

**Connecting**Chemistry

# BRC GLOBAL STANDARDS

## CASE STUDY



The BRC Global Standard for Storage and Distribution was introduced in 2006 to complete the chain between the food manufacturer and the retailer or caterer. It's designed to ensure that the quality and safety of products are maintained during their storage and distribution, and customer confidence is upheld. Today, it is an internationally recognised standard.

Brenntag UK & Ireland (part of Brenntag Group) is an instantly recognisable name in the life science, environmental and material science ingredients distribution sectors, serving over 20,000 customer accounts nationwide. Headquartered in Leeds, UK, the company has over 800 employees and operates through an extensive distribution depot network supported with its own fleet of over 100 vehicles, maintaining its strong national identity while fully utilising the worldwide scale of Brenntag as industry leader. Such a comprehensive operational setup, while providing the mainstay of sustainable



growth for the company and the source of value to their business partners, requires robust supply chain management and a clear strategy to steer the direction.

Safety and quality have always been at the forefront of the company's culture. We spoke to the team who led the project to get BRC certification, to obtain their insight on what it means to the company and their customers and suppliers alike.

## WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO BECOME CERTIFICATED AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE BRC GLOBAL STANDARDS?

**Alistair Hunter (AH), Technical and Compliance Manager, Brenntag UK & Ireland:**

At Brenntag we have been very proactive in regards of the formal validation of food safety and food quality principles. We felt it was an obvious choice to validate our internal standards through the BRC Global Standards as it is seen as the leading safety and quality certification program for the food industry. It sets the standardisation of quality, safety and operational criteria, and ensures that manufacturers and suppliers are compliant to a recognised industry benchmark, which provides additional protection for the consumer. We are now in the third year of the BRC Global Certification process.

Back in 2014 we kickstarted the process at our site in Widnes, receiving A Grade certification against the BRC7 Global Standard for Food Safety and the Storage and Distribution Standard which they have successfully maintained since. We have been receiving an increased number of customer requests to work towards achieving the preferred GFSI certification of BRC, and decided to work towards BRC certification across all Brenntag UK & Ireland distribution sites. Our commitment to continuous improvement across all operational facilities and strive to be expertly knowledgeable of the market trends added to our decision to work towards BRC certification.

## TALK US THROUGH THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD AT BRENNTAG

**Paul Renwick (PR), Life Sciences Quality Manager, Brenntag UK & Ireland:**

As the leading distributor of specialty ingredients, we have actively worked with a number of accreditation and regulatory bodies in recent years to ensure the safety of our food additives and ingredients supply chain. In my role as Life Sciences Quality Manager I have always referred to the BRC Standard as one of excellence, therefore we felt it was logical

to extend it out and apply for a more focused approach.

To start the process we introduced the BRC concept to our senior management, explaining the multitude of benefits which the certification would give to Brenntag and our business partners. It was clear the standard would enhance our already well established safety and quality procedures. The food ingredients sector is a one of our key strategic areas of growth; senior management was extremely supportive, giving the go-ahead to participate in the scheme because of our commitment to the life sciences sector.

We currently have a number of sites already accredited for BRC Storage & Distribution. They include:

- Belfast
- Bradford
- Bristol
- Dublin
- Glasgow
- London
- Lutterworth
- Manchester
- Swansea
- Widnes

The initial pre-assessment audit was organised at our Manchester site which manages a considerable share of our significant food business. A gap analysis against the BRC Standards was then performed - which we were pleased with as it did not present any major issues.

### AH:

It is our intention to have all Brenntag UK & Ireland sites BRC certified by the end of 2016. We therefore used the actual certification audits as an opportunity for other yet uncertified sites to learn about the experience and to take the knowledge to their own sites to enhance our capabilities across the Brenntag operational network. This approach also allows us to achieve the buy-in from all employees across our network as we foster a shared safety culture.



## WHAT WERE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND CHALLENGES YOU FACED IN ORDER TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BRC GLOBAL STANDARD FOR STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION?

### AH:

As Brenntag UK & Ireland have been working to HACCP Standards coupled with robust quality standards for many years, the achievement of certification has been a relatively smooth process. There were not many challenges on the operational level; it was more about aligning our expertise and processes to reflect a slightly new approach - which definitely opened our teams' horizons and further extended our food safety expertise.

*It was extremely rewarding to all our teams to have the affirmation of the processes we've developed and implemented over the recent years.*

**Paul Renwick, Life Sciences Quality Manger**

Working towards BRC reinforced the decisions Brenntag UK & Ireland made in terms of significant investments into our Life Science facilities, fleet and logistics. As we are continuing our focus on specialities and advanced materials, providing our customers with the best level of service through our comprehensive regional and national infrastructure, BRC certification was a confirmation of our teams' efforts in the areas of safety, quality and customer service.

I would specifically highlight the investment in life science dedicated facilities which we expanded in line with our growing market share. We have effectively doubled our facilities in London and Bristol and significantly improved similar facilities in a number of our other sites to achieve greater consistency across our network.

### PR:

To echo Alistair's comments, I'd say it was extremely rewarding to all our teams to have the affirmation of the processes we've developed and implemented over the recent years. We are now looking at additional training programs for both existing and new members of staff to further cultivate the culture of safety and quality throughout our site network as well as looking to implement a program of sharing best practice.

## WHAT TRAINING HAVE YOU ACCESSED TO GAIN AND MAINTAIN CERTIFICATION?

### AH:

We have a dedicated quality and safety department that offer an in-house expertise in this area. However we always look for opportunities for our teams to grow their expertise; we have invested in a range of additional training (both external and provided in conjunction with our colleagues across the Brenntag Group). For instance, operational warehouse employees were provided specific training on the essence and details of the program, which included training on new procedures, e.g. allergens. Externally provided hygiene training and auditor training have been beneficial to the certification process too.



### PR:

To remain at the forefront of speciality ingredients distribution, we closely monitor changes to relevant legislation and regulations, sharing our knowledge with our customers and suppliers alike. This approach certainly helps us to maintain certification and to grow our expertise in the area.

## HAS BRENNTAG MADE ANY MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY DRIVEN BY COMPLIANCE TO THE BRC GLOBAL STANDARD FOR STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION?

### AH:

Due to our longstanding expertise in specialty ingredients distribution we have developed robust processes that provided a fantastic base for further improving and extending the concept. It was encouraging to us to have found that we have been on the right track - and motivational to our teams who always strive to improve. In terms of infrastructure improvements these are now in line with BRC requirements.

### PR:

In my opinion, major improvements have been seen with regards to communication across the depot network and in particular the exchange of ideas and standardised approach to compliance to clauses within the standard. For instance, minor non-conformances during the BRC audits are shared so peers can assess similar areas at their own depots and if necessary address it for the benefit of the overall food supply chain. For a geographically diverse organisation such as Brenntag UK & Ireland communication between network

facilities is key. Going through BRC reiterated the importance of knowledge sharing.

### HAVE YOU ADDED ANY VOLUNTARY MODULES TO THE STANDARD?

**PR:**

We have added a wholesale module with reference to the BRC Storage and Distribution Standard, and the Voluntary Module 8 Traded Goods with reference to The Global Standard for Food Safety Issue 7.

Addition of voluntary modules helps to simplify the re-assessment process, and simplifies the certification communication to our customers.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY TOP TIPS FOR SITES THAT ARE THINKING ABOUT IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD, OR ARE APPROACHING THEIR NEXT AUDIT?

**AH:**

Ensure that the whole organisation is aware of the standard and the part they play in ensuring continued compliance.

**PR:**

Ensure that HACCP prerequisite programmes are robust, employees sufficiently trained and facilities adequately audited.

You need a solid understanding of the standard and its requirements. Ensure you have a clear assessment of the necessary commitment and investment such as in training or additional resources. There is no point in going into the certification process half heartedly- you and your staff need to be 100% committed to the process.

### WHAT BENEFITS HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED FROM ADOPTING THE BRC GLOBAL STANDARD FOR STORAGE & DISTRIBUTION AND GAINING CERTIFICATION?

**AH:**

BRC Certification gives us the ability to provide concrete evidence of compliance with food safety requirements to our customers. It is the crucial element in the programs of industry leading accreditations and certifications we at Brenntag has been following rigidly for a number of years, making sure that every product we offer in our portfolio is of the highest quality.

Brenntag's position as a distributor of safe and quality food additives and ingredients can now be validated through this globally recognised standard. In this day and age of sourcing materials globally it is important to know you have a supplier who provides the confidence of knowing where the ingredient you purchase has come from.

It should also ensure we get fewer complaints, less rejects, allowing us to provide even greater customer service. We expect a further improvement in our OTIF which is currently in excess of 99% across our sites.

As we at Brenntag UK & Ireland continue to undergo extensive investment and accreditation programs to further develop and maintain our leading position in the food industry, BRC certification adds to the FEMAS accreditation and ESAD assessments that we have achieved, providing the mainstay for current growth and positioning us fantastically for the future.

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**Alistair Hunter, Technical and Compliance Manager**

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**PR:**

We have a longstanding experience supplying into the food industry; this certification gives our customers a greater confidence in the quality processes we have in place, the training our people receive, and the commitment to being custodians of the safety for the food ingredients supply chain we operate in. Given that a number of our customers are themselves accredited to BRC 7 we feel our certification provides the perfect fit. The BRC certification of a distributor closes the loop between the end user and manufacturer, assuring additional integrity throughout the supply chain.

The BRC certification provides additional recognition of our teams' efforts on maintaining and improving our safety and quality processes. It is also a source of an extra communication stream between our national site network.

## OUR ACCREDITATIONS AND QUALITY STANDARDS



Certification No. FS 72516  
BS EN ISO 9001 : 2008



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