

Guide: Looking Up – Beyond Inspections

A Short Guide to Supplier Oversight for
Companies with Local Teams near Production

Who this guide is for

Brands and retailers that operate their own quality, sourcing, or technical teams in production countries and already perform product inspections.

These teams often visit factories regularly, run inspections, and maintain close supplier relationships. However, inspections alone rarely provide a complete understanding of factory capabilities, limitations, and operational risks.

This guide introduces a simple approach to combining inspections and factory audits to improve supplier oversight.

From Symptom Spotting to Root Cause Detection

Product inspections are essential for monitoring production quality. They help teams detect:

- product defects
- specification deviations
- packaging issues
- workmanship problems

However, inspections mainly show the output of production.

When the same problems appear across multiple inspections, the underlying cause is often related to how the factory operates.

Examples include:

- unclear work instructions
- insufficient worker training
- unstable production processes
- missing quality control procedures

To understand these issues, teams often need to evaluate the factory's processes, capacity, and management systems.

Utilizing Untapped Potential to Gain Supplier Intelligence

Companies with teams on the ground are well positioned to conduct technical or general factory audits. This provides insight into how the factory actually operates.

Typical audit objectives include:

Area	What teams assess
Production capability	Equipment, capacity, technical skills
Quality systems	Internal QC procedures and documentation
Workforce	Training, supervision, staffing stability
Processes	Standard operating procedures and controls
Risk factors	Operational, compliance, or management risks

Factory audits therefore help answer questions that inspections alone cannot:

- *Can the factory consistently meet quality requirements?*
- *Are production processes stable?*
- *What risks exist in the supplier's operations?*

A Practical Supplier Oversight Model

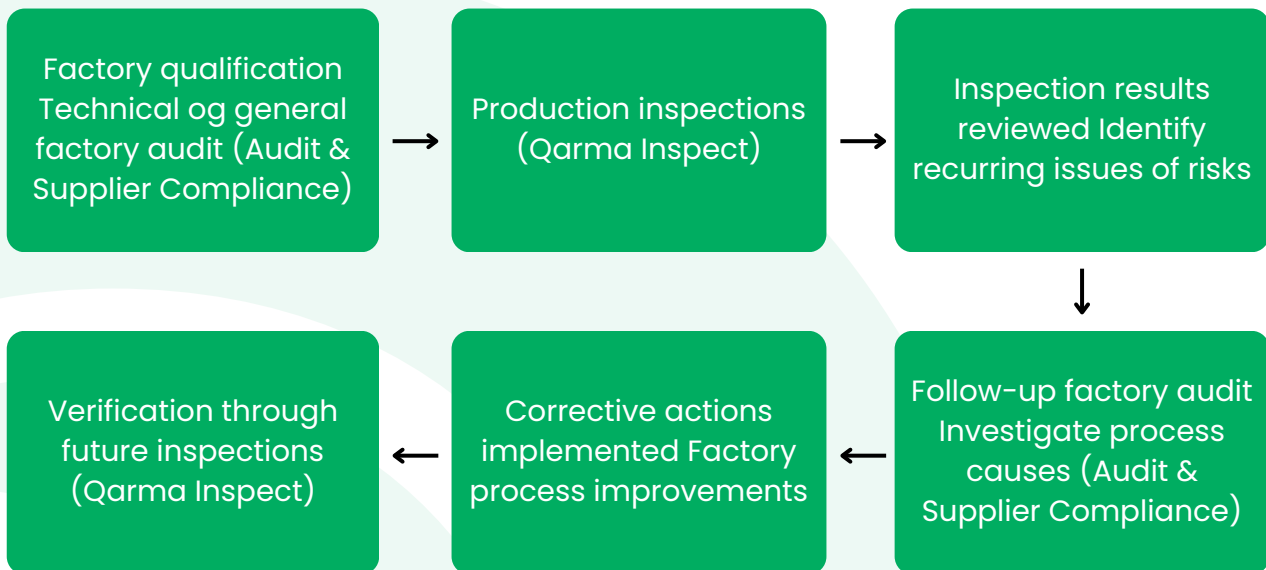
Companies with local teams often structure oversight around two complementary activities.

Activity	Purpose
Product inspections	Monitor production quality
Technical or general factory audits	Evaluate factory capability and risks

Together they provide a more complete view of supplier performance.

- Inspections detect product issues
- Audits evaluate factory systems and capacity
- Corrective actions improve supplier processes

This approach helps organizations move from reacting to quality problems to understanding and improving supplier operations.



This creates a continuous improvement loop between inspection teams and supplier audits.

What Inspection Data Can Actually Reveal

Teams working regularly in factories often see patterns in inspection data that signal deeper issues.

Recurring defects

Repeated defects may indicate weak internal quality controls.

Large variation between inspections

Inconsistent results can signal unstable production processes.

Frequent corrective actions

If the same issues require repeated fixes, factory procedures may not be properly implemented.

Documentation gaps

Missing or outdated work instructions often appear during factory visits.

When these signals appear, a targeted factory audit can help identify the root cause.

Using Qarma Audit & Supplier Compliance for Factory Audits

Teams that regularly visit factories often rely on spreadsheets, PDF reports, or email threads to manage audit findings and follow-up actions. This can make it difficult to maintain a consistent oversight across multiple suppliers and production locations.

Qarma Audit & Supplier Compliance helps structure these activities in one place.

It allows teams to:

- plan and schedule **technical or general factory audits**
- use standardized **audit checklists** for consistent evaluations
- document findings directly during factory visits
- assign and track **corrective actions** with suppliers
- maintain a centralized record of **supplier documentation and certifications**
- **verify findings** with the Qarma app

Because audits, corrective actions, and supplier records are stored together, teams gain clearer visibility into factory capability, compliance status, and risk areas across their supplier network.

For organizations already using **Qarma Inspect**, this creates a connected workflow where:

- inspections monitor production quality
- factory audits evaluate processes and capacity
- corrective actions drive supplier improvements

Together these tools support a more structured and transparent approach to supplier oversight.