of material of animal origin.

The Standard applies to the control of animal inputs in plant-based products, in the manufacture, processing and packing of processed foods, ingredients, pet foods and natural health products.

#### Who is eligible for certification?

Sites are eligible if they are currently certified to any GFSI-benchmarked Standard or to a GFSI Global Markets Program to Intermediate Level. A typical standalone Plant-Based Global Standard audit is 1 day on site. Combining the Plant-Based Global Standard audit with the GFSI scheme audit adds 0.5 days to the GFSI scheme audit time.

For sites not already certified to a GFSI-benchmarked or Global Markets Program, the Plant-Based Global Standard audit may be conducted in combination with the initial GFSI scheme audit.

#### Minimising failures and protecting brands

The aim of the Standard is to promote a systems-based approach to prevent failures that could harm brand reputation. Correctly applied, a site's plant-based management system will provide a very strong level of protection from failure and, if failure does occur, it will enable the rapid identification and management of risks and deviations.

More widely, the certification will contribute to increasing the availability of plant-based products, expanding the market, and will benefit consumers by giving them increased choice and confidence in their purchases.

#### Stand out in the crowd

The new Standard offers an on-pack trademark which will allow consumers to make an informed choice and enable brands to differentiate themselves in an increasingly crowded market. By displaying the BRCGS Plant-Based trademark on product packaging, brands are able to communicate that their product meets the needs of the consumer who wishes to follow a plant-based diet.

The management system approach to certification means that sufficient control measures will be in place to ensure the integrity of plant-based products in either dedicated and non-dedicated plant-based sites. Sites may also use certification to the Standard to underpin their own plant-based claims or logos.

The Standard has been designed so that it can be delivered as a 'stand-alone' audit or alongside another BRCGS Standard. To learn more, please contact: [enquiries@brcgs.com](mailto:enquiries@brcgs.com)

### The global plant-based food market

US\$74.2 bn

by 2029

11.9%

CAGR

Source: **Meticulous Research, 2020**

### The Free-From certification market

34%

global market growth value projected by 2025

32%

market value increase projected in Europe by 2025

US\$252.4 m

projected value of European Free-From Food Market by 2025

Source: **MarketsandMarkets, 2020**

The Standard has been designed so that it can be delivered as a 'stand-alone' audit or alongside another BRCGS Standard. Find out more, please contact [enquiries@brcgs.com](mailto:enquiries@brcgs.com)

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## Setting new Standards

### Our site survey results

All sites are invited to complete our short survey to feedback on their audit experience and they can access the survey here [BRCGS Monthly Survey](#).

The results of our recent site survey found extremely high levels of confidence in the quality of BRCGS certification and the performance of our Certification Bodies.

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## 95%

of sites were satisfied with the performance of the Certification Body and would use the same Certification Body again to complete our BRCGS audits

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## 76%

of sites chose BRCGS certification because it was a customer/retailer requirement for BRCGS/GFSI benchmarked scheme

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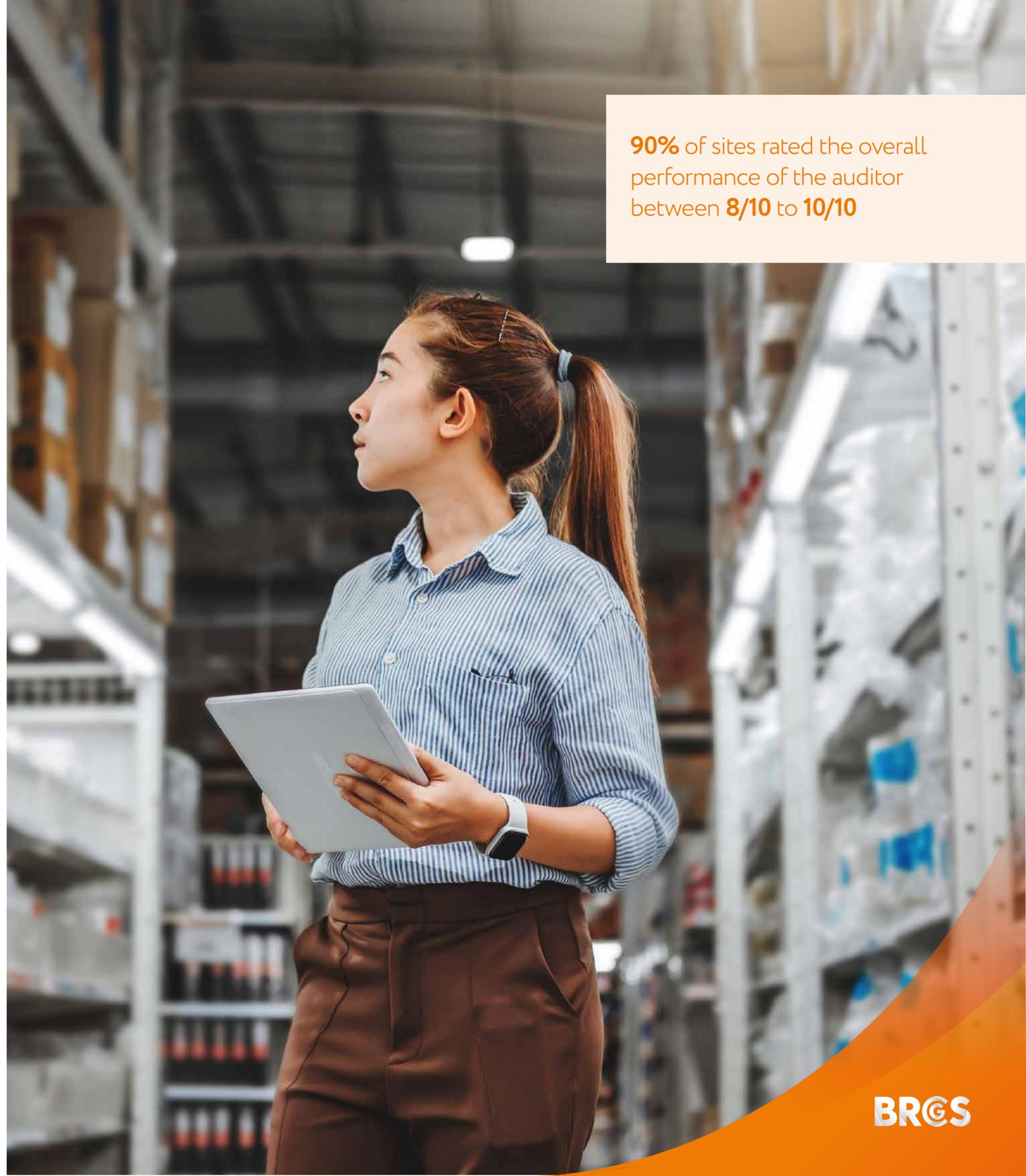
## 90%

of sites rated the overall performance of the auditor between 8/10 to 10/10 (Very Good-Excellent)

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(Site survey results collected between Jan-Oct 2020)

**90%** of sites rated the overall performance of the auditor between **8/10** to **10/10**





## Setting new Standards IT Development

The BRCGS Directory is the official database of all our audits and the shop window that is searched by the world's leading brands, retailers, specifiers, and regulators looking for competent and trusted suppliers.

In February 2020, we upgraded the system to improve usability and the access and uploading of data. The new Directory provides a platform on which we can build greater supply chain connectivity, transparency and intelligence. We will also be able to use data to provide greater benchmarking and supply chain performance insight, delivering ever greater brand confidence.

“The new Directory provides a platform on which we can build greater supply chain **connectivity, transparency and intelligence.**”

## Supporting sites in good times and bad

We are committed to giving all sites access to the support and expertise they need to keep improving and maintain BRCGS Certification. That extends from tools to keep their skills up to date through to helping identify problems and taking action to put them right.

### Gathering feedback through Tell BRCGS

We actively encourage feedback as this allows us to develop a clear picture of how our Certification Bodies, auditors and Standards are performing. The Tell BRCGS initiative gives us a forum for feedback, comments and complaints and ensures that we can continuously improve. Whatever the issue, we listen carefully and take the most appropriate action to protect brands and make sure the BRCGS scheme is delivering throughout the supply chain.

All feedback is confidential, and we always investigate to confirm sites' BRCGS certification status.

# Setting new Standards

## Supporting sites in good times and bad (Continued)

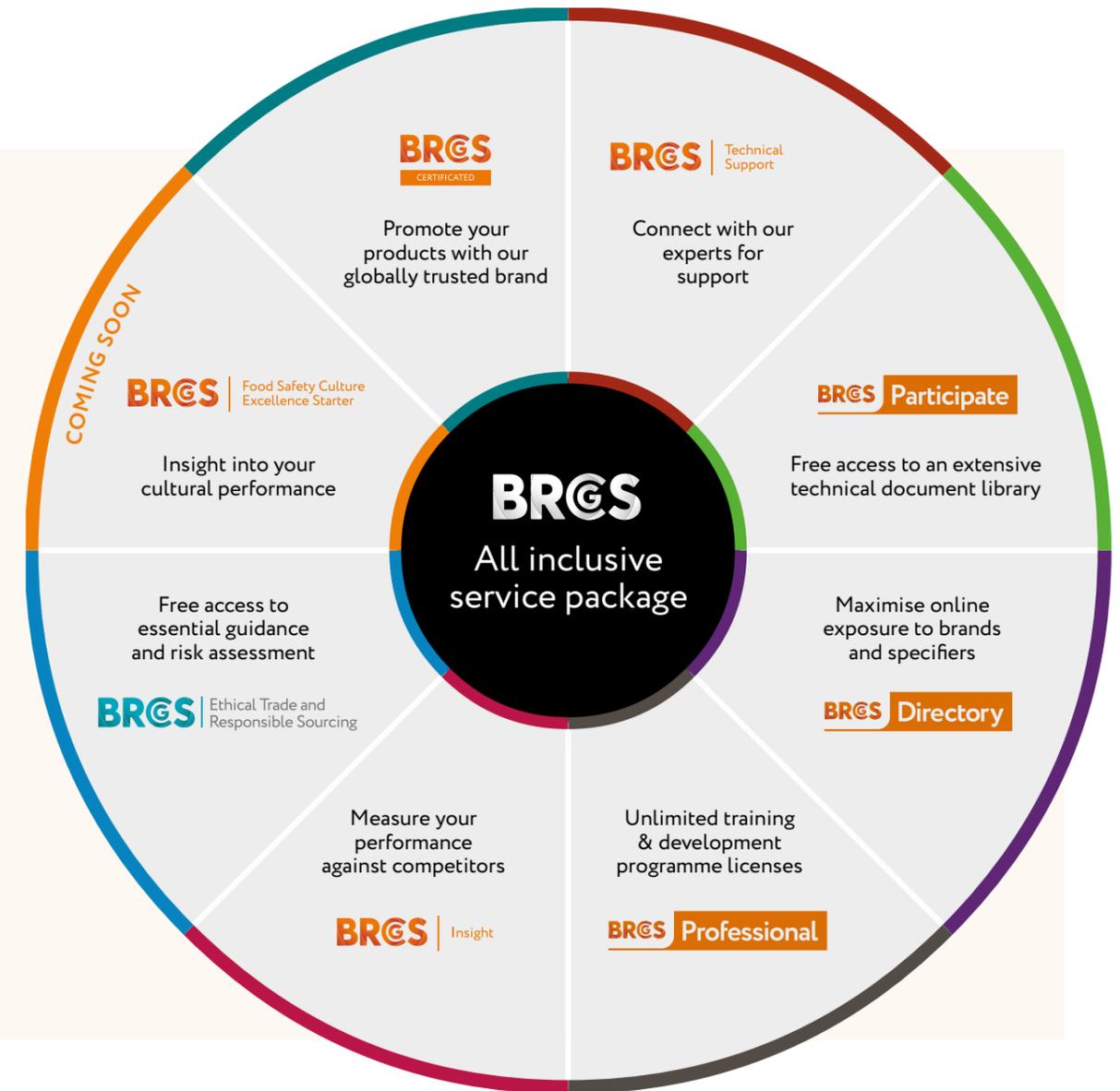
### Our All Inclusive Service Package

#### Supporting development and continual improvement

Our certificated sites have exclusive free access to wealth of tools designed to support their business and help the get best value from BRCGS expertise and our management system certification process.

As brands and major specifiers seek to strengthen their supply chains and build greater resilience into their businesses, these support tools also help sites to establish new benchmarks and demonstrate to customers that they are a best-in-class supplier.

Delivered by our hugely experienced Technical team, our support offering is the most comprehensive in the industry and is backed by a global network of delivery partners and support professionals.



# Setting new Standards

## Supporting sites in good times and bad (Continued)

We are committed to giving all sites access to the support and expertise they need to keep improving and maintain BRCGS Certification. That extends from tools to keep their skills up to date through to helping identify problems and taking action to put them right.

### Investigating complaints

Once a complaint has been assessed by the Compliance team, possible courses of action include:

- A site visit by BRCGS and follow up of any identified non-conformities by the Certification Body
- Notifying the Certification Body of an investigation, potentially followed by a site visit by the Certification Body or by BRCGS
- BRCGS contacting the site to seek further information
- A witness audit of auditor by BRCGS

The action taken will be guided by what we need to confirm the BRCGS certification status of the site.

We aim to act on all complaints within 28 calendar days, and it may take up to 90 days to conclude our investigation, particularly where sites visits need to be arranged.

### 2020 complaints

51%

of complaints lacked evidence or were not justified

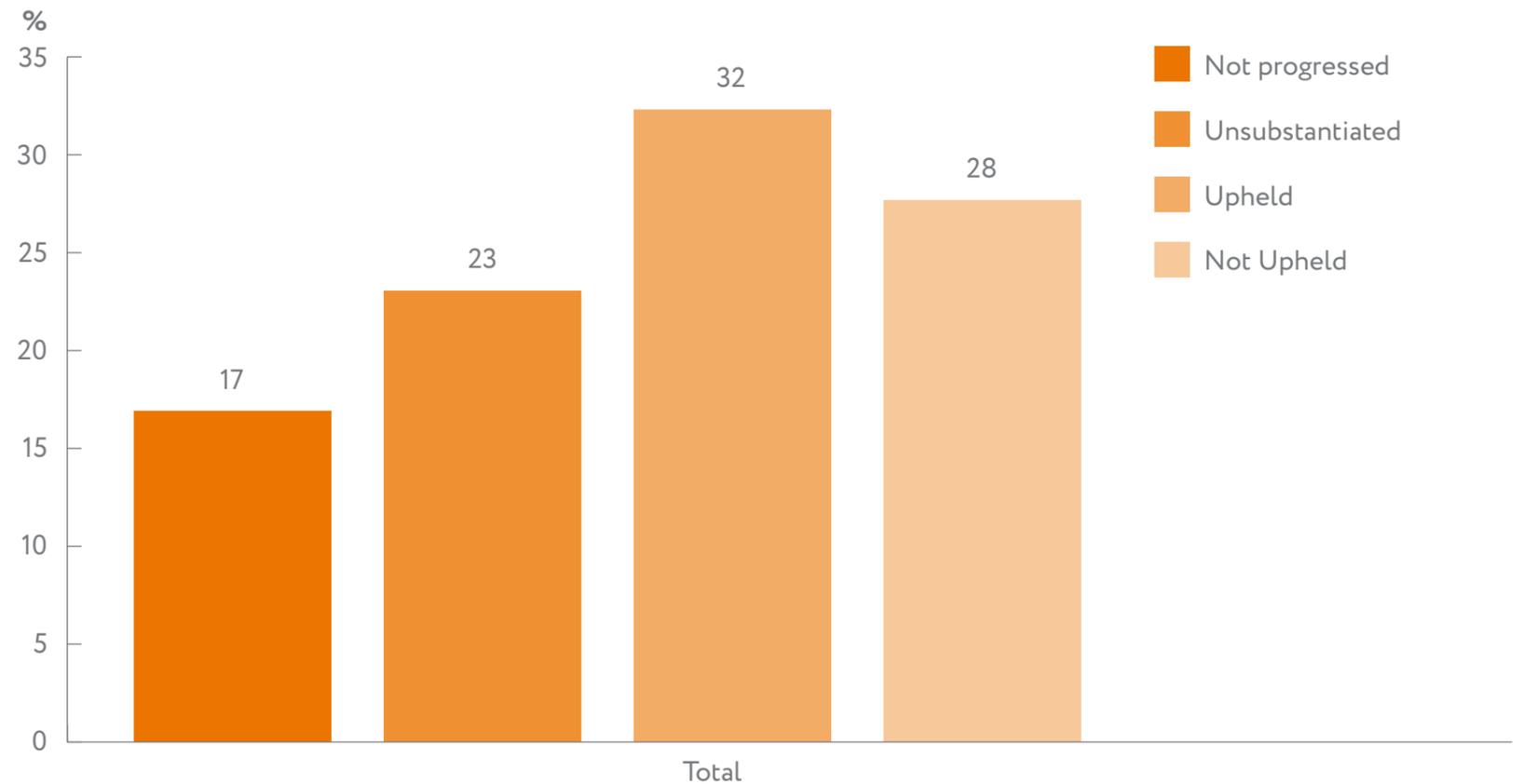
32%

of complaints received required further action following investigation by Compliance

17%

were not progressed by the complainant

Figure 9: Actions taken against the complaints received in 2020



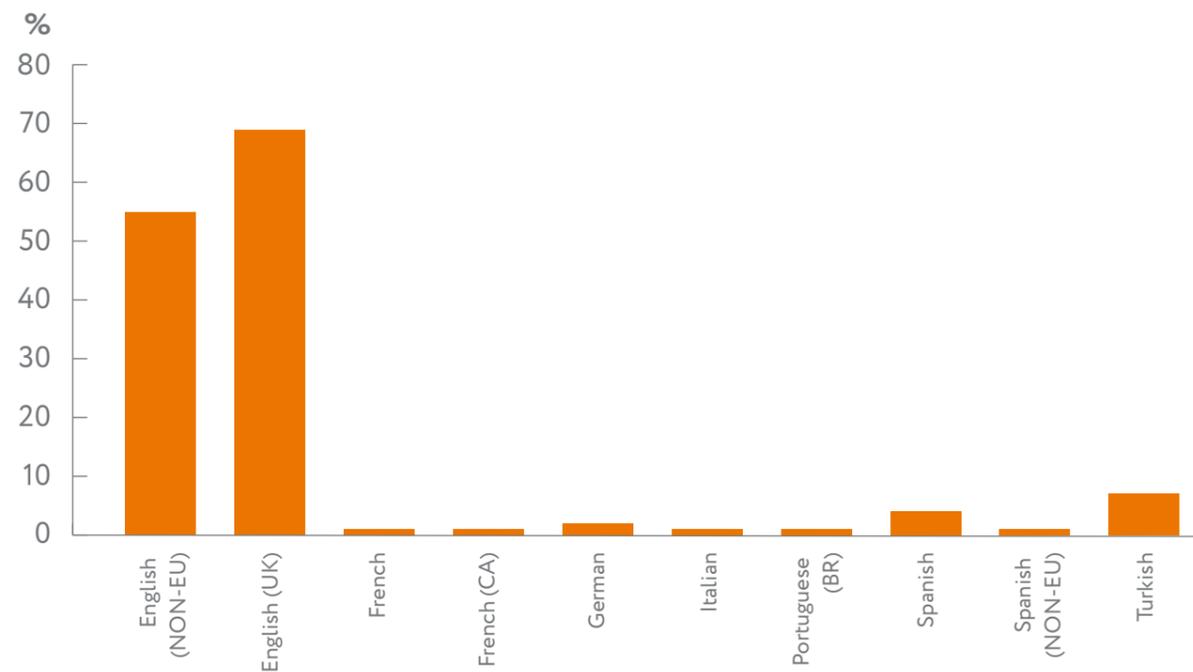
# Setting new Standards

## Supporting sites in good times and bad (Continued)

### A global response

We have received an encouraging response since introducing Tell BRCGS, with cases being reported from 31 different countries in languages including French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish and English.

Figure 10: Distribution of different languages used on our Confidential reporting system in 2020



### Contacting Tell BRCGS

The system allows you to open a secure post box, ensuring confidentiality but still allowing a two-way dialogue between you and BRCGS.

If you have a comment or complaint, we can be contacted through:

Tell BRCGS. Click [here](#).



# Let's keep in touch

Keep up to date with the latest news and information:

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

