

Certified Food Scientist Program Retirement – FAQs

These FAQs are to be used when discussing CFS retirement with certification holders, applicants, employees and other stakeholders, and are intended to clarify the decision around why CFS will be retired, the timeline for retirement and what it means for each group.

What is happening with the Certified Food Scientist Program?

IFT is retiring the CFS Certification program. Here's what you need to know:

- Current applicants will have one calendar year to sit for the exam.
- No new applications will be accepted after December 15, 2025.
- All new certifications will be completed by December 15, 2026.
- Certification renewal will only be available upon request.
- The program will be fully retired at the end of 2029, with the CFS designation noted as retired on electronic badges.

Why is CFS Certification being retired?

When launched in 2012, CFS was an avenue for science of food professionals to amplify their knowledge and commitment to food science, while giving companies a unique way to identify, cultivate, and retain top talent.

A lot has changed in the more than a decade since CFS was introduced. Advances in technology, instant access to information and the continued evolution of the larger science of food community have all contributed to a sharp decline in new CFS applicants and renewals.

Although retiring CFS is not an easy decision, it helps us to evolve as well, thereby helping us deliver on IFT's mission to connect all global food system communities to promote and advance the science of food and its application.

How was the decision to retire CFS Certification reached?

The initial CFS class in 2012 included 1362 applicants. Inaugural applicants were certified based on a portfolio review of their resumes, as our formal exam requirements were put in place in 2013.

Over the following five years, we saw an average of roughly 138 new CFS designations per year. However, since 2019 that has slipped to an average of just 44 designations per year. Similarly, renewal rates have fallen from 49% to 38%, a trend which is expected to accelerate.

Given the sharp decline in new designations and renewals, retiring the CFS program helps us accelerate our support for the evolving needs of the entire science of food community.

My CFS application is in progress, can I still complete my certification?

Anyone with an application in progress or already scheduled to sit for their exam will have the option to take the exam to earn their certification or receive a full refund.

All new certifications will be completed by December 15, 2026, and we will continue to recognize and support the CFS credential through the end of 2029 to ensure certificate holders get the recognition they have earned.

Can I get a refund if I don't want to complete my certification?

Yes, if you have not yet taken your exam and no longer wish to complete CFS certification, you can contact us for a full refund.

When is the deadline for completing the CFS exam?

Applicants will continue to have one calendar year to sit for the exam. No new applications will be accepted after December 15, 2025, and all new certifications will be completed by December 15, 2026.

Can I renew my certification?

As we intend to retire the CFS program, renewals will be discontinued immediately. However, if you feel strongly about renewing your certification, we will accept renewal applications by request.

Has IFT retired other programs?

Yes. As science and the needs of our community evolve over time, we take great care to ensure the resources and services we offer are closely aligned with those needs. Occasionally, that means retiring or discontinuing programs showing a decline in demand by a large percentage of our members.

Will I still be able to display my CFS badge?

Yes. Once the program is retired in 2029, the CFS designation will be noted as retired on electronic badges, so you can continue to display your CFS experience and knowledge.

What if I still have questions or need additional assistance?

If you have questions or need additional help, please email ifsc@ift.org