



INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

In order to spare scheme participants the time and cost of conducting dual audits, QS regularly carries out thorough comparisons with other standards. One of these comparisons has just been conducted, with the upshot that further IFS audits may now be recognised within the QS scheme using additional checklists (see page 1). Thus the same high standards apply everywhere, since in the QS scheme everyone from the farm to the shop has to be able to rely on everyone else. Furthermore, QS is now offer-

ing another service. In future, companies will be able to have their social management programme assessed. For this purpose, economic operators have developed a special inspection specifically for this purpose (see page 2). And, as usual, there's much more from the world of quality assurance for fruit, vegetables and potatoes.

Happy reading!

Your QS team Bonn, 02. Dezember 2013

RECOGNITION OF IFS AUDITS AVOIDING DUAL AUDITS



QS makes scheme participation easier for its participants by recognising other standards and thereby avoiding the extra cost of conducting dual audits. Scheme participants with IFS-standard certification can now benefit from this. With the new edition of the Scheme Manual, to be published on 1 Jan 2014, QS will recognise not just the IFS food audit, but also the IFS cash&carry/wholesale audit and the IFS broker audit.

IFS-QS combined audits for wholesalers

Since there is frequently no product processing in the fresh fruit, vegetables and potatoes sector, ever more fruit, vegetables and potatoes wholesalers with IFS food certification are starting to seek the new IFS standard cash&carry/wholesale certification. With the advisory board's decision to recognise IFS cash&carry/wholesale certification, QS is catering for this new trend.

These audits will be recognised if additional QS checklists are also completed during the audit. The fruit, vegetables and potatoes advisory board made this decision at its last meeting. This decision follows a thorough comparison of QS requirements and IFS standards, thus ensuring that consistently high quality is maintained throughout the QS scheme, without incurring the cost of dual audits.

For scheme participants to obtain eligibility for QS delivery on the basis of an IFS audit, an additional QS checklist must be completed. This serves to confirm that the company in question additionally meets QS-specific requirements. As the IFS food and cash&carry/wholesale standards largely contain the same requirements in the relevant sectors, the same additional checklist can be used for both standards.

IFS-QS combined audits for agents

In order to make participation in the QS scheme simpler for companies that already have IFS broker certification, from 1 Jan 2014 onwards QS will also recognise IFS-QS combined audits for the IFS broker / QS agent sector. An additional checklist has been compiled specifically for agents, i.e. for companies that engage solely in trading and marketing activities without any direct contact with goods. This checklist guarantees that all requirements relevant to the QS scheme are checked during the audit.

We will be glad to answer any questions regarding this new recognition procedure.

Quality Assurance. From farm to shop.

SERVICE FOR SCHEME PARTICIPANTS INSPECTION OF WORKING AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS NOW POSSIBLE



Starting in January 2014, QS is to provide a new service. In future, scheme participants will voluntarily be able to have their social management programme assessed for uniformity of principles in an independent inspection. The advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes recently issued a specific guideline called “Voluntary QS Inspection of Working and Social Conditions”.

potatoes, enabling the independent documentation and inspection of companies’ social management programmes. The contents and the system of the voluntary QS inspection are based on German law and were drawn up with due regard to the Global G.A.P. module “GlobalGAP Risk Assessment on Social Practice” (GRASP).

Participation always voluntary

Scheme participants at all levels can voluntarily

register for the inspection. The inspection will be independent of participation in the QS scheme. By registering, companies declare their intention to have an assessment made of their compliance with the guideline on working and social conditions. The frequency of the inspections is the same as for the regular QS or QSGAP scheme audits.

Producers opting for the inspection do so by contacting their coordinator, who will make all the arrangements necessary for participation. All other companies will register for the inspection via the QS database. Family businesses that employ family members only will not be inspected.

Following the introduction of the inspections, QS and the certification bodies will work together closely to produce precise evaluations of implementation. This will ensure that the requirement profile is applied in a practical manner and can be adjusted as and when required.

The “Voluntary QS Inspection of Working and Social Conditions” guideline can be obtained from the download centre on the QS website.

EXPERT ADVICE WHAT TO DO AFTER FLOODING

The severe flooding in the spring hit southern and eastern Germany the hardest – in a barely imaginable way. In this article, Joachim Ziegler from the service centre for the rural Rhine-Palatinate region takes a look at the consequences of the floods and what you can do.

In ancient cultures, such as on the Lower Nile, floods were considered a blessing for mankind and nature due to the deposits of fertile soil, the anaerobic disinfection of soil, and the flushing of salt in arid zones, but nowadays they constitute an almost incalculable risk for fruit and vegetable producers. The water has long since receded, the mud has been cleared from the houses and businesses, but what remains is the uncertainty about the lasting ingress of pollutants from industrial and residential areas or of microbiological contamination from sewage treatment works etc. Previous instances of flooding, however, only led to very sporadic persistent ground contamination. This is caused by the ingress of heavy metals and pollution by petroleum-derived hydrocarbons from damaged tanks. Minor oil pollution can’t even be traced any more after a while due to microbial decomposition, especially when the soil has been intensively loosened and mixed once the area is

accessible again. Even for micro-organisms that constitute a hygiene risk (e.g. salmonellas, enteroaggregative E. coli), the contamination risk drops markedly after an interim period of several months (> 6 months) until the soil is next cultivated.

Heavy metals on the other hand are not degraded by soil cultivation. However, this kind of contamination is generally very rare.

Thorough liming and significantly increasing soil pH above the neutral value can help immobilise heavy metals.

Commissioning soil analyses

It only makes sense to commission expensive soil analyses if there are compelling reasons to do so. It is obligatory to observe the precautionary limits for metals (cadmium, lead, chrome, copper, mercury, nickel and zinc) and organic substances (e.g. polychlorinated biphenyls



(PCBs), benzopyrene and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)) as well as the regulations for the soil to crop exposure pathway stipulated in Germany’s Federal Soil Protection and Contaminated Sites Ordinance (Bundes-Bodenschutzgesetz, available at www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bundesrecht/bbodschtv/gesamt.pdf). In case of flooded, close-to-the-surface wells, the possibility of contamination should also be taken into consideration and ruled out by analysing irrigation water.

Quality Assurance. From farm to shop.

SCHEME PARTICIPANT OPST, OBST PARTNER STEIERMARK POME FRUIT SPECIALISTS



Willi Nuster

OPST Obst Partner Steiermark GmbH is a producer organisation in the Styrian region of south-eastern Austria with around 700 agricultural production businesses and 9 distribution partners. OPST's principal prod-

ucts are apples, with a crop area of around 3,800 hectares, pears, with a crop area of about 150 hectares, and plums, with about 100 hectares. Around 15% of this area is now dedicated to organic production. The EVA apple export association exports the products to over 20 countries.

Willi Nuster (see photo) is responsible for quality management. He says, "Quality assurance is of enormous importance for OPST Obst Partner Steiermark GmbH." This is also evident in the company's history, as it started developing its first quality assurance systems back in 1997. The company took a great step forwards in terms of quality management when it joined the QS scheme. In 2005, just a year after QS Fachgesellschaft Obst-Gemüse-Kartoffeln GmbH was founded, the OPST producers started implementing QS requirements. "All conventional

producers meanwhile meet the requirements," is Willi Nuster's resume.

But they're not resting on their laurels with quality assurance at OPST Obst Partner Steiermark GmbH. "We're committed in our producer organisation to continuing to advance our quality assurance systems. So we're continually improving food safety for the benefit of the consumer and bringing it up to the latest standards. Farmers are kept up to date with training courses and information packs. That way they know all about the importance of healthy, sustainable, high-quality fruit," explains the quality manager. "So OPST manages the certification of the farmers on the one hand and of our distribution partners on the other, so we can guarantee a safe system across the board."

It's a commitment that pays off. "Because of the steps we've taken, the „frisch-saftig-steirisch“ (fresh-juicy-Styrian) apple has gained consumers' trust. The unique countryside of the Styrian apple-growing region is crucial for the outstanding taste of our product," says Willi

Nuster in praise of their product's quality, before summing up the guarantees of success for their position in the domestic market. "Safe products due to certification, down-to-earth production in family-run businesses, and the unique conditions of an outstanding climate."

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AUDITOR TRAINING IN 2013 ENSURING THE CONSISTENCY OF AUDITING

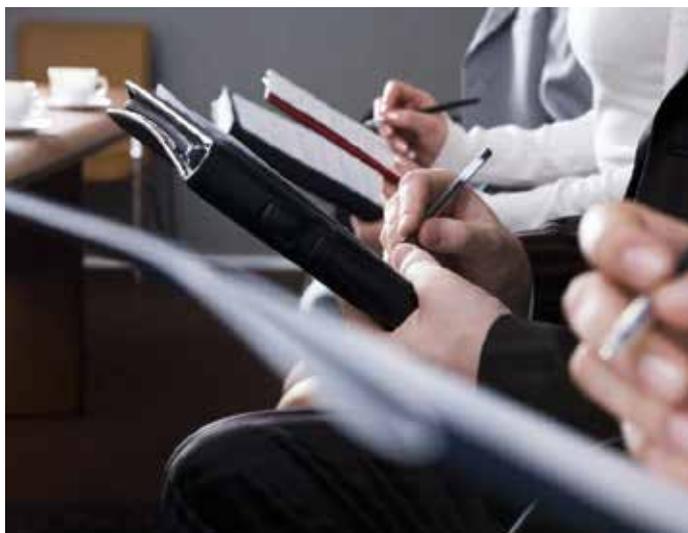
QS has organised almost 40 training courses, workshops and information meetings for auditors, coordinators and certification bodies this year. These events are an important forum for exchanging experiences and for further developing the common understanding of quality. The training courses for auditors were of particular importance. They help to ensure that inspections at production businesses and companies are conducted in a proper and professional manner and with consistently uniform standards.

"QS auditors are experts in cross-stage quality assurance from farm to shop. They have to assess compliance with the relevant requirements on site. So the auditors bear a large responsibility. To fulfil this duty, a thorough knowledge of the processes involved in food production and marketing is required," explains Dr Alois Fenneker, who at QS is responsible for certification bodies. On the training courses, the specifics of the

individual stages are explained to the auditors. Practical case studies and discussions, he points out, contribute towards making the audits more consistently uniform.

To ensure that the information has been understood and is implemented effectively, there is a test at the end of each course. In order to retain their QS approval, auditors must attend a training course and pass a test for each stage of approval.

This year auditors sat a combined total of almost 1,240 tests. A high standard was set, with a fail-



ure rate of only 10%. The auditors in question had to resit the tests. As a result of failure to attend courses and of failing the tests, 55 approvals had to be revoked.

Quality Assurance. From farm to shop.

MARKETING QS-LIVE IN DIALOGUE WITH CONSUMERS

At trade fairs and consumer exhibitions, QS and its partners regularly provide information on quality assurance from farm to shop. For instance at Consumenta, in Nuremberg at the start of November 2013. QS-live ambassadors spearheaded the communication with consumers.

Consumenta is Bavaria's largest consumer goods exhibition. This year around 161,000 visitors viewed the wares of almost 1,000 exhibitors. A particularly powerful visitor magnet was the "From the Region - for the Region" hall, where QS was represented along with its partners QAL (QAL Gesellschaft für Qualitätssicherung in der Agrar und Lebensmittelwirtschaft mbH) and LQB (Landwirtschaftliche Qualitätssicherung Bayern GmbH). The com-

munal stand's tagline was "trust in safe food of controlled origin". QS-live ambassador Lore Mauler and QS employees were on hand to field consumers' questions. They explained to the visitors what scheme participants achieve in terms of food safety and what consumers themselves should be aware of once they've done the shopping.

New QS-live ambassador

While Lore Mauler has been a QS-live ambassador from the very beginning, Patrick Grevenig from EDEKA Frischecenter Zurheide in Dusseldorf was only recently appointed a QS-live ambassador. He won the final of the Grips&Co competition "Germany's best newcomer in trade", which was supported by QS-live and originally created for the food trade by the journal RUNDSCHAU. As



New QS-live ambassador Patrick Grevenig, EDEKA Zurheide (2 from left)

a result the 20-year old was made a QS-live ambassador for the next 12 months by QS Managing Director Dr Hermann-Josef Nienhoff.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS THE LATEST FIGURES

With the logistics standard, QS has this year started offering a guideline for the transportation of fresh fruit and vegetables. It is applicable in particular to logistics service providers who carry out transportation in the QS scheme. As recent figures show, 37 companies have signed up to the standard so far.

Scheme participants in the chain, Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes	Total	of which outside Germany
Production¹	28,724	5,400
- Fruit, vegetables	13,264	4,950
- Potatoes	10,594	4,922
	2,670	28
Wholesale	783	243
Logistics	37	7
Food retail	14,640	200

¹ of which:
Producers with QS GAP certification: 6,684, producers with recognised GlobalG.A.P. certification: 3,017
Producers with recognised IKKB certification: 2,272 producers with recognised AMAG.A.P. certification: 122

As of 1 Oct 2013

+++ NEWS IN BRIEF ++

Welcome



We are pleased to welcome a new colleague. Jutta Haski joined the call centre team in September. She will be glad to help you if there are any questions you want to ask QS.

Jutta Haski

Congratulations

Heike Faßbender and Ute Simon have now been at QS for ten years. Colleagues have been congratulating them since October and August respectively.



Heike Faßbender, Ute Simon

QS at Fruit Logistica



QS will be represented at Fruit Logistica once again next year. QS experts will be manning the stand and fielding questions from 5 to 7 February. What's special this year is that QS Fachgesellschaft Obst-Gemüse-Kartoffeln GmbH will be celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Ufen succeeds Schulz

As previously announced, Gerhard Schulz left his post as chairman of the Federal Committee for Fruit and Vegetables in October 2013 and is thus no longer a member of advisory board. Schulz played a central role in the founding and development of the QS scheme for fruit, vegetables and potatoes. His successor as chairman of the horticulture specialist group in the Federal Committee for Fruit and Vegetables is Christian Ufen.

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