MBAA Task Force for Food Safety in the Brewing Industry
Introduction to the SQF Program

What is SQF?
SQF, stands for Safe Quality Foods, and is a comprehensive food safety and quality management program for the entire food supply chain which is owned by the US-based retailer trade association the Food Marketing Institute (FMI). It lays out the rules that a supplier (a farmer, food manufacturer or any entity associated with the food industry) must follow in order help ensure the safety and quality of their product or service. These rules include regulatory compliance, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and management system requirements to provide discipline and proof the controls implemented are effective and are actually carried out. The SQF program is made up of eight stand-alone codes which address the industry and its needs (prior to Jan. 2, 2018 this was addressed within one 3-level SQF Code). The supplier uses the rules in the SQF Code(s) to develop and implement a program that meets their needs and then contracts a third party audit company (a certification body) to verify through audits that the program as documented and implemented meets the requirements of the SQF Code and will assure the production of a safe, quality product/service. If the audit verification is successful, the facility is then "certified" for one year by the certification body.

A supplier can be certified to any of the SQF Food Safety Codes. Additional certification to the SQF Quality Code requires successful maintenance (and recertification to the applicable Food Safety Code). Certification audits to the Food Safety Codes are scored (E = excellent, G = Good, C = Comply) while certification audits to the SQF Quality Code is not scored with only a report issued upon passing.

How Does the SQF program apply to Breweries or the Beer supply chain?
The SQF Codes are designed to be very general and do not address the specific details for beer or spirit manufacture. Any entity which manufactures beer, spirits, ingredients, direct-contact packaging materials or provides services to the beer supply chain can implement and be certified to the applicable Food Safety (and Quality) Code. The most relevant Code for the brewing industry is the SQF Food Safety Code for Manufacturing (ed. 8) combined with the SQF Quality Code. The combination of the two Codes address both food safety and quality with the SQF Quality Code providing enhanced quality control with the implementation of HACCP-based food quality plans, additional tools and training. The program does not currently apply to brew pubs and other entities serving beer. A searchable database of SQF- certified sites is publicly available through the SQF Website.

Can I get help with understanding and implementing the SQF Code in North America?
There is an official network of SQF Training Centers in North America who deliver training to the Code. You can see a complete list of these centers on the SQF website by clicking HERE.

Where can I get more information about the SQF Code?
Information about the standard is available on the SQF website. The Code is available for free through the SQF website by clicking HERE.