



INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

One of the claims of the QS scheme is that it makes food production and marketing as safe as possible. To ensure that the laboratories recognized by QS also live up to this claim, a laboratory performance assessment is conducted twice a year. In the past test, we took into account that the QS scheme is becoming more and more international by giving the labs a citrus fruit to analyze (Page 1).

There is also news from our information campaign “QS-live”, which is why we are placing special focus on consumer communication in the QS scheme on Page 3.

And we are again introducing a QS scheme participant. We conducted an interview on quality assurance with Mr. Strissel of Gemüsering Stuttgart (Page 4).

We wish you lots of fun with your reading,
Your QS Team

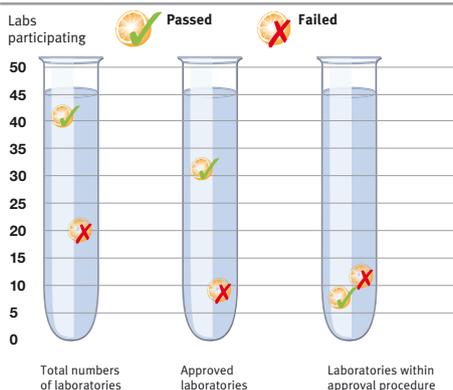
LABORATORY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ORANGES PRESS FOR MORE SAFETY

Quality assurance in the QS scheme is in no way limited to apples and cucumbers. Producers of lemons and oranges are certified too. For this reason, the approved labs in the QS scheme had to deal with a subtropical fruit in the laboratory performance assessment.

63 laboratories participated in the spring test which has just been completed successfully, over 60 percent of them from abroad. With its semi-annual laboratory performance assessment, QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH tests the efficiency of the labs approved to make residue analyses in the QS scheme. The laboratories that pass the test are awarded a qualification certificate which is often demanded by producers, wholesalers and the food retail sector as a prerequisite for commissioning them.

By selecting the orange, the most commonly cultivated citrus fruit in the world, as the test material, QS paid due consideration to the fact that more and more foreign businesses are becoming QS scheme participants or are becoming eligible to deliver due to the recognition of comparable standards. This currently applies to 4,170 businesses.

Laboratory Performance Assessment with Oranges



There was another reason for choosing the orange as the test material, however. The testing of oranges for residues is a technical challenge because acids and waxes make analysis more difficult. Despite this, 43 laboratories achieved very good and good results, 21 of them with the maximum number of points. None of the laboratories recognized by QS lost their approval due to poor evaluations. Jens Schäfer, who is responsible for the laboratory performance assessments at QS, draws mainly positive conclusions: “The laboratories recognized by QS work to a high standard, as is

shown by the large number of correct analyses. More and more active substances can be identified and also correctly quantified by the labs. The ones with which this was not fully possible, however, have to explain how they intend to correct these deficiencies at short notice”.

One of the substances that had to be detected was the active ingredient carbendazim, which almost 30 percent of the laboratories were not able to clearly detect in the autumn test 2011. It is therefore all the more pleasing that the latest results show distinct progress in that all of the labs identified the substance correctly. Only 40 of the 63 participants were able to determine the precise quantity of the active substance, however. The weed killer 2,4-D (dichlorophenoxyacetic acid) also proved difficult. It was wrongly quantified by 19 labs in the test.

In the next laboratory performance assessment in autumn this year, the laboratories will again have to prove how good their analysis methods are.

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD **CHANGES TO THE PREPARATION GUIDELINE**

At its meeting in the spring, the advisory board for fruit, vegetables, potatoes voted on adjustments to the criteria in the guidelines. One resolution aims at practice-orientated adjustment in the preparation guideline for the production of mirepoix, or soup greens.

The area of application of the Guideline Preparation includes all products which are chopped, peeled and packaged, grated, shredded or pureed after harvesting, as well as the treatment of sprouts and shoots. It also includes mirepoix, a product for which the advisory board has now decided to introduce simplifications. The micro-

biological/ sensory testing of the products no longer has to be conducted in line with the control plan, a risk-based approach can be adopted in future. The requirements for microbiological tests on the premises remain unchanged, however.

Another exception is that businesses which exclusively process mirepoix are no longer required to have their staff trained every year in accordance with the Infection Protection Act (IfSG). The basic requirement for hygiene training for staff remains in place, however.

The microbiological hazard potential of mirepoix should be classed as less than that of fresh-cut products as it is usually cooked before eating.

The heating process prevents possible contamination, because germs are killed off.

The amendment of the guideline will take effect with the revision of 1 June 2012.



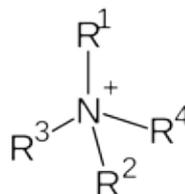
SAFETY NOTE **QUATERNARY AMMONIUM COMPOUNDS**

Increased residue levels of the active substances benzalkonium chloride (BAC) and didecyldimethyl ammonium chloride (DDAC) were determined in fruit and vegetable products from various countries of origin. The substances belong to the group of quaternary ammonium compounds (QAC) which are a component of many disinfectants.

According to the latest available knowledge, DDAC is also authorized as a post-harvest treatment agent (e.g. for citrus fruits and lychees) in several third countries. It is also used to prevent the formation of latex stains (e.g. with mangos) and in rinsing water and/or during immersion. By doing so, QAC residues can remain on the surface of the foodstuff, even though this can be avoided if used properly.

In this regard, QS would like to point out to scheme participants that QAC concentrations should be kept as low as good working practice permits. Great care should be taken to ensure the proper use of disinfectants and effective cleaning. QS scheme participants have already received information on this in circulars.

If the active substances are used as a post-harvest treatment in third countries, a maximum concentration of 0.01 mg/kg applies in the EU. If they are classed as additives not authorized for foodstuffs as defined by Reg. EC 93/128, they should be regarded as contaminants.



Information on Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QAC)

- Large, heterogeneous group of substances
- Economically relevant: benzalkonium chloride and didecyldimethyl ammonium chloride

QAC belong to the group of cationic surfactants:

Mode of action:

- Enrich themselves in the fatty cell membranes of living organisms
- Disrupt normal functioning of the cell membrane
- Biocidal effect of cationic surfactants above all

Area of application:

- Plant protection products and disinfectants
- Softeners, care products, textile auxiliaries

SANCTION BOARD **CONSISTENT ACTION AGAINST VIOLATIONS**

When the requirements of the QS scheme are violated, every scheme participant must expect consequences. To ensure fairness here is the responsibility of the QS sanction board which dealt with 80 cases from the supply chain Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes last year.

Under the chairmanship of Wilbert Knickenberg, who has since handed over his office to Kurt Pillymann, former President of the Regional Court in Bonn, the Sanction Board issued a warning in 22 cases in 2011. A fine was imposed on scheme participants in 53 cases and one scheme participant had his reapproval withdrawn for two years. Two scheme participants on the produc-

tion stage must satisfy additional requirements in future and two cases were dismissed. Most of the violations were in the area of plant protection (see info box) and affected the production stage.

Almost 11,500 regular audits were conducted in the supply chain Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes in 2011. Add to this the audits of special purpose, random sample audits and the results of roughly 9,000 samples which were analyzed within the scope of residue monitoring. Measured against the extent of these controls, the number of sanction cases the sanction board had to deal with during the same year was pleasingly low. This shows that the scheme participants take their

commitment to safe food and participation in the QS scheme seriously.

Sanction Procedures

Extract of K.O. Evaluations:

- Use of authorized plant protection products/active substances
- Implementation of corrective measures
- Risk analysis and hygiene requirements
- Compliance with maximum residue quantities
- Compliance with waiting times
- Conducting/documentation of self-assessments
- Approval of suppliers

FOCUS ON CONSUMER COMMUNICATION ++ FOCUS ON

QS-LIVE CONSUMER COMMUNICATION GATHERING MOMENTUM

Consumer communication at QS is building up a head of steam. The website of the EU-funded campaign “QS-live. Quality Assurance Initiative” has been online since February. As the very latest development, the site has now been switched fully online with lots of information, photo and film material and many interactive elements.

The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of the QS certification mark among consumers and anchor it as a trustworthy signal for safe food. All QS scheme participants who use the test mark to communicate the quality of their own produce will benefit from this.



With the new website, the initiative is now targeting a much wider public in the internet. In future, representatives of all production stages will be

reporting there on their commitment to ensuring quality and food safety. We are pleased that with Peter Fehmel, a down-to-earth representative of the sector from the Palatinate region is making a stand for the production of fruit and vegetables. Other representatives are Jennifer Bauder (trainee in the food retail sector), Josef Schöberl (cattle farmer from Bavaria), and Franz-Josef Seibold (butcher) who are permitting an insight into their daily work.

In addition to this, rural woman and nutritionist Lore Mauler is keeping a diary in the internet. In her blog, she gives consumers valuable tips on how to handle fresh foods.

Click into it at www.qs-live.de.

PORTRAIT PETER FEHMELE FAVOURS THE QUALITY ASSURANCE INITIATIVE



“Consumers must be made aware again of the significance of agriculture for the production of safe foods,” says Peter Fehmel, who is participating in “QS-live. Quality Assurance Initiative” as a representative of the production of vegetables.

Fehmel’s vegetable business is situated in the Palatinate, near Ludwigshafen. On an area of roughly 200 hectares, master horticulturalist Peter Fehmel and his employees grow radishes, spring onions, carrots, kohlrabi and napa cabbage

among other things. Since 1999, he has also had two hectares under glass. On the business management side, he receives a lot of support from his wife and one of his three sons, and quality is the order of the day for the managing director. The investments made in a continuous cool chain with extensive picking and refrigeration areas underscore this intention. The quality and durability of products have top priority, according to Peter Fehmel, along with short delivery times, which is why participation in the QS scheme is only logical for this medium-size enterprise. Successful participation is documented every year by the QS-GAP certificate. Peter Fehmel explains his willingness to participate in the “QS-live” information campaign by his conviction that something has to be done to coun-



teract scandal journalism. “Real crises are the exception; the products on offer in the food retail sector nowadays have never been so safe,” he emphasizes. Consumers must be made more aware, however, of what is being done every day in farming businesses everywhere to ensure the production of safe food. With the QS certification mark, consumers have the certainty that this will remain so.

If you want to find out more about Peter Fehmel and his commitment to safe food, you can get to know him in the internet at www.qs-live.de.

QR-CODES INFORMATION OFFER GOES MOBILE

QS has optimized its web pages for users with mobile phones with internet capability. A leaner design shortens loading times and enables a faster page build-up. In this way, QS has also made it possible to access information in the internet from a mobile phone via QR codes. QR codes are becoming more and more commonplace.

They have a rectangular pattern and are being printed more and more on flyers and posters. QR (quick response) codes encrypt information or links to websites which can be quickly and easily accessed by mobile devices. The prerequisite for this is a functional mobile pho-

ne camera and a small program on the phone (app) which decodes the QR code.

Originally developed for use in logistics, QR codes are also being used for communication nowadays. They supplement the range of available information by referring users to more detailed websites, such as that of QS. In this way, customers in food retail outlets can acquire information while still in the shop on such things as the QS certification mark and the commitment of trade and industry to safe food.

In the meantime there is also information on

quality assurance with meat and vegetables. After accessing the corresponding site via the QR code (see below), users can click on other online offers as required. QS intends to further develop this area of its online communication, thus expanding the service range for its scheme participants.

If you have any questions or suggestions, **Mr. Stefan Martin**, Head of Sales and Marketing at QS, would be pleased to answer them.



A SCHEME PARTICIPANT **GEMÜSERING STUTTGART**



Marketing and in-house production are the two supporting pillars of Gemüsering Stuttgart. Founded in 1991 as a pure marketing company, the business has acquired a leading market position in the meantime as an outdoor and greenhouse producer. National marketing focuses mainly on the food retail sector and regional supply. The responsible heads of quality management are Karin Riesterer and Dr. Thorsten Strissel.

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GEMÜSERING By maintaining their own cultivation areas and processing plants, Gemüsering Stuttgart ensures that tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, cucumber cauliflower, cabbage and many other vegetable varieties are continuously available.

The Gemüsering group employs a workforce of more than 900. Part of the corporate philosophy is to supply customers with outstandingly good quality, which means that quality assurance plays a vital role within the company. "The motto of our quality assurance in the company is 'quality begins before the seeds are sown'," emphasizes Dr. Thomas Strissel.

Dr. Strissel, where does the main focus of your quality assurance lie?

We want to ensure product safety even before the harvest. This requires good communication with the producer businesses, within the group and with the customer regarding details of growing conditions, for example, or external information.

Microbiology is playing an increasingly more important role. Has this shifted the focus of your efforts?

We conduct tests along the entire chain, thus acquiring valuable information on possible microbial dangers. The risk is relatively low for unprocessed products in the areas of production and trading. We work with care and remain vigilant. The new QS preparation guideline serves as a benchmark for all measures. We also see an important basis for safe products in the field of operational and staff hygiene.

Where do you see the special tasks of quality management in the future?

Quite clearly in the recognition of customer demands as early as possible. From the knowledge gained in past years, we are achieving improvements selectively in regard to product quality and hygiene management. The focus here is on microbiological monitoring and temperature management during the transport of goods.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS **LATEST FIGURES**

The development of participant numbers is pleasing. In the past 12 months, the number of scheme participants has risen once again and has exceeded the mark of 24,000 in the supply chain Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes. The vast majority of our new scheme participants come from central and southern Europe.

Stage	Total	Of which abroad
	24,047	4,556
Production¹	12,573	4,194
- Fruit, vegetables	9,823	4,168
- Potatoes	2,750	26
Wholesale	690	162
Food Retail	10,784	200

¹ Of which:
Producers with QS-GAP certification: 6,271 (+185)
Producers with recognized GlobalG.A.P. certification: 2,765 (+193)
Producers with recognized IKKB certification: 2,233 (+335)

+++ NEWS IN BRIEF ++



Annual Report

QS presented the Annual Report 2011/2012 at the annual conference in Frankfurt/Main. The report gives an overview of the occurrences and activities of the

past year and provides an outlook of the current year. The report focuses mainly on antibiotics monitoring, spot audits and QS-live. The motto of the annual report is "Food you can trust".

of Internal Quality Management at QS, and Mr. Robert Römer, who is responsible for Slaughtering/Deboning and Food Retail. Both of them have accompanied the development of the QS scheme practically from the beginning.

GlobalG.A.P. gives confirmation for QS-GAP

For the third time now, QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH has benchmarked its QS-GAP standard with GlobalG.A.P. With the confirmation, the Benchmarking Committee of GlobalG.A.P. certifies anew that QS-GAP satisfies all of the GlobalG.A.P. requirements for the production of fruit, vegetables and potatoes. This means that in the future too, QS-GAP certified producer businesses can deliver their produce into both schemes with only one certificate.

10 Years with QS: Dr. Iris Rudat-Schwarz and Robert Römer



In April we were able to celebrate the company's tenth anniversary with Dr. Iris Rudat-Schwarz, head

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